

SYLLABUS

San José State University Department of English and Comparative Literature ENGL 007, Section 8, Critical Thinking, Fall 2013

Instructor:	David Mesher
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Office Hours:	Tuesdays and Thursdays: 8:00-8:30, 16:30-17.00 & by appointment
Class Days/Time:	Tuesdays and Thursdays: 13:30-14:45
Classroom:	DMH 354
Class Web Page:	mesher.zxq.net/engl7
Prerequisite:	Engl 1A
GE/SJSU Studies Category:	Area A3

Faculty Web Page and MYSJSU Messaging

Copies of the course materials such as the syllabus, major assignment handouts, and so on, may be found on the class web page at mesher.zxq.net/engl7. Essays for this course will be submitted online on the course Canvas page (sjsu.canvas.com). You are responsible for regularly checking with the messaging system through MySJSU for any messages that may be sent pertaining to this class.

Course Description

Critical thinking is the careful and deliberate determination of whether to accept, reject, or suspend judgment about a claim. As simple as this sounds, that process of determination can involve literally all we know about ourselves and society. The purpose of this course, therefore, is not only to familiarize you with critical thinking, but also to provide you with a systematic approach to its process and components. To these ends, we will pay particular attention to cultural and individual assumptions behind claims, the sorts of evidence which support claims, arguments and fallacies which contain claims, and the rhetoric and language used to express claims. Our study of critical thinking will be supplemented with readings and class discussions within a multicultural context, and written assignments will deal not only with elements of critical thinking, but with their application in that context as well.

This course will combine conventional and experimental approaches to critical thinking. The mechanics of critical thinking will be covered in sections from the class reader drawn from a web site that also includes

further exercises, practices quizzes, and supplementary materials. Though use of the web materials is not required, it is highly encouraged, and students who do no work online may be at a disadvantage.

Course Goals and Student Learning Objectives

The goal of this course is to introduce students to the mechanics of rational analysis—recognizing, analyzing, evaluating, and engaging in effective reasoning—and to give them opportunities to practice such analysis on everyday as well as academic and professional topics.

GE Program Learning Outcomes

Upon successful completion of this course, students will be able to do the following:

SLO 1: Students should be able to distinguish between reasoning (e.g., explanation, argument) and other types of discourse (e.g., description, assertion). This course distinguishes between statements that are part of an argument (premises and conclusions), those that are support for the argument (including definitions, explanations, descriptions, and assumptions), and those that are unrelated to the argument (which might be just about anything). This SLO will be assessed on both essays, as well as on the second midterm.

SLO 2: Students should be able to identify, analyze, and evaluate different types of reasoning. All reasoning can be expressed either deductively or inductively, which is covered in the second part of this course. However, there are also personal, situational, professional, cultural, and other variations on those two main types, which typically are distinguished by the hierarchy of evidence offered in support of the premises of an argument, ranging from anecdotal and proverbial to historical and physical. This SLO will be assessed on both the exams and the essays.

SLO 3: Students should be able to find and state crucial unstated assumptions in reasoning. Arguments, whether written or verbal, usually articulate only two of the three claims of a syllogism, and identification of the missing claim is one of the major reasons to study formal methods of evaluating an argument. In addition, evaluating the support offered for an argument's premises involves identifying the assumptions on which they are based. Both of these processes are covered in the first and second parts of the course, and will be assessed on those midterms and the final exam.

SLO 4: Students should be able to evaluate factual claims or statements used in reasoning, and evaluate the sources of evidence for such claims. While critical thinking sometimes focuses more on the argument than its support, common mistakes in jumping to conclusions about information and its sources are covered in the section of the course dealing with fallacies. This SLO will be assessed on both essays.

SLO 5: Students should be able to demonstrate an understanding of what constitutes plagiarism. All written work for this course will be submitted online, through Canvas, and automatically sent to Turnitin.com. Class discussions of plagiarism will take place before and after the first paper is due, so that students understand the process and can correctly interpret the statistical results feedback from Turnitin.com. This SLO will be assessed on both drafts of both essays, using the Turnitin.com result when applicable.

SLO 6: Students should be able to evaluate information and its sources critically and incorporate selected information into his or her knowledge base and value system. In order to promote such incorporation, this course uses readings from the field of social or behavioral economics (this semester, Dan Ariely's *Predictably Irrational*), which deal with widely accepted but often unanalyzed real-world beliefs; the SLO will be assessed in the second essay.

SLO 7: Students should be able to locate, retrieve, organize, analyze, synthesize, and communicate information of relevance to the subject matter of the course in an effective and efficient manner. This SLO will be assessed on the second essay, which students do research on their topic, and the reliability of sources ranging from web pages to peer-reviewed publications will be covered in class.

SLO 8: Students should be able to reflect on past successes, failures, and alternative strategies. Being able to evaluate one's own arguments and to improve one's chances for success is part of what critical thinking is all about. This SLO will be assessed on both essays, which involve submitting early drafts and then revising them, thereby allowing students to rethink and revise their projects before the final draft is due.

Course Content Learning Outcomes

Upon successful completion of this course, students will:

1. learn to identify valid and invalid reasoning, by formal means, and to assess the strength of an argument's underlying support and assumptions;
2. improve their own abilities to express their ideas logically, to communicate their positions effectively, and to be persuasive about matters of importance to them, both verbally and in writing;
3. understand the importance as well as the limitations of statistics, measurements, and other factual evidence in supporting arguments; and
3. appreciate the value of a free exchange of ideas, with tolerance for someone with whose ideas they may disagree, and exhibit a willingness to challenge their own unanalyzed assumptions and arguments as well as those of others.

Required Texts/Readings

Critical Thinking Text (downloadable from class website or available from AS Print Shop).

Doyle, Arthur Conan. *Sherlock Holmes: The Complete Novels and Short Stories Volume 1*. Bantam. 978-0553212419.

Ariely, Dan. *Predictably Irrational, Revised and Expanded Edition: The Hidden Forces That Shape Our Decisions*. HarperCollins. 978-0061353246

Other Texts

Required: Students should have access to a dictionary, thesaurus, and composition book (from English 1A/B or 100W)

Library Liaison

Toby Matoush, toby.matoush@sjsu.edu, (408) 808-2096

Classroom Protocol

Preparation and Participation: Students should come to class having read the day's assignment and prepared to discuss it, bringing a copy of all texts assigned for that day. Opportunities for such contributions may take the form of small-group or full-class discussions; in either situation, individual students may be called upon by the instructor to answer a question, interpret a passage, or express an opinion. Please do not occupy yourself with non-course-related materials during class, and refrain from conversations or inappropriate comments while the instructor or classmates are speaking. Turn off all phones, music, and other likely distractions while in class, and do not eat or participate in other types of distracting behavior. Laptops and tablets may be used only for note-taking in class; otherwise they must be turned off.

Assignments and Grading Policy

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| 1. Class participation, quizzes, and timely completion of work; SLOs 1,2,3,4 | 10% |
| 2. Three midterm tests: 10% each; SLOs 1,2,3, 4 | 30% |
| 3. First paper (1500 words): first draft (5%); final draft (10%); SLOs 1,2,3,4,5,8 | 15% |
| 4. Second paper (1500 words): research (5%); final draft (15%); SLOs 4,5,6,7,8 | 20% |
| 5. Final exam; SLOs 1,2,3,4 | 25% |

Quizzes: In order to ensure that you get credit for the hard work you do in reading and reflecting on the material assigned for this course, there will be frequent quizzes (on average, one every two or three class meetings). I think of quizzes as one of the best ways for you to measure how carefully you are reading the texts and understanding the concepts, and how much of that reading you retain (at least for a day or so). The quizzes will cover significant information from that day's reading assignment, so if you read well ahead of the assigned schedule, be sure to review your notes and come to class with a fresh and detailed impression of what was assigned. A pattern of doing poorly on these quizzes should be taken as an indication that you are not doing the reading, not understanding it fully, not reading attentively enough, or not reading with the care and analysis necessary to be successful as a critical thinker.

Homework Assignments: In addition to quizzes and formal essays, there will be exercises based on the critical thinking materials under study—ranging from completing some of the pages of exercises in the back of the reader to generating your own examples and exercises. Not all of these will be handed in for credit, but doing such exercises regularly is the best way to test yourself on your understanding of that material.

Written Work: There will be two multi-part paper projects (both 1500 words), counting 15% and 20% respectively toward the final mark; three midterm exams, counting 10% apiece; and a final examination counting 25% of the course grade. Homework assignments and quizzes will help determine the remaining 10%, along with participation in class and the timely completion of readings and written work. Grading will be on a 100-point scale for each assignment. For the final mark, an average for all coursework of 100-97 will be an A+, 96-94 an A, 93-90 an A-, 89-87 a B+, 86-84 a B, 83-80 a B-, 79-77 a C+, 76-74 a C, 73-70 a C-, and so on.

In English Department courses, instructors will comment on and grade the quality of student writing as well as the quality of ideas being conveyed. All student writing should be distinguished by correct grammar and punctuation, appropriate diction and syntax, and well-organized paragraphs. Grades issued will represent a full range of student performance and will adhere to the following SJSU academic standards of assessment:

The "A" essay will be well organized and well developed, demonstrating a clear understanding and fulfillment of the assignment. It will show the student's ability to use language effectively and construct

sentences distinguished by syntactic complexity and variety. Such essays will be essentially free of grammatical, mechanical, and usage errors.

The “B” essay will demonstrate competence in the same categories as the “A” essay. The chief difference is that the “B” essay will show some descriptably slight weaknesses in one of those categories. It may slight one of the assigned tasks, show less facility of expression, or contain some minor grammatical, mechanical, or usage flaws.

The “C” essay will complete all tasks set by the assignment, but show weakness in fundamentals (usually development), with barely enough specific information to illustrate the experience or support generalizations. The sentence construction may be less mature, and the use of language less effective and correct than the “B” essay.

The “D” essay will neglect one of the assigned tasks and be noticeably superficial in its treatment of the assignment—that is, too simplistic or short. The essay may reveal some problems in development, with insufficient specific information to illustrate the experience or support generalizations. It will contain grammatical, mechanical, and usage errors that render some sentences incomprehensible.

The “F” essay will demonstrate a striking underdevelopment of ideas and insufficient or unfocused organization. It will contain serious grammatical, mechanical, and usage errors that render some sentences incomprehensible.

The Department of English reaffirms its commitment to the differential grading scale as defined in the SJSU Catalog (“The Grading System”). Grades issued must represent a full range of student performance: A= excellent; B= above average; C= average; D= below average; F= failure. Courses graded according to the A, B, C, No Credit system shall follow the same pattern, except that NC shall replace D or F. In such cases, NC shall also substitute for W (or Withdrawal) because neither grade (NC or W) affects students’ GPA.

Submission of Written Work: All essays and homework assignments must be typed and double-spaced (without a cover page), follow standard MLA format, and be submitted online only, through the course Canvas page (at sjsu.canvas.com), by the beginning of class on the days they are due. Though you will be able to upload your work after that, it will automatically be marked “late” by Canvas, and late work will only be accepted by arrangement with the instructor. Essays uploaded to Canvas are automatically submitted to Turnitin.com, as well, to check for plagiarism. Do not try to hand in printed copies of your essays for this course, and do not email or leave at my office any work for this class unless I specifically ask you to do so. Corrected papers will be returned online (in your Canvas account) in pdf format. Please keep a copy of all work submitted on disk, and retain all graded work returned until the end of the semester. Students should anticipate a significant delay in the return of late work. And remember that I will also be keeping a copy of your marked work during the semester so that, when you submit your second essay, I will begin by reviewing the technical mistakes you made in the first one, and looking to see if you have made any progress in those areas on the second. You, too, should take the time to review those errors, and improve your writing.

University Policies

Dropping and Adding

Students are responsible for understanding the policies and procedures about add/drop, grade forgiveness, etc. Refer to the current semester’s [Catalog Policies](https://info.sjsu.edu/static/catalog/policies.html) section at info.sjsu.edu/static/catalog/policies.html. Add/drop deadlines can be found on the current academic year calendars document on the [Academic Calendars webpage](https://www.sjsu.edu/provost/services/academic_calendars/) at www.sjsu.edu/provost/services/academic_calendars/. The [Late Drop Policy](https://www.sjsu.edu/aars/policies/latedrops/policy/) is available at www.sjsu.edu/aars/policies/latedrops/policy/. Students should be aware of the current deadlines and penalties for dropping classes. **This semester, the last day to drop courses without an entry on your permanent record is September 4th. The last day to add courses or register late is September 11th.**

Information about the latest changes and news is available at the [Advising Hub](http://www.sjsu.edu/advising/) at www.sjsu.edu/advising/.

Consent for Recording of Class and Public Sharing of Instructor Material

[University Policy S12-7](http://www.sjsu.edu/senate/docs/S12-7.pdf), <http://www.sjsu.edu/senate/docs/S12-7.pdf>, requires students to obtain instructor's permission to record the course; such permission must be obtained in writing prior to the recording, and such permission may be limited to specific class sessions or parts of sessions. In addition, in classes where active participation of students or guests may be on the recording, permission of those students or guests must be obtained in advance as well. Further, materials you receive in this course are the intellectual property of the instructor, and may not be publicly shared or uploaded without prior written permission.

Academic integrity

Your commitment as a student to learning is evidenced by your enrollment at San Jose State University. The [University Academic Integrity Policy S07-2](http://www.sjsu.edu/senate/docs/S07-2.pdf) at <http://www.sjsu.edu/senate/docs/S07-2.pdf> requires you to be honest in all your academic course work. Faculty members are required to report all infractions to the office of Student Conduct and Ethical Development. The [Student Conduct and Ethical Development website](http://www.sjsu.edu/studentconduct/) is available at <http://www.sjsu.edu/studentconduct/>.

Instances of academic dishonesty will not be tolerated. Cheating on exams or plagiarism (presenting the work of another as your own, or the use of another person's ideas without giving proper credit) will result in a failing grade and sanctions by the University. For this class, all assignments are to be completed by the individual student unless otherwise specified. If you would like to include your assignment or any material you have submitted, or plan to submit for another class, please note that SJSU's Academic Integrity Policy S07-2 requires approval of instructors.

Campus Policy in Compliance with the American Disabilities Act

If you need course adaptations or accommodations because of a disability, or if you need to make special arrangements in case the building must be evacuated, please make an appointment with me as soon as possible, or see me during office hours. Please be aware that [Presidential Directive 97-03](http://www.sjsu.edu/president/docs/directives/PD_1997-03.pdf) at www.sjsu.edu/president/docs/directives/PD_1997-03.pdf requires that students with disabilities requesting accommodations must register with the [Accessible Education Center](http://www.sjsu.edu/aec) (AEC: www.sjsu.edu/aec) to establish a record of your disability.

In 2013, the Disability Resource Center changed its name to be known as the Accessible Education Center, to incorporate a philosophy of accessible education for students with disabilities. The new name change reflects the broad scope of attention and support to SJSU students with disabilities and the University's continued advocacy and commitment to increasing accessibility and inclusivity on campus.

Student Technology Resources

Computer labs for student use are available in the [Academic Success Center](http://www.sjsu.edu/at/asc/) at www.sjsu.edu/at/asc/ located on the 1st floor of Clark Hall and in the Associated Students Lab on the 2nd floor of the Student Union. Additional computer labs may be available in your department/college. Computers are also available in the Martin Luther King Library.

A wide variety of audio-visual equipment is available for student checkout from Media Services located in IRC 112. These items include DV and HD digital camcorders; digital still cameras; video, slide and overhead

projectors; DVD, CD, and audiotape players; sound systems, wireless microphones, projection screens and monitors.

SJSU Peer Connections

Peer Connections, a campus-wide resource for mentoring and tutoring, strives to inspire students to develop their potential as independent learners while they learn to successfully navigate through their university experience. You are encouraged to take advantage of their services which include course-content based tutoring, enhanced study and time management skills, more effective critical thinking strategies, decision making and problem-solving abilities, and campus resource referrals.

In addition to offering small group, individual, and drop-in tutoring for a number of undergraduate courses, consultation with mentors is available on a drop-in or by appointment basis. Workshops are offered on a wide variety of topics including preparing for the Writing Skills Test (WST), improving your learning and memory, alleviating procrastination, surviving your first semester at SJSU, and other related topics. A computer lab and study space are also available for student use in Room 600 of Student Services Center (SSC).

Peer Connections is located in three locations: SSC, Room 600 (10th Street Garage on the corner of 10th and San Fernando Street), at the 1st floor entrance of Clark Hall, and in the Living Learning Center (LLC) in Campus Village Housing Building B. Visit [Peer Connections website](http://peerconnections.sjsu.edu) at peerconnections.sjsu.edu for more information.

SJSU Writing Center

The SJSU Writing Center is located in Clark Hall, Suite 126. All Writing Specialists have gone through a rigorous hiring process, and they are well trained to assist all students at all levels within all disciplines to become better writers. In addition to one-on-one tutoring services, the Writing Center also offers workshops every semester on a variety of writing topics. To make an appointment or to refer to the numerous online resources offered through the Writing Center, visit the [Writing Center website](http://www.sjsu.edu/writingcenter) at <http://www.sjsu.edu/writingcenter>. For additional resources and updated information, follow the Writing Center on Twitter and become a fan of the SJSU Writing Center on Facebook. (Note: You need to have a QR Reader to scan this code.)



SJSU Counseling Services

The SJSU Counseling Services is located on the corner of 7th Street and San Fernando Street, in Room 201, Administration Building. Professional psychologists, social workers, and counselors are available to provide consultations on issues of student mental health, campus climate or psychological and academic issues on an individual, couple, or group basis. To schedule an appointment or learn more information, visit [Counseling Services website](http://www.sjsu.edu/counseling) at www.sjsu.edu/counseling.

Engl 007, Section 3: Critical Thinking, Fall 2013, Course Schedule

This schedule is subject to change. Any changes will be announced in class at least one week in advance. If you miss class, please check for changes to the schedule on the class web page at mesher.zxq.net/engl7.

		Critical Thinking Text	Readings	Writing Assignments
8/22	Thursday	Introduction		
8/27	Tuesday	1. Conditionals	Brain Teasers	
8/29	Thursday	2. Chain Arguments	Holmes: Scandal in Bohemia	
9/3	Tuesday	3. Twisted Terms	Holmes: Red-Headed League	
9/5	Thursday	No class		
9/10	Tuesday	4-6. Induction and Deduction	Holmes: Case of Identity	
9/12	Thursday	7-8. Options	Holmes: Five Orange Pips	
9/17	Tuesday	Sherlock Holmes and Conditionals	Holmes: Twisted Lip	
9/19	Thursday	Review	Holmes: Blue Carbuncle	
9/24	Tuesday	First Exam		
9/26	Thursday	First exam returned		1st paper: first draft due
10/1	Tuesday	9. Syllogisms	Predictably Irrational: Intro	
10/3	Thursday	10-12. Claims and Conversions	Predictably Irrational: Ch. 1	
10/8	Tuesday	13-14. Premises, Identifiers	Predictably Irrational: Ch. 2	
10/10	Thursday	15-16. Validity and Vagueness	Predictably Irrational: Ch. 3	
10/15	Tuesday	Review		
10/17	Thursday	Second Exam		
10/22	Tuesday	Second exam returned		1st paper: final draft due
10/24	Thursday	17A Fallacious Appeals: Misdirected	Predictably Irrational: Ch. 4	
10/29	Tuesday	17B Fallacious Appeals: Emotional	Predictably Irrational: Ch. 5	
10/31	Thursday	18 Ad Hominem Attacks	Predictably Irrational: Ch. 6	
11/5	Tuesday	19 Fallacious Generalizations	Predictably Irrational: Ch. 7	
11/7	Thursday	20-23 Miscellaneous Fallacies	Predictably Irrational: Ch. 8	
11/12	Tuesday	23-26 Miscellaneous Fallacies	Predictably Irrational: Ch. 9	2nd paper: research draft due
11/14	Thursday	Review		
11/19	Tuesday	Third Exam		
11/21	Thursday	Third exam returned		
11/26	Tuesday	27-28 Statistics & Averages	Predictably Irrational: Ch. 10-11	
11/28	Thursday	No class (Thanksgiving)		
12/3	Tuesday	29 Studies and Experiments	Predictably Irrational: Ch. 12-13	2nd paper: final draft due
12/5	Thursday	Review		
12/12	Thursday	Final Exam, 12:15-2:30		