Welcome to Online Speech 104

I want to welcome you to this online version of Speech 104, Argumentation and Critical Thinking. In this course we will cover everything we do in the face to face version of the class, but it will be totally done online. There are no in-person class meetings.

Beginning Saturday, August 28th, your “virtual class” will be available to you 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

I am always asked, “How can a speech class be online?” Speech 104 is designed to make you a better critical thinker and a more confident decision maker. We will be doing that by studying a variety of topics including communication, persuasion, perception, argumentation, language, evidence, reasoning, and the relation between truth and validity. And all of this will be done online.

Earning a Grade

I don’t grade on a curve. You will receive points for all of your assignments and at the end of the winter session your points will be totaled and you will receive the grade that corresponds to your point total. All of you can receive a high grade if you make the effort.

I will ask you to do three tasks in this class:

- participate in online discussions
- take quizzes on each chapter,
- complete homework assignments

If you spend the time and make the effort, you all can do well.
Textbook

We will be using the textbook, Communicating Critical Thinking, by Jack Sterk and Jim Marteney. The text is necessary for the course and can be obtained at the Los Angeles Valley College Bookstore. You should also be able to go to the bookstore online at http://www.lavcbookstore.com/ to order the book and have it sent to you.

The Class

To be successful in this course you need to log into the class at least three times a week. I will do my best to make the class interesting so you will want to log in even more. Remember, if you were taking this class at the college in a regular class, you would be spending close to 3 hours per week in class and that doesn’t include reading the text, studying and doing homework. Then add to that drive time to and from the college and you may spend up to 6 – 7 hours a week in class. So I expect you to be online often and spending time reading the material and participating in the discussions. You do well on these and you will do well in the class. I will always be there to help you succeed.

Myths

I just want to warn you about two myths I often hear from students:

Myth 1: An online class is easier than a face to face class. This class is not difficult, but it may actually take more time than a face to face class. My goal is to make this class so enjoyable that you will want to visit often and participate.
Here is the good news. An online class may take more time, but it is more convenient. You may take the class anywhere you can find an Internet connection any time day or night. Some students enjoy spending time at Starbucks drinking coffee and connecting to the Internet with their laptop.

**Myth 2: I can do my schoolwork at entirely my own pace.**
You do have a lot of freedom when and where you do your class work. You can work in the morning or late at night, but there will be deadlines for discussions and assignments so you will have to follow a schedule.

You need self-discipline, but you still have some flexibility when you go online to do your work.

As I said earlier, my goal is to make this class so interesting and stimulating that you will want to join us online and participate in the activities. But the class really becomes exciting when everyone contributes. Together, we can really create a great class learning about critical thinking.

**Getting Started**

To enter the class you will need to go to the class portal at:

https://myetudes.org

The log-in instructions can be found at:
http://www.lavc.edu/virtualvalley/loggingonline.htm

The class officially begins on Monday, August 30th, but I will be opening the class on Saturday, August 28th so you can get started exploring the class.
Help Desk

If you have any problems with logging in or concerns about taking an online class, you can find help at the Valley College Help Desk. I may not always be in my office able to help you, but these people are available to come to your aid.

- Their phone number is (818) 778-5834
- Their email address is: etudeshelp@lavc.edu.

You can also receive help in person the Computer Lab at BJ103.

A complete listing of times of operation can be found at the website:

http://www.lavc.edu/virtualvalley/helpdesk.htm

Making Sure Your Computer is Ready

One of the biggest problems students have in taking this class is with their computer system. There is a link on the left hand side of the Etudes portal that is titled, “System Requirements.” Follow the instructions to make sure that your system will work well with the college’s online learning system called Etudes. The instructions there include those for the “cache” settings and setting up your “cookies,” “java” etc. (don’t worry setting this up is easier than it sounds). Your computer will then be ready to go. Follow these instructions and you will experience much less frustration and headaches.

If you are using a Mac, you will notice that the Safari browser will not work well. Instead you will see instructions on downloading the Firefox browser.
First Assignment

Your first week is designed to get you used to using the Etudes Classroom System, and become comfortable in taking an online class. The information on these assignments are listed in your first module. You need to complete your first assignments by Wednesday night, September 1st at 11:30 pm. **If you do not finish them by then, will drop you from the class** so those on the waiting list can be enrolled. You must get started early.

When you enter to the class, you will see the first announcement on the right hand side with complete instructions on what you need to do.

Very Important

The first day you can log on is Saturday, August 28, at 8:00 a.m. If you have not logged on and participated in the first discussion by Wednesday night, September 1st at 11:30 pm, then I will assume you do not want to take the class. It is just like attending the first day of class. You miss it, you are dropped. So remember, **you need to log into the class and participate before Wednesday night, September 1st at 11:30 pm**

I am looking forward to meeting all of you online and working with you so we can have a fun, stimulating, and successful Fall semester.

*Jim “profjim” Marteney*