

CRITICAL REASONING

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COUSE TOPICS – SEP 3, 2014

The best way to practice critical reasoning is by examining arguments in the media, political debates, the courtroom and academic articles. The topics to discuss are potentially infinite. Below you'll find a list of possible course topics. Please mark **TWO TOPICS** that most interest you.

- ☐ *Courtroom Arguments and the OJ Simpson Trial.* Was the jury right in acquitting OJ Simpson? If there was a "mountain of evidence", as the prosecutor said, why was OJ Simpson acquitted? We will examine arguments from the defense and the prosecution.
- ☐ *Obama v. Romney.* In the presidential debate, what did Obama and Romney say? What didn't they say? Did they offer arguments or were they simply trying to convince as many voters as possible? Would their arguments withstand scrutiny?
- ☐ *Capitalism and Economic Inequalities.* Some argue that capitalism is effective in eradicating poverty, rewards people according to what they deserve, and fosters individual freedom. Others argue that capitalism fosters inequalities, destroys the social fabric of society, and keeps the world population in slavery. How to adjudicate this disagreement?
- ☐ *Public Debt and the Welfare State.* Every advanced country has several billion of dollars in public debt. The United States is no exception. Many argue that the US should spend less, and that welfare benefits, e.g. public health care, should be cut. Others think the state should spend more, because public debt is not like individual debt. They argue that more welfare benefits should be provided to US citizens. How to adjudicate this disagreement?
- ☐ *Vegetarianism and Animal Rights.* Animals feel pain, just like human beings, and when we kill them, they suffer; the meat industry exploits animals and treats them with cruelty; eating meat isn't needed for a good diet. These are some of the arguments for vegetarianism. Many disagree and continue to eat meat. What arguments are out there that can help us decide?
- ☐ *The War on Terror and Drones.* The United States have executed military attacks against foreign countries, and more recently, drones have been used to target "militants" who were considered a threat to national security. The War on Terror has often been criticized as ineffective and misplaced. Many, on the other hand, argue that the threat of national security should not be overlooked. Who is right?
- ☐ *Immigration.* Some argue that US immigration restrictions should be relaxed, and some even think that people should be free to travel from one country to another without restrictions. Others, instead, think that a strict immigration policy is essential for maintaining the integrity of American society. What are the arguments supporting one position or the other?
- ☐ *Same Sex Marriage.* Should homosexual couples be allowed to marry? Some argue that same sex marriage is unnatural, that it would destroy the family, and that marriage is about procreation. Others think these arguments are baseless. How to adjudicate this disagreement?
- ☐ *Something else.* Please explain briefly.