

Psychology 13: PSYCHOLOGY of REASONING & PROBLEM SOLVING CRITICAL THINKING in PSYCHOLOGY

Fall 2011, Ticket 65615
Tuesday & Thursday, 9:30 – 10:45 A.M. (3 Units)

1 Course INSTRUCTOR

Michael Cassens

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Office Hours: Mon, Tues, Wed, Thurs: 11:30 A.M. – 12:30 P.M.
Wed: 6:00 – 7:00 P.M.

2 Course MATERIALS

Smith, J. C. (2010). *Pseudoscience and Extraordinary Claims of the Paranormal: A Critical Thinker's Toolkit*. Wiley-Blackwell: Malden, MA. (ISBN: 978-1-4051-8122-8)

Web pages

Some materials including announcements, PowerPoint slideshows, and additional reading, viewing, or listening materials may be made available via the class web page on the Blackboard website at:

<https://soccdd.blackboard.com/webapps/login/>

If you're having problems getting started with Blackboard, click the "Need Help" button on the Blackboard website. Your login should be the first part of your IVC email address (e.g. mcassens1) and the password should be your registration PIN number (or the last four digits of your social security) followed by two zeros (e.g. 646500). If you're still having difficulty, come talk to me.

3 Course DESCRIPTION

This course has one principle goal: to familiarize you with the process of **THINKING CRITICALLY** about the world in which we live. This will involve a firm understanding of the science of psychology. A *science* requires adherence to the *scientific method*, and the scientific method requires that one obtain *empirical evidence* to support or refute *testable theories*. I hope to persuade you that psychology is both interesting and vital - and that it is a key to understanding yourself, those around you, and the world in general, therefore thinking critically about psychology becomes of the utmost importance.

Upon completion of this course, the student will be able to:

1. Identify and contrast the biases and inherent assumptions behind controversial statements.
2. Explain and demonstrate the skills needed to be a critical consumer of information.
3. Recognize the difference between an observation and an inference.
4. Use standards of evidence derived from the scientific method to analyze and evaluate the quality of evidence presented in an argument.
5. Recognize and explain the dynamics of at least five different techniques of persuasion and propaganda.
6. Illustrate and apply appropriate strategies and models for solving problems.
7. Explain and distinguish among several strategies and models for decision making.
8. Distinguish belief from knowledge.

4 Class REQUIREMENTS

Final Exam (25% of total grade)

The final exam will be held on Thursday, December 15, 2011. The final exam will be a cumulative closed book, closed-notes essay exam. It will cover information from the textbook, readings, discussions and lecture. You will need a Blue/Green Book for the final exam.

NOTE: You are encouraged to submit all written assignments electronically using the drop boxes in Blackboard.

Reaction Papers to the required readings (11% of total grade)

You are required to read the assigned text readings *before* class. You are to write a personal reaction of at least 300 words to each assigned reading to be posted or turned in at the beginning of the class meeting when that topic will be discussed. These reaction papers should be about something in the readings that you found to be of particular interest, or something with which you made a connection. Personal stories are fine, but make sure you stick to the topics. *I do NOT want a summary of the readings.* There will be 11 sets of readings in the textbook that we will be covering (some sets include more than one chapter), and each paper will be worth 1% of the total grade. Late or short reaction papers will receive half credit.

Discussion Article Analysis (12% of total grade)

Throughout the class, we will have 12 group discussions based on a wide variety of topics (see schedule). For each discussion, you are required to find at least one peer-reviewed journal article from the scientific literature that is related to that discussion's topic. Further, you are required to write a summary and analysis of at least 300 words on the article you found. You will post or turn in your analysis by the beginning of class on the day of the discussion. There will be 12 group discussions and each analysis will be worth 1% of the total grade. Late or short analyses will receive half credit.

Discussion Participation (12% of total grade)

After you have located a related article for each discussion, you are required to participate in an informed discussion of the topic with your classmates. Group members will each grade one another on their preparedness and participation (with roles changing each session to keep things honest). I will insert myself into a number of the groups each session. Your grade each discussion day will be the averaged score for participation across all of your group members - yourself included. At the end of the class, all groups will come together to report what they saw as the "take-home message" for the day. Your informed verbal contributions to the discussions will each be worth 1% of your grade.

The Belief vs. Knowledge Paper (35% of total grade)

You are required to write a 7 to 10 page (2100 to 3000 word) paper on a myth, paranormal belief, or pseudoscience. I will provide you with many options of commonly held false beliefs (like autism is caused by immunizations or sugar causes children to be hyperactive), although you are welcome to come up with your own as well. Your paper should include a history of the myth/belief (attempting to explain why it may be commonly held) including resources suggesting its validity along with a critical analysis of the arguments of the believers. Further, you should cover why the belief is incorrect, and what the truth of the matter is including support from scientific sources. You must include a minimum of FIVE (5) SCHOLARLY sources (and as many non-scientific sources as you like including websites, magazines, or newspapers). Your Belief vs. Knowledge Paper is due at the end of class on Tuesday, December 6, 2011. Critiques will devalue by 5% for each day they are late.

In-Class Presentation of the Belief vs. Knowledge Paper (5% of total grade)

After completing your Belief vs. Knowledge Paper, you are required to teach the class about what you learned in your research. Over the last few classes in the semester, there is time designated as presentation times. The presentations will be presented in a "Speed Report" format where each student will have *exactly* three (3) minutes and one (1) Power Point slide to report your findings. To receive the full credit, you must speak intelligently about your paper's findings for *exactly 3 minutes using 1 slide*. I encourage you to be as creative as you can to report the knowledge about your myth in a short amount of time.

Summary of class requirements:

Reaction Papers	11%
Discussion Article Analysis	12%
Discussion Participation	12%
Belief vs. Knowledge Paper	35%
Presentation of Paper	5%
Final Exam	<u>25%</u>
	100%

When:

Due each lecture (see schedule below)
Due each discussion
Graded at each discussion
Due Thursday, December 6
Last three class meetings
Thursday, December 15

5 Academic HONESTY

Cheating and other forms of dishonest behavior are destructive to the educational process for all students, and will not be tolerated in this class. As a result, the following guidelines shall be followed:

1. Students may not submit work that is not totally their own, and
2. Exams must be taken individually with no assistance of any kind.
 - A. There will be no bathroom breaks during an exam
 - B. All electronic devices will be sealed in a provided envelope during an exam
 - C. No hats are to be worn during an exam
 - D. Dictionaries can ONLY be used during an exam under direct observation from me. No electronic dictionaries are allowed during an exam.

If you do not comply with these testing conditions, please drop this class immediately.

Any student engaged in ANY dishonest behaviors may receive an "F" on the activity, and may be reported to the Dean of Student Services. If I suspect that you are cheating, I will assume that you are cheating. If you would like more information on the academic honesty policies of Irvine Valley College, please refer to page 68 in the 2011-2012 Course Catalogue.

Code of Conduct. Irvine Valley College policy states that electronic communications conducted in the course web site are "public" communications in the same way that classroom exchanges are public. Your instructors and other students are bound by the same principles of respect, professionalism, and concern, in College classrooms, offices, and the course website. If you feel that these principles have been compromised in some way, please discuss this directly with your instructors, and in the case of this class, with me.

6 *Campus RESOURCES*

There are a wide variety of services that you are entitled to as tuition-paying students at Irvine Valley College. Some of them may be important to you as they relate to this course.

Counseling Center, Location: SC210; **949-451-5251**

Counseling services at Irvine Valley College exist to help students with their academic, career, and personal concerns. The counseling faculty help students clarify their needs, make decisions, set goals, and deal effectively with personal obstacles. The relationship between student and counselor is confidential. They offer academic planning, career exploration, and personal counseling.

Disabled Students Program and Services (DSP&S), Location: SC171; **949-451-5630**

The goal of DSP&S is to provide effective assistance to all students with disabilities so they can achieve academic success. Whether the student has a physical, communicative, learning or psychological disability, the program functions primarily to accommodate the disability, enabling each individual to participate fully in the educational experience at the college.

Extended Opportunity Program Services (EOPS), Location: SC 130; **949-451-5243**

EOPS is a state funded program for students who are financially and educationally disadvantaged. At Irvine Valley College, **EOPS** works to help students succeed by providing educational opportunities, encouragement, and support services. Reaching educational goals may seem difficult sometimes. We are committed to assisting our students in realizing their potential.

Health and Wellness Center, Location: SC 150; **949-451-5221**

The Health and Wellness Center offers free medical services to any student who has paid their health fee and is currently attending classes. These include psychological services, which are provided by counseling interns under the supervision of a licensed psychologist. Services provided include addressing the following issues: Stress, Anxiety, Depression, Family issues, Difficulty adjusting to school environment, Drug or alcohol abuse, Difficulty focusing, Grief, Relationship issues, and Acculturation issues. Again, these services are FREE!

IVC Campus Police Department, Location: CP-100; **949-451-5234**

The campus police station is located beyond Lot 8 on the perimeter road near the baseball fields. Please call them for any emergency that you might encounter on campus. In addition, Campus Police Officers will provide assistance in starting vehicles with dead batteries and help on-campus motorists in obtaining lockout or other assistance. Further, they offer escort services 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

7 *Class POLICIES*

1) *Electronics in the Classroom... Turn off your electronic devices!*

It is very disruptive if phones go off in class, so please show respect to your classmates and instructor and turn them off before coming in to class.

Additionally, laptop computers may ONLY be used in class as a note-taking strategy. Do not use them for *any* other reason during class. Before you are allowed to use a laptop in a class, you must register with me and sign an agreement that you will only use it for classroom purposes. Further, if you wish to use a laptop in class you MUST sit in the front row. If you use electronic devices for non-class related purposes, you may be excused from class and have your grade reduced. Your classmates will act as "The Laptop Police" and can report your inappropriate behavior for extra credit.

2) *Drop Policy... It's YOUR responsibility!*

Please be aware that the only time I definitely will drop you is if you fail to show up for the first week's class sessions without notification (in which case you are probably not reading this). I may drop you for excessive absences, but ultimately it is YOUR responsibility to drop the class. Do not assume that I will drop you... ever. It is your responsibility.

3) *Class Conduct... Participate in class! (And always respect others).*

Part of your grade in this class is based on your participation in classroom discussions. At the end of this class, I am hoping that you, the students, will be doing more talking in the class than I. That being said, I feel it is very important to remind everyone that our classroom will be a safe environment where you are welcome to discuss any relevant aspect of the topic, just so long as your comments maintain a high level of respect for everyone else in the room. Students are responsible for regulating their own conduct and for respecting the rights and privileges of others. Failure to show respect for the standards as set forth by the SOCCCD is cause for dismissal from class and even expulsion (please see page 88 of the 2011-2012 Course Catalogue for more details on the code of conduct).

4) *Show up on time!*

This class begins at 9:30 A.M. Please make a point of being ready to engage in a discussion at 9:30 so we do not lose any time. There may be more to talk about than time in the course, so it is important that we maximize our meetings.

5) *Don't let yourself fall off the truck!*

This class will cover a wide variety of often inter-related topics with a healthy amount of reading and research required each week. It's easy to get left behind if you stop reading. Don't let it happen! DO NOT STOP READING! Come see me if you need help! I am here to help you.

6) *COME SEE ME IF YOU ARE HAVING ANY PROBLEMS!*

I try to make myself as available (and approachable) as possible to you, my students, so please come see me if you want, or need, to talk about something related to the course.

"The plan is useless, but the planning is indispensable."

~ Dwight D. Eisenhower

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8 *The PLAN*

	Date	Title	Readings/Reaction Due
Tue	Aug 23	Syllabus / Introductions	
Thur	Aug 25	Credible Sources: How to Find "Good" Information	Chapter 1
Tue	Aug 30	What is Critical Thinking and Why Study It?	Chapter 2
Thur	Sept 1	The Scientific Method: How to Ask Empirical Questions	
Tue	Sept 6	Biased Samples	
Thur	Sept 8	Terminological Confusion	
Tue	Sept 13	<i>Discussion #1: Operational Definitions and You</i>	
Thur	Sept 15	Converging Evidence and Interactions (No quick fixes or easy answers)	
Tue	Sept 20	<i>Discussion #2: The Temptation of Single Causes (and Social Influence)</i>	
Thur	Sept 22	<i>Discussion #3: Why Are You Attracted to the Person You Are Attracted To?</i>	
Tue	Sept 27	Are the Sources Credible	Chapter 3
Thur	Sept 29	<i>Discussion #4: Bad Psych (Misleading Films or Books)</i>	
Tue	Oct 4	<i>Discussion #5: Astrology</i>	
Thur	Oct 6	Is the Logic Valid and Sound?	Chapter 4
Tue	Oct 11	Movie Day! (The Secret)	
Thur	Oct 13	<i>Discussion #6: The Secret Secret of The Secret</i>	
Tue	Oct 18	Are Claims Based on Observation?	Chapter 5
Thur	Oct 20	<i>Discussion #7: Aliens Live!</i>	
Tue	Oct 25	Oddities of Nature and Statistical Outliers	Chapter 6
Thur	Oct 27	<i>Discussion #8: Vaccines and Autism</i>	
Tue	Nov 1	Perceptual Errors and Trickery	Ch. 7 & 12
Thur	Nov 3	<i>Discussion #9: ESP and Speaking to the Dead</i>	
Tue	Nov 8	Memory Errors	Chapter 8
Thur	Nov 10	<i>Discussion #10: The Memory Wars!</i>	
Tue	Nov 15	The Placebo Effect	Chapter 9
Thur	Nov 17	<i>Discussion #11: The War FOR Drugs (Antidepressants)</i>	
Tue	Nov 22	Sensory Anomalies and Hallucinations	Ch. 10 & 11
Thur	Nov 24	NO CLASS: THANKSGIVING	
Tue	Nov 29	<i>Discussion #12: Hypnosis, Dreams, & Out-of-body Experiences (Oh My!)</i>	
Thur	Dec 1	Bringing It All Together: Critical Thinking and Popular Myths	Ch. 13 - 16
Tue	Dec 6	Presentations	
Thur	Dec 8	Presentations	
Tue	Dec 13	Presentations	
Thur	Dec 15	<i>Final Exam (cumulative)</i>	