

**Welcome to English 7: Critical Thinking, Spring of 2013: San José State University  
Sections 01 and 03**

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**Office Hours: M, W 6:30-7:15 AM or earlier, 10:30-11:45, 3-3:45, or by appt.**

**GE/SJSU Studies Category:** Critical Thinking A3, Qualitative Reasoning (Area A: Basic Skills) and in Cultural Pluralism (Area Y)

**Required texts and materials:**

The Power of Critical Thinking, 4th ed.: Lewis Vaughn      1” binder clips  
Access to internet and printer      3-ring binder with filler paper  
A printed edition of a college-level dictionary

**Class size:** Enrollment shall normally be limited to 25 students.

**Prerequisites and co-requisites:** Successful completion of English 1A or the equivalent is strongly recommended. English 007 fulfills General Education requirements for Critical Thinking (Area A3).

**Description:** English 7 fulfills the General Education Requirements in Qualitative Reasoning (Area A) and in cultural Pluralism (Area Y). This course integrates the study of Reasoning with texts that express the concerns of our diverse culture, so that the student can become aware of, and sensitive to, the role of cultural and individual assumptions in reasoning.

Students will be introduced to the basic concepts of critical thinking: definition of terms, statements of assumptions, the process of inductive and deductive reasoning, distinctions between fact and opinion, use of evidence to support premises, recognition of standards of proof, common fallacies, and misleading logical and rhetorical devices. Students should be especially aware of the role that language plays in persuasive aspects of reasoning. Students will learn these skills of critical thinking by analyzing and discussing culturally oriented readings, which will be a substantial part of the course rather than incidental or supplemental to it.

To practice critical thinking requires careful and deliberate determination of whether to accept, reject, or suspend judgment regarding a claim. The bases for such determination can literally involve bringing all we know about ourselves and our world to bear upon the issue at hand. English 7's purpose focuses on two main emphases: we will familiarize ourselves increasingly further with what critical thinking is, and we will learn systematic approaches to undergoing the process as well as understanding the nature and articulation of its components. Toward these goals, 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, as well as the rhetoric and language used to express claims. Our study of critical thinking will be supplemented with reading from the course's required text, as well as relevant short-story material and texts of current arguments and propositions downloaded from the Web.

**Area Goals:** Students will demonstrate, in written and oral forms, proficiency in course goals. This critical thinking course should help students learn to recognize, analyze, evaluate, and engage in effective reasoning. Development of the following competencies will result in habits of intellectual autonomy, appreciation of differing worldviews, courage and perseverance in inquiry, and commitment to employing analytical reasoning.

**This Course's Implementation of Student Learning Objectives (SLO):**

**SLO 1: Students should be able to distinguish between reasoning (e.g. explanation, argument) and other types of discourse (e.g. description, assertion)**

Working with the course's primary text, The Power of Critical Thinking (PCT), we will cover types of definitions, connotation and denotation, descriptions and reportage, with emphasis on comparative analysis of authoritative sources (Chapters 1,2);

**SLO 2: Students should be able to identify, analyze, and evaluate different types of reasoning**

Working with PCT and current news materials, we will focus on types of reasoning [causal argument (Chapter 5), evaluative, etc.]. In addition, we will focus upon inferences, both deductive and inductive (Chapter 2, onward );

**SLO 3: Students should be able to find and state crucial underlying assumptions in reasoning**

Working with our core text as well as with short-story literature, we will concentrate on recognizing syllogisms, while analyzing the validity of their premises and support (Chapters 3 through 5). We will be analyzing short story material as well as journalistic releases available on the Web, organizing paragraphed argument into formal logical format, then analyzing premises for validity, soundness, strength and cogency;

**SLO 4: Students should be able to evaluate factual claims or statements used in reasoning, and evaluate the sources of evidence for such claims**

We will focus on understanding and detecting logical fallacies, types of propaganda and unsupported opinion, comparatively analyzing these with regard to reasoning (PCT Chapter 5, and our analyses of Max Schulman's "Love Is a Fallacy"). The emphasis will be on understanding reasons as statements featuring informed opinion, propositions, premises, and statements of evidence offered as explanation, justification, or support for conclusions;

**SLO 5: Students should be able to demonstrate what constitutes plagiarism.** In their extended essay assignment focused on critical examination of a published work's arguments, logical and psychological fallacies, students will be exposed to research and citation methodologies as well as instruction regarding the differences among summary, paraphrase and plagiarism;

**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;**

This course, through its primary text, *The Power of Critical Thinking*, as well as by means of lecture and class discussion, will cover crucial aspects of psychological and philosophical obstacles to effective critical thinking. Each of the three module tests and each of the three take-home essay projects require students to strive toward meeting this learning outcome.

**SLO 7: Students should be able to locate, retrieve, organize, analyze, synthesize, and communicate information of relevance to the subject matter in the course;**

Students will focus throughout the course on academic, journalistic, and literary texts, working with these media to produce informed examples of critical thinking at work. The course will require three take-home essays, each undergoing peer- and instructor critique. The last take-home essay will feature informed discussion regarding research and analyses of published academic or professional perspective on a current, controversial issue. The essay will also feature MLA formatted citation. Toward achieving these goals, students will complete library-sponsored tutorials on information literacy and plagiarism, and complete assignments designed to hone their research and citation skills;

**SLO 8: Students should be able to reflect on past successes, failures and alternative strategies;**

All essay working drafts will receive written comment and critique through peer and instructor evaluations. Students will also receive a final evaluative critique upon revising their drafts for final submission

**The following Course Content Objectives are specific to GE Area A3:**

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

>Students will analyze, evaluate, and construct their own arguments or position papers about issues of diversity such as gender, class, ethnicity, and sexual orientation.

>Reasoning about other issues appropriate to the subject matter of the course shall also be presented, analyzed, evaluated, and constructed.

>All critical thinking classes should teach formal and informal methods for determining the validity of deductive reasoning and the strength of inductive reasoning, including a consideration of common fallacies in inductive and deductive reasoning.

>This course will require the use of qualitative reasoning skills in oral and written assignments. Substantial writing assignments will be integrated with critical thinking instruction. Writing will lead to the production of argumentative essays, with a minimum of 5000 words required. Students will receive frequent evaluations from the instructor. These evaluative comments will be substantive, addressing both the quality and form of writing.

**Assessment:** Student writing (including in-class essays, homework responses, working and final drafts of take-home essays) will be assessed for grammar, clarity, conciseness, and coherence. In accordance with the approved assessment plan, the course coordinator/department chair will summarize the assessment results according to the procedure for submitting courses for continuing certification in General Education.

**Assignments and Engagement:** Come to class with all texts assigned for that day. Students are expected to be fully conversant with materials to be discussed in class. Be sure to read carefully, with your college-level dictionary at hand for checking diction and definition.

**Quizzes and Homework (HW):** Expect quizzes based on the materials, instruction, and readings assigned for that day's work. They, along with in-class exercises, cannot be made up. All homework exercises are to be presented at the beginning of class, recorded in pen on filler paper only.

**Plagiarism and Cheating:** Plagiarism is the formal submission of another's ideas or words without providing conventional, explicit credit to her, him or them. Whether the work is published or not, bought or "borrowed," its uncredited use by another constitutes an act of plagiarism that will result in failure of this course. In addition, further administrative action through the Office of Academic Integrity, including formal recording of offense and recommendation regarding expulsion, will result.

**Research and consult: when in doubt, cite.**

**Academic Integrity:** Instances of academic dishonesty will not be tolerated. "Your commitment to learning, as evidenced by your enrollment at San Jose State University and the University's integrity policy, require you to be honest in all your academic coursework. Faculty members are required to report all infractions to the Office of Student conduct and Ethical Development." Students are expected to be familiar with the University's Academic Integrity Policy. Please review this at <http://www.sjsu.edu/senate/S07-2.htm>. Use of another's words or thoughts without appropriate acknowledgement of the author is an act of plagiarism. Detection of plagiarism or of cheating upon an exam will result in failure of the course and further University sanctions.

For this class, all assignments are to be completed by the individual enrolled student unless otherwise specified. "If you would like to include in your assignment any material you have submitted, or plan to submit for another class, please note that SJSU's Academic Policy F06-1 requires the approval of instructors."

**Dropping and Adding Classes:** Students are responsible for understanding the policies and procedures regarding add/drop, grade forgiveness, etc. Refer to the current semester's catalogue Policies section at <http://info.sjsu.edu/static/catalogue/policies.html>. Add/drop deadlines can be found on the current academic calendar webpage located at [http://info.sjsu.edu/academic\\_programs/calendars/academic\\_calendar/html](http://info.sjsu.edu/academic_programs/calendars/academic_calendar/html). The late Drop policy is available at <http://www.sjsu.edu/aars/policies/latedrops/policy/html>.

Students should be aware of the current deadlines and penalties for dropping classes. Information about the latest changes and news is available at the Advising Hub at <http://www.sjsu.edu/advising.html>.

**Campus Resources for Academic Assistance:**

The University Writing Center, located in Clark Hall, Suite 126, offers expert peer tutoring by appointment and drop-in formats.  
(408) 924-2308 <http://www.sjsu.edu/writingcenter>

SJSU Peer Connection, SSC 600, on the first floor, offers open tutoring on a regularly scheduled or drop-in basis in many subject areas. Register at their information desk during your first visit for access throughout the semester.  
(408) 924-2587 <http://peerconnections.sjsu.edu>

**Student Technology Resources:** Computer labs for student use are available in the new Academic Success Center, located on the 1<sup>st</sup> floor of Clark Hall, and on the second floor of the Student Union.

**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. Presidential Directive 97-03 requires that students with disabilities requesting accommodations must register with the Disabilities Resource Center (DRC) to establish a record of their disability. Special accommodations for exams require ample notice to the testing office, and must be submitted to the instructor well in advance of the exam date.

**Department of English and Comparative Literature Course Commitment:** In 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.

**The grade:** The Department of English and comparative Literature reaffirms its commitment to the differential grading scale as defined in the official SJSU Catalogue (“The Grading System”). Grades issued must represent a full range of student performance: A = excellent; B = above average; C = average; D = below average, and F = failure.

Grading for this course is A, B, C, D, and F. By university policy, a grade of C- or lower does not satisfy the GE requirement, although the grade will be recorded on your transcript, affect your GPA, and count toward the 120-unit graduation requirement. Grading will function on a 1000-point scale: 1000 through 970 =A+; 969 to 940 =A; 939 to 900 =A-; 899-870 =B+; 869-840 =B; 839-800 =B-; 799-770 =C+; 769-74 =C; 739-700 =C-, and so forth.

Essay 1 (600-word min.)	100 pts	Test 2 (w/ 500-wd. essay)	120 pts
Essay 2 (800-word min.)	100 pts	Test 3 (w/ 500-wd. essay)	120 “
Essay 3 (1400-word min.)	150 pts	HW, quizzes, in-class work	90 “
Test 1 (w/ 500-wd. essay)	120 pts	Participation	100 “
		Final Exam (700-wd. essay)	100 pts

**University statement regarding diversity:** Assignments (both reading and writing) shall address issues of race, class, and gender when appropriate, and the perspectives of women and diverse cultural groups shall be incorporated into course instruction and materials in an inclusive and comprehensive manner whenever possible.

**Course Content- Estimation of per-unit student workload:** Success in this course is based on the expectation that students will spend, for each unit of credit, a minimum of forty-five hours over the length of the course (normally three hours per unit per week with one of the hours used for lecture) for instruction or preparation/studying or course-related activities including but not limited to internships, labs, and clinical practica. Other course structures will have equivalent workload expectations as described in the syllabus.

**Note Well: Neither mere words on a page nor maintenance of normative body temperature in class will suffice in providing prerequisites for your success. One cannot succeed by participating on only a metaphysical level; vocal discussion and scholarly, active engagement are key integers in representing yourself professionally.**