



“The aim of education should be to teach us how to think, rather than what to think.”

James Beattie (Scottish Poet)

## Marsala's English 201C Critical Thinking and Composition

Welcome! My name is Susan Marsala and if you are reading this letter, then you must be considering taking this class online. Let me begin by saying that this is an English class and not boot camp. It does require you to work, but it doesn't have to be unpleasant work. This is a course where you will think about complex issues and write papers that allow you to reflect and explore your own responses to a variety of questions. It offers you the opportunity to examine how you think and the method you employ in problem solving. The most frequent comment I hear from students upon completion of the course is that this course is so relevant to “real life.” Most importantly, this class is as much about you as it is about logical fallacies or styles of argumentation.

*This course takes place exclusively online; there are no face-to-face meetings.*

**My Online Teaching Philosophy:** I believe that distance education should not be “disengaged education”; the distance in miles should have no bearing on the contact and attention a student gives or receives in a cyber “classroom.” The wonderful aspect of online technology is its capacity to be a bridge between where we are and where we want to be. My attitude about online teaching is exactly the same as it is in a traditional classroom. I like students; I like teaching; I love exploring ideas. For that reason, I want my online classes to have the same level of personal connection as any classroom-based course. What changes for me is the modality, not my approach to education. Providing a “classroom” where such engagement is not only possible but also effectively realized is my primary goal as an educator. I look forward to having you in class.

**Start Date For Course: Monday, August 21st 2017.**

Instructor: Susan Marsala

Email: [smarsala@cuesta.edu](mailto:smarsala@cuesta.edu)

Office Hours: M-TR 8:9:30 and always by appointment

SKYPE, Phone, or Facetime conferences are always possible by appointment.

Learning Management System (Course site): We will be using the campus site CANVAS for this class. You will find all assignments and class information posted there. Please familiarize yourself with the site. Here are a couple of a links that will help you:

Access to *Canvas*: "Quick Reference Guide":

[http://www.cuesta.edu/student/documents/distance\\_ed\\_students/Canvas\\_Quick\\_Reference\\_Students.pdf](http://www.cuesta.edu/student/documents/distance_ed_students/Canvas_Quick_Reference_Students.pdf)

Access to Video Tours of Canvas Features:

[http://www.cuesta.edu/academics/distance/fac\\_de\\_resources/Student\\_Videos.html](http://www.cuesta.edu/academics/distance/fac_de_resources/Student_Videos.html)

Please note that I will be unavailable before classes begin, so please wait until the beginning of the semester to contact me. All enrolled students will receive an email a day or two before class starts with essential class information.

**Things to Consider in Determining if an Online Class is Right for You:** An online English course is not a self-paced course. The class has required assignments and specific due dates. In practice, an online course is the same as a classroom course.

**Course Description:** English 201C Critical Thinking and Composition presents an advanced composition course beyond ENGL 201A. It teaches students to evaluate problems in light of reason and evidence. In this class, students learn to think their way to conclusions; to consider a broad spectrum of view points; to analyze concepts, theories and explanations; to develop a reliable method for problem solving; to relate familiar ideas to new contexts; to examine assumptions; and to logically defend reliable positions of their own. Prerequisite: ENGL 201A with a grade of C or better. Transfer: CSU; UC.

#### **Student Learning Outcomes for English 201C:**

Upon completing English 201C successfully, students will be able to:

1. Demonstrate advanced critical thinking and reasoning skills (PO 2);
2. Write arguments using advanced rhetorical and composition skills (PO 4, 5,)
3. Demonstrate information fluency (PO 8).

### The Devil and the Details

- You must participate in the course as class work requires;
- You will write approximately 300-500 words a week (discussion forums, exercises and papers);
- You will have assignments due each week (primarily short ones; only 2 longer papers [3-4 pages] required).
- There will be a longer paper or project due during the last week of the course.

### Required Textbook: *Justice What's the Right Thing to Do?* by Michael Sandel

Sandel looks at the topic of justice in context of critical thinking, and we will watch a few of his videos—my former students liked the approach, book and videos very much..

**Waitlist Procedure and Add Policy:** People wishing to add, including those on the official waitlist, should send me an email on the first day of the semester, and I will add students as spots become available. I know that adding can be difficult; however, I will do my best to accommodate as many students as I can.

**Drop Policy:** On the first day of class, you must log into our CANVAS class site by 11:59 PM PST. Please understand I often have 15 or more students waiting to add. As a courtesy to other students, please log in as early as possible on the first day. Once you do, your place in the class is secured. Failure to login may result in being dropped from the roster.

Finally, I want you to know that I love teaching these courses, and I have become a true believer in online education. Additionally, I think that learning can and should be engaging—even fun. Using online resources such as videos, engaging reading assignments, and multimedia resources adds depth and interest to this course. More importantly, I have found that the key to student success, in any modality, is achieved by frequent and consistent contact—from both sides. You will find that I will initiate such contact several times a week; I want my students comfortable contacting me with any and all questions and concerns. A student who needs help is never a “bother” to me. I am here because you are here.

Cheers,  
Susan

For additional information about Canvas and online resources, see the links directly below.

### Canvas Information:

The following link will explain the system requirements and computer specifications needed to use *Canvas*:

[http://www.cuesta.edu/student/aboutacad/distance/faqs\\_technical.html](http://www.cuesta.edu/student/aboutacad/distance/faqs_technical.html)

FAQ for Technical Considerations:

[http://www.cuesta.edu/student/aboutacad/distance/faqs\\_technical.html](http://www.cuesta.edu/student/aboutacad/distance/faqs_technical.html)

Access to *Canvas*: "Quick Reference Guide":

[http://www.cuesta.edu/student/documents/distance\\_ed\\_students/Canvas\\_Quick\\_Reference\\_Students.pdf](http://www.cuesta.edu/student/documents/distance_ed_students/Canvas_Quick_Reference_Students.pdf)

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Access to Class Site: This link takes you to the dashboard for our class homepage:

<https://cuesta.instructure.com>

Mobile app to access Canvas:

<https://community.canvaslms.com/docs/DOC-9208>