



EL CAMINO COLLEGE

El Camino College Distance Education Course Information

Course Title: Critical Thinking and Discourse

Section(s): 4179

Orientation Meeting On Campus:

There is no campus orientation. However, all students are required to **check in by 5 pm Tuesday, February 16, 2010, to my email below, to confirm your intention to remain in the course.** Remember – the budget situation in California means that classes are filling earlier and many are looking to add classes; I *must* hear from you by the time mentioned above to save your spot in the course. **“Waitlisted” student should also contact me by the 16th;** if and when spaces open up, I will offer you a seat.

As you “check in,” starting about a week before the class begins, I’ll send you an online orientation handout that you can use to familiarize yourself with ETUDES (our course management system), the layout of this course, the syllabus of readings and assignments, and how to get started in the course.

INSTRUCTOR: Dr. Elizabeth Shadish

EMAIL: eshadish@elcamino.edu

TELEPHONE: 310-660-3593, ext. 3763

OFFICE HOURS: (Online) M, 10 – 11:00 am by “PM” and/or chat in ETUDES

(On Campus) TTh, 10:15 – 11:15 am, CTO 102A

REQUIRED COURSE INFORMATION

Required Text:

L. Vaughn, *The Power of Critical Thinking: Effective Reasoning about Ordinary and Extraordinary Claims*. (2008, Oxford University Press, 2nd Ed)

Course Information:

The ability to read, think and write clearly and critically is especially valuable in contemporary society, when so many fields require the effective handling of masses of (sometimes rapidly changing) information. This course focuses on the study and development of just this ability - or, more precisely, of those abilities/skills which make for independent, articulate and effective reading, thinking and writing.

Why take the course? You'd be surprised at how few, but powerful, are the ways through which we are manipulated by the masters of information manipulation – or even simply by our own common human traits and tendencies. Once you learn these ways, especially in their less obvious forms, you'll have a kind of power that non-critical thinkers will never enjoy. You'll be able to argue effectively, separate fact from fantasy, resist being distracted by irrelevant claims or fears, and understand the difference between good v. inadequate evidence for a claim or thesis. These are universal skills: skill that will help you in other classes and in life.

Course Management System (CMS): We will be using ETUDES-NG; the login page can be found at <http://etudes-ng.fhda.edu/portal>. See the ECC Dist. Ed page for [login information](#).

Typical Assignments: As this course is designed to strengthen your understanding of the philosophical foundations of religious doctrines, typical assignments include:

1. occasional quizzes on basic chapter information
2. 2 papers in which you demonstrate your growing ability to create a basic argument, and to extend and strengthen that argument in light of what you will study
3. small group discussions concerning various aspects of critical thinking, especially including informal fallacies
4. an essay about a philosophical reading that will be discussed in preparation for that essay

5. a final project, in which you demonstrate your grasp of our course material through an analysis of an editorial or essay

Technical and Personal Requirements:

1. You'll need regular access to a reliable computer. You should be comfortable downloading plugins as needed to use our CMS, using attachments in email and Internet formats, and browsing the Internet.
2. Self-discipline, organization, initiative and a willingness to speak up when you have questions or confusions are essential to success in the course.
3. Sufficient time to devote to readings and assignments (in particular if you are also juggling other family/work obligations).
4. The time and willingness to be a good "online classmate" – that is, one who will check in frequently, respond to classmates' questions and comments, and generally contribute that unique point of view that only you can bring to the class.

Starting in the Course: In the first two weeks or so, you'll be asked to:

1. check the "Start Here" Module for more information about being in the class,
2. explore our CMS and introduce yourselves to each other,
3. (optional): take a "mock quiz" – a few questions of various sorts (m/c, short essay, etc) that will help you ensure that when it's time to take a real, for points, quiz, you and your computer will have no trouble doing so
4. take a brief "online readiness" quiz,
5. read the first chapter in your text, and
6. prepare for a class discussion of arguments

Checking the "Start Here" Module will enable you to see where to find your instructions for the "Introductions" assignment and the "Online Readiness" quiz.

The class will be available approximately one week before the semester starts. Feel free to email me – eshadish@elcamino.edu - if you would like more information about the course before then, or simply if you have further questions!