

What is “Critical Thinking”?

Enrichment Event

How skilled is your thinking?

- **First-Order Thinking** is spontaneous and nonreflective. It contains insight, prejudice, truth and error, good and bad reasoning, indiscriminately combined.
- **Second-Order Thinking** is first-order thinking raised to the level of conscious realization (analyzed, assessed, and reconstructed).

What is critical thinking?

- Critical thinking is a **mode of thinking** – about any subject, content, or problem – in which the thinker **improves the quality of his or her thinking** by skillfully taking charge of the structures inherent in thinking and imposing intellectual standards upon them.

What does a critical thinker do?



- Raises **vital questions** and problems, formulating them clearly and precisely;
- **Gathers and assesses** relevant information, and **effectively interprets** it;
- Comes to **well-reasoned conclusions** and solutions, testing them against relevant criteria and standards;

What does a critical thinker do?



- **Thinks open-mindedly** within alternative systems of thought, recognizing and assessing, as need be, their assumptions, implications, and practical consequences; and
- **Communicates effectively** with others in figuring out solutions to complex problems.

Why should I think critically?

- You will need to think critically for tests and quizzes;
- Writing essays and research papers;
- Doing laboratory exercises;
- Choosing your major;
- Applying for jobs (cover letter, resume);
- and Every day in your career!

Fair mindedness

As we develop the basic intellectual skills that critical thinking entails, we begin to use those skills in one of two ways: **self-centered** or **fair-minded**. In other words, we can develop in such a way that we learn to see mistakes in our own thinking, as well as the thinking of others.

Becoming fair-minded

- **Self-centeredness** entails viewing all opposing viewpoints as **WRONG** with no consideration.
- **Fair-mindedness** entails treating **ALL** viewpoints alike, without reference to one's own feelings or interests.



Becoming fair-minded

- Exercise: Think about an issue you are passionate about...
 - What is the opposing position?
 - Can you list the errors with that position?
 - Can you list the strengths with that position?

Intellectual Humility

- Understanding the limits of one's own knowledge
- Being aware of one's own prejudices and biases
- Exercise: Name a person you know fairly well. Make two lists: (1) Everything you know about that person, and (2) everything you DON'T know about that person.

Intellectual Courage

- Having a need or desire to address ideas, beliefs, or viewpoints which one has strong negative emotions.
- Take an active role in questioning assumptions
- Exercise: Select one group to which you belong.
 - Think of one main belief of the group
 - Why might this belief be questioned?
 - Would I be able to stand up to my group and point out the problems with that belief?

Intellectual Empathy

- The need to put oneself in the place of others in order to genuinely understand them.
- This leads to the ability to reconstruct the viewpoints and reasoning of another person.
- Exercise: Think about a conflict/argument you have had with another person about a personal belief
 - What was your perspective?
 - What was the other person's perspective?

Intellectual Integrity

- Understanding the need to be true to one's own thinking and hold yourself to the same standards to which you hold others.
- Honestly admit to discrepancies within your own thinking.
- Exercise: Can you think of a situation where your behavior contradicts what you say you believe?

Intellectual Perseverance

- Being able to work your way through intellectual complexities despite frustration.
- Being open to a period of confusion.
- Exercise: Can you think of an time where you were confronted with a complex idea and eventually succeeded in understanding the idea?

Intellectual Autonomy

- Having the internal motivation to think for oneself.
- Being able to use critical thinking to come to your own conclusions about beliefs and ideas.
- Exercise: Can you think of a time where you questioned the beliefs or ideas of others within your “group”?

Fair-Mindedness takes...

- **Humility** to recognize what you don't know.
- **Courage** to confront previously held beliefs.
- **Empathy** to understand other perspectives.
- **Integrity** to hold yourself to the same standard to which you hold others.
- **Perseverance** to muddle through confusing information to greater understanding.
- **Autonomy** to judge whether your ideas are truly yours.