***California State University***

***RS 204: Religion, Logic, and the Media***

### *Fall Semester 2016*

## *Instructor:* Mary Jane O'Donnell, Ph.D.

## *Ticket Number:* 19664

# *Course Day/Time:* Fridays/8:00-10:45 a.m.

***Classroom:*** Sierra Hall, Room 384

***Office Hours:*** F: 7:00-8:00 a.m. and 2:00 to 3:00 p.m.

***Office:*** Santa Susana Hall 229

***Telephone:*** 818-677-3940 (Office hours only)

## *Email:* mjod@csun.edu

***Course Description:*** This course introduces and encourages students in the use of the basic concepts of logic and critical reasoning. Using these concepts, students will gather, discuss, analyze, and critique material from broadcast, print, or Internet news sources on matters pertaining to religion. Our concern in analysis is not the truth of the statement or personal opinions about it, but rather the analysis of the formal structure of the example itself. This course satisfies the “Critical Thinking” requirement in General Education. A plus/minus grading system will be used.

***Student Learning Outcomes for RS 204:*** This course is intended to enable the student to attain the following outcomes:

* Explain and apply the basic concepts of deductive logic as a dimension of critical reasoning;
* Apply the principles of deductive logic to the critical analysis of statements made about religion in the news and entertainment media;
* Understand the historical and social contexts in which media misunderstand or distort statements made by or about religious groups or spokespersons.

***Student Learning Outcomes for General Education Requirement/Critical Thinking:***

1. Explain and apply the basic concepts essential to a critical examination and evaluation of argumentative discourse;

2. Use investigative and analytical thinking skills to examine alternatives, explore complex questions and solve challenging problems;

 3. Synthesize information in order to arrive at reasoned conclusions;

4. Evaluate the logic and validity of arguments, and the relevance of data and information.

 5. Recognize and avoid common logical and rhetorical fallacies.

***Goal:*** Students will analyze information and ideas carefully and logically from multiple perspectives and develop reasoned solutions to problems.

***Text:***

* *Critical Thinking*, Brooke Noel Moore and Richard Parker. 11th ed. McGraw-Hill, 2014.
* Student-selected examples of current news, analysis and opinion about religion from media sources for analysis.

***Information online:***

* **Elements and Standards of Critical Thinking Online Model:**

[**http://www.criticalthinking.org/courses/Elements\_standards\_model.cfm**](http://www.criticalthinking.org/courses/Elements_standards_model.cfm)

(Go to “Click to Open”)

**Possible Websites to use for research:**

**\*Los Angeles Times:** [**http://www.latimes.com/**](http://www.latimes.com/)

**\*New York Times:** [**http://www.nytimes.com/**](http://www.nytimes.com/)

**\*Washington Post:** [**http://www.washingtonpost.com/**](http://www.washingtonpost.com/)

**\*Newsweek:** [**http://www.newsweek.com/**](http://www.newsweek.com/)

**\*Time:** [**http://www.time.com/time/**](http://www.time.com/time/)

***\*****These websites now allow only limited access without a subscription. One way to make up for this is to use LexisNexis Academic on the Oviatt Library’s Website. This database allows you access to the most recent articles from major world publications, including newspapers, magazines, wire services, broadcast transcripts, and blogs. It also allows you to filter articles according to subject.*

**LexisNexis Academic:** [**http://www.lexisnexis.com.libproxy.csun.edu/hottopics/lnacademic/**](http://www.lexisnexis.com.libproxy.csun.edu/hottopics/lnacademic/)**?**

**Huffington Post:** [**http://www.huffingtonpost.com/religion/**](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/religion/)

**Reuters:** [**http://blogs.reuters.com/faithworld/**](http://blogs.reuters.com/faithworld/)

**World Religion News:** [**http://www.worldreligionnews.com**](http://www.worldreligionnews.com)

**Religion News Service:** [**http://www.religionnews.com**](http://www.religionnews.com)

**Patheos:** [**www.patheos.com**](http://www.patheos.com)

**Religion Dispatches:** [**http://religiondispatches.org**](http://religiondispatches.org)

**The Immanent Frame:** [**http://blogs.ssrc.org/tif/**](http://blogs.ssrc.org/tif/)

**Feminism and Religion:** [**http://feminismandreligion.com**](http://feminismandreligion.com)

**Religion and Politics:** [**http://religionandpolitics.org**](http://religionandpolitics.org)

**The Atlantic:** [**http://www.theatlantic.com**](http://www.theatlantic.com)

**USA Today:** [**http://www.usatoday.com/**](http://www.usatoday.com/)

**CNN:** [**http://religion.blogs.cnn.com**](http://religion.blogs.cnn.com)

**Fox News:** [**http://www.foxnews.com/us/religion/index.html**](http://www.foxnews.com/us/religion/index.html)

**National Review Online:** [**http://www.nationalreview.com**](http://www.nationalreview.com)

**NPR:** [**http://www.npr.org/**](http://www.npr.org/)

**The Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life:** [**http://pewforum.org/**](http://pewforum.org/)

**The Barna Group:** [**http://www.barna.org/**](http://www.barna.org/)

***And many more…***

***Instructor’s Office Hours:*** My office hours are posted above. I look forward to working with each of you in class and on an individual basis. Therefore, I urge you to take advantage of my office hours. I am happy to discuss any aspect of this course with you, and help you with the assignments. I especially urge you to see me if you are confused about the course or an assignment. Really successful students ask questions!

***Communication with Instructor:*** Please contact me by email, in class, or during office hours with your questions, comments, or requests. Although I have a phone in my office, I will only be available by phone during office hours (except if I am meeting with a student), and I am not assured of getting any messages left on the phone’s answering system. Again, I will be delighted to speak with you about your work in this class.

***Technological Information:*** This class will employ Moodle for student assignments and to provide students with access to media examples that will be presented in the course. It is your responsibility to learn how to use Moodle. For information and instructions about Moodle, go to: <http://www.csun.edu/it/student-moodle-help/>

***Course Assignments:***

* ***Reading:*** Students will read assigned portions of the texts for each class. All assignments must be read ***BEFORE*** class. The reading selections are listed in the Course Schedule;
* ***Quizzes:*** There will be eleven (11) quizzes, which will comprise 40% of your grade. YOU MUST BRING A SMALL SCANTRON FOR EACH. (If you do not have a Scantron, you will not be allowed to take the quiz). To determine your final grade I will average your ten best scores, which means you can either miss one quiz or do poorly on one quiz.
* ***Student Presentations****:* Students will work in groups assigned by the instructor to prepare a class presentation about a current issue in religion and to work together on assignments throughout the course. More detailed instructions may be found on the class’s Moodle site.
* ***Mid-Term and Final Exam:*** These exams will cover all material in the course up to the date of the exam.

***Course Requirements:***

* ***Attendance:*** Attendance is mandatory. Any absence must be excused in advance, or if that is not possible, must be accompanied by a documented explanation. If a student has two or more unexcused absences, the student’s grade will be lowered by 10%.
* ***Promptness:*** You must be on time for class.
* ***Preparation for Class:*** You must be fully prepared for each class. All assignments must be read prior to the class they are assigned, and all readings must be brought to class.
* ***Participation:*** You must fully participate in the class by asking/answering questions, fully participating in discussions, and fully engaging in any other activity of the class.
* ***Personal Needs:*** Please make sure you attend to your personal needs before or after the class. You may not leave during class.
* ***Technology***: No cell phones, texting, or Internet use during class. With permission you may use a computer or tablet for classwork.
* ***Academic Honesty:*** Any evidence of plagiarism or cheating will result in a failing grade, certainly for the item plagiarized, but also for the course.

***Grading: Plus-Minus System will be used***

* Class participation and attendance: 10%
* Eleven Quizzes (only 10 counted): 40%
* Mid-Term and Final Exam: 40% (20% each)
* Class Presentation and Group Work: 10%

***Letter Grades:***

* 95-100 A
* 90-94 A-
* 87-89 B+
* 83-86 B
* 80-82 B-
* 77-79 C+
* 73-76 C
* 70-72 C-
* 60-69 D

***Course Schedule:***

***Week 1: September 2***

* Introduction

***Week 2: September 9***

* Chapter 1: What is Critical Thinking?
* Quiz #1

***Week 3: September 16***

* Chapter 2: Two Kinds of Reasoning
* Quiz #2

***Week 4: September 23***

* Chapter 3: Clear Thinking, Critical Thinking and Clear Writing
* Quiz #3

***Week 5: September 30***

* Chapter 4: Credibility
* Quiz #4

## *Week 6: October 7*

* Chapter 5: Rhetoric, the Art of Persuasion
* Quiz #5

***Week 7: October 14***

* Chapter 6: Relevance Fallacies
* Quiz #6

***Week 8: October 21***

* Mid-Term Prep
* Mid-Term

***Week 9: October 28***

* Chapter 7: Induction Fallacies
* Quiz #7

***Week 10: November 4***

* Chapter 8: Formal Fallacies and Fallacies of Language
* Quiz #8

***Week 11: November 11***

* No Class: Veterans’ Day

***Week 12: November 18***

* Chapter 9: Deductive Arguments/Categorical Logic
* Quiz #9

***Week 13: November 25***

* No Class: Thanksgiving Holiday

## *Week 14: December 2*

* Chapter 11: Inductive Reasoning
* Quiz #10

***Week 15: December 9***

* Chapter 12: Moral, Legal, and Aesthetic Reasoning
* Quiz #11

***Week 16: December 16***

* Final Exam: 8:00 to 10:00 am

***Important to note:*** This syllabus is subject to change. I will make every effort to notify you in advance about any changes.

***DRES:*** If you have a disability and need accommodations, please register with the Disability Resources and Educational Services (DRES) office or the National Center on Deafness (NCOD). The DRES office is located in Bayramian Hall, room 110 and can be reached at 818-677-2684. NCOD is located on Bertrand Street in Jeanne Chisholm Hall and can be reached at 818-677-2611. If you would like to discuss your need for accommodations with me, please contact me to set up an appointment.