Hello. My name is Alexandra Dimakos. I will be your instructor for English 103 and I love critical thinking!

This is not a course syllabus. Your syllabus, which can be downloaded from your Blackboard course site on the first day of the semester, provides all necessary course information. The following information is to help you understand the scope and perspective of the course and to give you a better sense if this class is right for you.

Please note: This course is 100% online and there are no face-to-face meetings. The Blackboard course site cannot be accessed until the first day of the semester (June 16th at 8:00am PST – Pacific Standard Time). This course requires a tremendous amount of discipline, organization, reading, and participation several days a week (and by “several,” I mean “4-5 days a week”).

VERY IMPORTANT: To avoid being dropped from the course as a “no show”, you must login to the course website on Blackboard and complete a discussion board activity by 11:59pm on June 16th. If you do not complete this assignment by the deadline, you will be dropped from the course. Again, the website becomes available for student access at 8:00am on June 16th.

Course Description: In English 103, students examine the principles of critical thinking as applied to writing and reading arguments on complex issues. This course focuses on close textual analysis, argumentative/persuasive writing, and logical reasoning.

Prerequisite: Successful completion of English 101 or English 101 Honors. English 103 meets UC and CSU transfer requirements.

There is a great deal of challenging reading in this course, so please be aware that you may be asked to read anywhere from 20-30 pages a week from the required texts in addition to viewing PowerPoints, handouts, videos, and websites if applicable.

Late Work Policies: No late work is accepted. However, there is one exception to this rule. I will accept final drafts of essays 24 hours after the deadline, but they will receive a deduction half off the original point value. For example, if your final draft is worth 100 points, and it’s turned in late, it will automatically be reduced by 50 points. Final drafts are the only assignments I will accept late.

Using Technology: I understand that technology can be unpredictable (as is life!), but the best approach would be to not wait until the last minute (or even the last hour) to finish an assignment and definitely have a backup plan (or three…or five) in case your wifi decides it doesn’t feel like connecting or there’s a technological apocalypse of sorts.

If you are unfamiliar with using Blackboard, complete the following steps:
1. Go to http://www.canyons.edu/BBTutorial to view a multimedia tutorial about how to access Blackboard 9. This is not the orientation, but it will give you a chance to get used to how Blackboard 9 works. **If you’re a Blackboard 9 aficionado (a.k.a. you’ve used Blackboard 9 before for some other class), you can skip this step.**

2. Once you’re familiar with Blackboard 9, go to http://bb9.canyons.edu and enter your Username and Password. Remember, the class will not be available until 8:00am on June 16th; therefore, if you try to log in before then, you will not be able to see the class yet.

3. Once you log in and access the course, you will find links to the Syllabus, Discussion Boards, Essay Prompts, and Weekly Course Work for Week 1.

**Getting Help:** If you have any trouble logging in, you can visit the TLC (BONH-209 at the Valencia campus or Room 306 at the Canyon Country Campus) for assistance – go to http://www.canyons.edu/offices/TLC for hours and contact information.

You may also contact Blackboard technical support at (661) 362-3344 or bbsupport@canyons.edu (Check their summer session hours and please allow up to 24 business hours for an email response).

**Required Textbooks:** The COC bookstore will have the books listed below in stock. Although there are many other textbooks that may have the same readings, **I will be using, referring to, and assigning pages from these books.** If you have a different versions or editions of these books, it may be difficult or impossible for you to complete assignments and follow along in class. The required texts are:

- Any good MLA handbook.

We will be assigned reading and work after the first day (June 16th), so you will need your books as soon as possible.

**Basic Required Online Skills:**

You will need to have:

- Basic computer literacy, including skills in Internet navigation and basic document creation and handling. At the very least, you should know how to cut and paste, how to copy from one document to another, and how to attach documents to emails.

- Reliable, consistent Internet access with an up-to-date browser. AOL’s browser often does not work well with Blackboard, so if you are an AOL user, you will need to download another browser to use to access this course (Firefox, Internet Explorer, etc.). In case of technical problems with your computer or Internet connection, you might choose to make use of the computer labs on COC’s campus.

- Access to Microsoft Word required (No Rich Text Files - .rtf ). If you are not entirely confident in your computer skills or if anything listed here sounds unfamiliar to you, I highly recommend that
you also enroll in Counseling 070 (Distance Learning and Strategies for Success), a one-unit short-term course designed to improve your success in online courses.

Students who do well in hybrid and online courses tend to share the following qualities:

- They are incredibly self-motivated, consistently meet deadlines and show up to class on time and prepared.
- They are strong, critical readers and communicate clearly and effectively in writing.
- They have strong time management skills.
- They enjoy active, cooperative learning experiences.
- They have reliable access to the Internet (Lack of internet access, poor Internet access or malfunctioning technology – including printers and computer programs – are not acceptable excuses for not completing assignments on time. Remember those back up plans?).
- They have basic computer skills, including the ability to cut/copy and paste between documents, send and download email attachments, and create and save documents in Microsoft Word.

Course Requirements: This course meets the IGETC Arts and Humanities requirement for transfer to CSU and UC and therefore requires the same amount of total work hours (including time spent in class) as a regular 16-week face-to-face section.

Assignments: Over the course of the class, you should expect to complete anywhere from 2-4 assignments (discussion board responses, activities, peer reviews, etc.) per week in addition to one 5-7 page essay, one 7-8 page essay, and one 8-10 page essay (three essays total).

Turnitin.com: All final drafts of essays must be submitted to www.turnitin.com before they will be graded. If you do not upload your essays to www.turnitin.com on time on the day they’re due, you will receive a deduction off your final score. You must cite our assigned texts when quoting or paraphrasing from them and any outside sources (sources you’ve found through your own research) you use to support any of your claims. When in doubt, ask me. That's what I’m here for!

Expectations: Please do not take this class because you don’t have time in your schedule to take a “real class.” This is a real college class (we’ll be delving into some real college readings and topics – it may even be fun!) that requires the same time commitment as a class that meets face-to-face.

This is not a class where you can complete work far ahead of your classmates or make up work during the last minutes of the semester. Our class wide online discussion boards will be asynchronous, not synchronous, meaning that you can log in at a time of day convenient to you -- even 3 am. (I won’t be on at 3 am. I’ll be sleeping and dreaming of Shakespearean sonnets, interesting essay topics, or cupcakes, but you’re welcome to sign on whenever you like). However, there are due dates and deadlines for assignments.

Make-Ups and Absences: There are no make-ups and no excused “absences” - even with a doctor’s note. An absence is an absence. If you miss an assignment, you cannot make it up. However, if you have an emergency that prohibits you from completing assignments, you must email me immediately so we can discuss your progress in the course and steps to take to ensure the best possible solution. Your prompt communication is imperative!
If you will not be able to participate in this manner, this is not the course for you.

Please feel free to email me if you have any questions regarding the course. I am diligent about checking my email and will respond to your email within a 24-hour time period. I stop checking emails at 10:00pm, and I do not respond to emails on Saturdays and Sundays. You can email me on Saturday and Sunday, but I won’t respond until Monday.

I look forward to working with all of you and helping you succeed in this course. Did I mention I love critical thinking?

Best wishes and see you on line on June 16th!

Sincerely,
Professor Alexandra Dimakos

Office Location: Canyon Country Campus Quad 2 – Room 205
E-mail: Alexandra.dimakos@canyons.edu OR adimakos@gmail.com