

The University of Findlay
College of Liberal Arts
Fall Semester 2011

The Mission of the University is to equip our students for meaningful lives and productive careers.

Course Number/Title: PSYC 310-01 **Studies in Behavior: Critical Thinking About Weird Things**

Credit Hours: 3

Class Time/Place: M/W/F 10:00 -10:50 MAIN 216

Prerequisites: PSYC 100 or permission of the instructor

Course Description

This course examines the key issues associated with the scientific study of critical thinking. Although it's common to see courses on critical thinking in many domains (e.g. education & philosophy) the scientific examination of what critical thinking is and how it relates to problem solving is exclusively an advanced topic in cognitive science. Cognitive science is concerned with the study of the "thinking mind" and when we talk about "critical thinking" we base our examination on the hypothesis that while it's true that everyone "thinks" it's not true that everyone "thinks well". At the core of this class is the idea that we can all fall prey to bad thinking strategies. It is my hope that you will learn how to be a critical thinker when dealing with a variety of situations, as well as learn how to tell the difference between science and pseudoscience. We will focus primarily on how to think about weird situations, but if you can master the skills needed to effectively evaluate strange phenomena (e.g. UFOs) you can easily apply these skills to less bizarre situations (e.g. Will eating "Cheerios" really help lower cholesterol?). By the conclusion of this course you should be able to find answers for yourself, because we all know "The Truth Is Out There", and with good critical thinking skills you will be more likely to find it.



Instructor:

Evelyn M. Buday, Ph.D.

OFFICE: 200 Howard Room E

PHONE: 419-434-4523

E-MAIL: buday@ findlay.edu

Office Hours:

Monday 2 – 3:30 Wednesday 11 – 12:30 Friday 11 – 12:30
Tuesday 11 – 12:30 Thursday 11 – 12:30

Or By Appointment

Please do not hesitate to stop by my office if you are experiencing difficulties or if you just want to chat about the course. The office hours I have scheduled mean you can GUARANTEE that I will be there during those times (unless there's an emergency). If these times are not convenient for you, I will be more than happy to schedule an appointment that is mutually convenient.

Relationship to the Conceptual Framework

This course reflects the overriding missions of the College of Liberal Arts and the Department of Psychology in terms of:

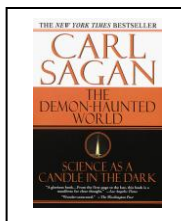
- * Preparing you for a life of critical thinking, cultural awareness, and service.
- * Providing you with an understanding of the science of human behavior.
- * Demonstrating how the science of critical thinking and problem solving applies to diverse settings.

Course Objectives

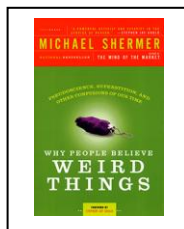
Upon completion of this course students will be able to:

1. Demonstrate scientific reading, and writing skills.
2. Apply the science of critical thinking to unique situations.
3. Discuss specific critical thinking & problem solving topics in depth.
4. Understand the biological bases of behavior and mental processes.
5. Use theories to explain and predict behavior and mental processes.

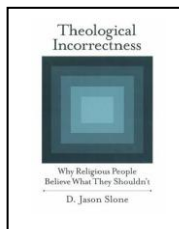
Required Textbooks & Other Materials



The Demon-Haunted World: Science as a Candle in the Dark
(1997)
Sagan, C.
ISBN-13: 978-0345409461



Why People Believe Weird Things
(2002)
Shermer, M.
ISBN-13: 978-0805070897



Theological Incorrectness: Why Religious People Believe What They Shouldn't
(2007)
Slone, D. J.
ISBN-13: 978-0195335613

All other class materials including lecture Power Points and research articles will be available on our class Blackboard web page. It is your responsibility to download and copy the materials before each class. All materials will be available on the web page by 10:00pm the night before class. I will not slow the class discussion down for those of you who do not come prepared with the lecture slides and handouts. Your official email address with this course is your Findlay email. In the event that I need to contact the class, I will do so ONLY through the Blackboard class email list. Failure to activate your Blackboard access is no excuse for lack of materials, and the longer you neglect to access your account the more detrimental it will be to your grade.

Instructional Strategies for Critical Thinking About Weird Things:

Case Analysis	+	Library and Internet Research	+
Debate		Practice/drill	
Discovery/Independent Research	+	Problem solving	+
Discussion/Questioning/Interviewing	+	Reading assignments	+
Experiential Learning	+	Role playing/simulation games	
Field Experience		Service Learning	
Group Presentation	+	Video/Audio Review and Critique	+
Laboratory Experiences		Other	
Lecture	+		

Methods of Assessment for Critical Thinking About Weird Things:

Abstracts		Participation	+
Attendance		Peer Evaluation	
Capstone Project		Portfolio	
Case Study	+	Portfolio Lab Performance	
Exams	+	Presentations	+
Group Projects	+	Professional Evaluation	
Homework Assignments		Quizzes	
Internet Research		Research project	+
Journaling		Other	
Lab Performance			
Oral/written review of literature	+		

Grading

Your grade in this course will be based on:

1. Two 50 minute **EXAMS** worth 100 points each. All of the exams will be closed notes, and involve some combination of definition, short answer, and essay.
2. Five **CRITICAL THINKING CHALLENGES** worth 20 points each. Throughout the semester I will “conjure up” several activities for you to investigate. Each activity will involve some amount of legwork on your part (e.g. collecting data on a questionnaire), the results of which will be discussed in class. On “CT Challenge” days, everyone will be required to present his or her findings to the class. Your grade will be based on the quality of your investigation and how well you contributed to the discussion. If you miss class, 10 points will be deducted from your “CT Challenge” grade.
3. Twelve **MINI-BOOK DISCUSSIONS** worth 20 points each. At the beginning of the semester each of you will sign-up to lead one 50 minute book discussion of a section of one of the three books on the required reading list. The discussion group leader’s grade will be based on the quality of questions asked of the class. The remainder of the class will earn a group grade based on the quality of the discussion and the number of students contributing to the discussion. If you miss a book discussion that you are not leading, you must submit a three page (double-spaced) summary of the book section no later than the next scheduled class period. If you miss a book discussion that you are leading for any reason other than a documented emergency, you must submit a ten page (double-spaced) summary of the book section with a list of detailed questions for discussion that you create yourself. This summary is due 12 hours prior to the day your book discussion was to occur.

- One **WEIRD THING PAPER** worth 100 points. The purpose of this paper is to allow you the opportunity to demonstrate how to critically evaluate a claim using the SEARCH formula for inquiry illustrated in class. Your grade will be based on depth of inquiry, organization and quality of conclusion. Potential topics for your paper as well as general instructions will be discussed in class.
- One **WEIRD THING PRESENTATION** worth 25 points. Our final exam day will be devoted to oral presentations of each of the topics investigated. Each presentation should be approximately 10 minutes in length. General guidelines for the oral presentation will be presented in class.

Grading Scale Distribution

The grading scale is as follows

A: 95% - 100%	B+: 87% - 89%	C+: 77% - 79%	D+: 67% - 69%
A-: 90% - 94%	B: 83% - 86%	C: 73% - 76%	D: 63% - 66%
	B-: 80% - 82%	C-: 70% - 72%	D-: 60% - 62%
			F: Below 60%

Honor Code

I will not knowingly engage in any dishonorable behavior, cheat, steal, lie or commit any act of plagiarism during my academic work, course, or endeavor. If I observe an act which I believe violates the University's Honor Code, I may, in my discretion, report it to the appropriate personnel.

Student Honor Code

"I acknowledge that I have fully complied or will comply with all aspects of the University's Honor Code in submitting this work."

Student Rights and Responsibilities Statement, Article VIII-Academic Dishonesty:

<http://www.findlay.edu/offices/adminoffices/registrar/Student+Rights+and+Responsibilities/studentrightsandresponsibilitiesstatement.htm>

Course Policies & Practices

Attendance:

I will be taking attendance, and it will be imperative that you make a commitment to miss as few of classes as possible. Late assignments and missed exams will be substantially penalized unless illness or other emergency has been documented by the Health Center or the Dean of Students Office. It will be your responsibility to get any notes from another student in the class pertaining to material covered in your absence. Students missing a significant number of classes without an acceptable excuse will have their final grade lowered.

Any films or film clips (whether identified on the schedule or not) shown in class will NOT be available for you to view outside of class. You may request a review of the film you missed in class within one week following the date it was shown in class & ONLY during my office hours. Otherwise, you will need to find another student willing to share their notes with you.

Use of Electronic Devices in Class:

Absolutely no electronic devices are permitted in class with the exception of a laptop computer (and then ONLY for class purposes). If you violate this policy you will be required to leave class immediately. You will also not be permitted to make up any missed lecture notes, activities, or assignments covered that day.

The use of an electronic device of ANY kind during an exam constitutes an honor code violation and will result in a grade of zero and the filing of an academic misconduct report. Possession of the device ALONE constitutes evidence of academic misconduct, however, I also reserve the right to immediately confiscate the device until such a time that the appropriate information regarding your honor code violation can be retrieved from it. Any examination of the device will be done under the Dean of Student's supervision with or without your presence. If your device cannot be freely accessed you will be required to provide the necessary access passwords. If it is discovered that you tampered with your device from a remote location after it was confiscated as evidence, further misconduct charges could apply. If you violate this policy I am also not responsible for any damage to, or loss of your device while under my care.

Following a violation of this policy, you will lose class laptop computer privileges and you will be required to sit in the front row using nothing but a writing instrument and paper in order to take notes. In addition you will be required to compose a two page (double-spaced, Times New Roman 12 pt font, standard margins) paper justifying why your decision to violate this policy was more important to you than attending to the information presented in class. The paper must be sent to me (as an attached file) within one week following the policy violation with your advisor cc'd on the email. Failure to submit the paper or to complete it to my satisfaction will result up to 20 points deducted from your totals points at the conclusion of the semester.

Should you need to have access to your device for personal reasons during a specific class, you must first obtain permission from me. In addition, you must also make sure the settings and your use of the device will not disrupt the class.

Academic Honesty:

Please note that I will enforce the rules regarding academic honesty to the fullest. This applies to unacknowledged assistance on all written work including exams. The assumption is that any work for which you have placed your name and turned it in to me for credit is completely your own. Ignorance regarding what constitutes plagiarism or cheating is no excuse. Prior to any exam, you may be required to turn over to me any cell phones or electronic devices. No rubber bands will be permitted on wrists. Hats with brims must be worn backwards at all times during the exam.

Late Assignments

Late assignments will have 10% of the possible points deducted per day late. No assignments will be accepted more than 5 calendar days late; assignments more than 5 days late receive a grade of 0 (zero).

Makeup Tests

No makeup tests are permitted for a missed exam unless documented proof of an emergency is provided. For non-emergency situations (e.g. athletic events) you must notify me at least one week prior to the scheduled exam date and I will make arrangements for you to take the exam before the rest of the class. Failure to arrange a time for the exam prior to your absence will result in a grade of 0 (zero).

Discussion of Graded Assignments

I am more than happy to discuss (during office hours, not via email) the details of a grade you received on any exam or assignment, however, you must first review the exam or assignment with your class notes and then compose a type written response detailing your question or argument before I will discuss your grade. You can either send me an email with your response before my office hours, or simply bring it (along with your exam) with you. As long as you're coming to scheduled office hours you don't need to make an appointment. I adopted this policy in order better serve you, and to make my office hours more efficient. If you take the time to review your argument first, this policy also reduces the likelihood that you could say something in anger that you may later regret.

Final Exam Date

The final exam must be taken at the time scheduled by the University. Exceptions to this rule are granted only with approval of the Dean of the College of Liberal Arts.

FINAL EXAM
Monday December 12, 2011
12:00–1:50

Special Services

If you are a student with a disability, it is your responsibility to inform your instructor and register with the Office of Disability Services (ods@findlay.edu) at least one week prior to a needed service so reasonable accommodations can be made.

Course Instructor Evaluation

Each student is expected to complete the course and instructor evaluation which is sent electronically to the student by the Office of the Registrar. The electronic notification comes in the form of an e-mail from the UF Registrar's Office with the following subject line: Online survey for the designated course (e.g., PSYC 301).

Last Date of Attendance Policy

In order to comply with federal student loan regulations, the last day of official attendance will be determined for this course based on the last assignment you completed whether that is an exam, assignment or required book discussion. Merely attending this class without completing the course work will not be sufficient for maintaining your status as a full or part-time student with respect to any current or previous federal student loans you may have.

Additional Information

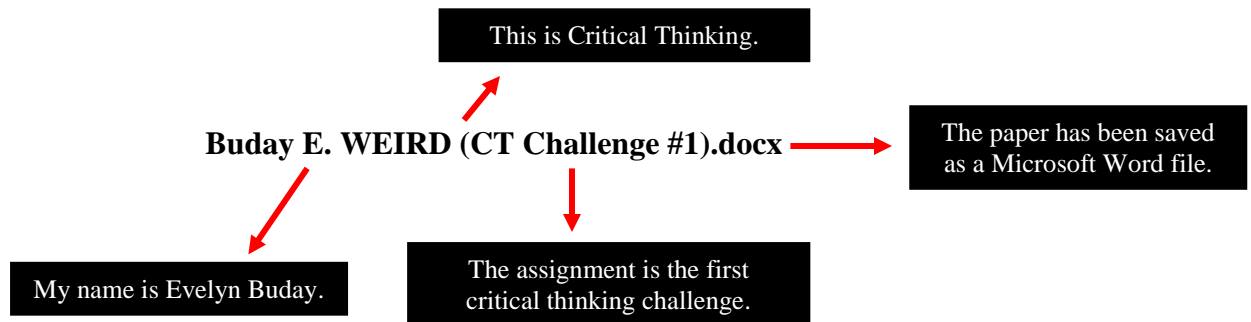
Unless specified otherwise, all documents must be submitted in Microsoft Office formats with the appropriate file extensions. Accepted formats are Microsoft Word (doc or docx), Microsoft Excel (xls orxlsx), and Microsoft PowerPoint (ppt or pptx). Microsoft Office is installed on all computers in the UF computer labs. If you do not have Microsoft Office on your personal computer, a full copy (Word, Excel, PowerPoint, Access, and Outlook) may be purchased in the bookstore for \$45.

All written work with the exception of exams will be submitted electronically as attached files. Prior to grading, all papers will be submitted to SafeAssign to check for academic dishonesty. SafeAssign reports with more than 5% lifted and material will be automatically be assigned a grade of zero. No more than 5% of your paper may contain direct quotations. You will not get a chance to rewrite the assignment. Failure to comprehend what constitutes plagiarism or cheating is no excuse.

On days when papers are due I must have your electronic submission **BEFORE** class begins or your paper will considered late. All graded papers will be returned to you electronically within one week of submission.

ELECTRONIC PAPER SUBMISSION INSTRUCTIONS

1. Save your paper as a word document (.doc or .docx) with your last name & first initial followed by the word code for the class (**WEIRD**) and the word code for the assignment (this will be given with each paper assignment). Each file should look similar to the following example:



2. Attach the file to an e-mail message to buday@findlay.edu. For the subject heading include the same title as you created for the document. The format of your message should look similar to the following:

To...

Cc...

Subject:

Attached:

3. Within 24 hours of receiving your paper, I will reply back to your original message with the following:
Thanks for your paper!

This will serve as your receipt. **DO NOT DELETE THIS MESSAGE.** If you do not receive a receipt reply e-mail message from me within 24 hours after your submission it is your responsibility to contact me IMMEDIATELY. Failure to contact me regarding a lost electronic submission by noon the day after the paper is due will result in late points deducted.

SCHEDULE

The following schedule is tentative. Exam dates, as well as topics to be covered are subject to change. It is your responsibility to attend class in order to keep yourself apprised of any changes.

WEEK #1

TOPIC: An Introduction to Weird

Aug. 22 (Mon) Syllabus
Aug. 24 (Wed) Thinking About College
Aug. 26 (Fri) What is a Skeptic?

WEEK #2

TOPIC: Cognitive Science & Critical Thinking

Aug. 29 (Mon) How Does Science Study Thinking?
Aug. 31 (Wed) How Does Science Measure Thinking?
Sept. 2 (Fri) **BOOK DISCUSSION #1: SHERMER (Ch.1-Ch.3)**

WEEK #3

TOPIC: What is Truth?

Sept. 5 (Mon) **NO CLASS**
Sept. 7 (Wed) Informal Fallacies
Sept. 9 (Fri) Encounters with the Strange

WEEK #4

TOPIC: The Possibility of the Impossible

Sept. 12 (Mon) The Paranormal
Sept. 14 (Wed) Appealing to Ignorance
Sept. 16 (Fri) **BOOK DISCUSSION #2: SHERMER (Ch.4-Ch.8)**

WEEK #5

TOPIC: Truth & Personal Experiences

Sept.19 (Mon) Problems with Personal Experiences
Sept. 21 (Wed) Coincidence
Sept. 23 (Fri) **CT CHALLENGE DISCUSSION #1**

WEEK #6

TOPIC: Truth & Personal Experiences

Sept. 26 (Mon) Denying Evidence
Sept. 28 (Wed) Bias & Error in Thinking
Sept. 30 (Fri) **BOOK DISCUSSION #3: SHERMER (Ch.9-Ch.11)**

WEEK #7

TOPIC: Truth & Reality

Oct. 3 (Mon) Socially Constructed Reality
Oct. 5 (Wed) Belief vs. Evidence
Oct. 7 (Fri) **CT CHALLENGE DISCUSSION #2**

WEEK #8

TOPIC: Why an Unexamined Life is not Worth Living

Oct. 10 (Mon) **NO CLASS**
Oct. 12 (Wed) **EXAM I**
Oct. 14 (Fri) **BOOK DISCUSSION #4: SHERMER (Ch.12-Ch.15)**

WEEK #9

TOPIC: Good Bad & Weird Arguments

Oct. 17 (Mon) Claims & Arguments
Oct. 19 (Wed) Faulty Premises
Oct. 21 (Fri) **BOOK DISCUSSION #5: SHERMER (Ch.16-Ch.18)**

WEEK #10

TOPIC: Science & Its Pretenders
Oct. 24 (Mon) Science & Dogma
Oct. 26 (Wed) **CT CHALLENGE DISCUSSION #3**
Oct. 28 (Fri) **BOOK DISCUSSION #6: SAGAN (Ch.1-Ch.5)**

WEEK #11

TOPIC: Science & Its Pretenders
Oct. 31 (Mon) The SEARCH Formula
Nov. 2 (Wed) **CT CHALLENGE DISCUSSION #4**
Nov. 4 (Fri) **BOOK DISCUSSION #7: SAGAN (Ch.6-Ch.10)**

WEEK #12

TOPIC: Science & Its Pretenders
Nov. 7 (Mon) Scientific Methodology
Nov. 9 (Wed) **CT CHALLENGE DISCUSSION #5**
Nov. 11 (Fri) **BOOK DISCUSSION #8: SAGAN (Ch.11-Ch.15)**

WEEK #13

TOPIC: Science & Its Pretenders
Nov. 14 (Mon) Confirming Hypotheses
Nov. 16 (Wed) Criteria of Adequacy
Nov. 18 (Fri) **BOOK DISCUSSION #9: SAGAN (Ch.16-Ch.20)**

WEEK #14

TOPIC: On Being Thankful for Science
Nov. 21 (Mon) **BOOK DISCUSSION #10: SAGAN (Ch.21-Ch.25)**
Nov. 23 (Wed) **NO CLASS**
Nov. 25 (Fri) **NO CLASS**

WEEK #15

TOPIC: Creationism, Evolution & Criteria of Adequacy
Nov. 28 (Mon) Scientific Creationism
Nov. 30 (Wed) Intelligent Design
Dec. 2 (Fri) **BOOK DISCUSSION #11: SLONE (Ch.1-Ch.3)**

WEEK #16

TOPIC: A Weird Take Home Message
Dec. 5 (Mon) Tips for Applying Weird Thinking
Dec. 7 (Wed) **EXAM II**
Dec. 9 (Fri) **BOOK DISCUSSION #12: SLONE (Ch.4-Ch.6 + Conclusion)**

WEEK #17**FINAL EXAM**

December 12 (Monday)

12:00 – 1:50