

Introduction to

Critical Thinking

Throughout our course, we will use the term "critical thinking" not to denote finding fault with others but as a general term referring to a "wide range of cognitive skills and intellectual dispositions needed to identify, analyze, and evaluate arguments and truth claims" (Bassham et al, 2023, p. 1).

Let's start by surveying the attributes of critical thinking...



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Clarity



Critical thinkers not only strive for clarity of language but also seek maximum clarity of thought.



State your position



Offer clear & understandable support



Keep it simple!



Precision

Cut through confusion and uncertainty and insist on precise answers to precise questions.



What exactly is the issue?



What exactly are the possible solutions?



What exactly are the pros & cons for each solution?



Accuracy



No matter how brilliant you may be, you're almost guaranteed to make bad decisions if your decisions are based on false information.

Garbage
In



Garbage
Out



Relevance



No tedious and irrelevant discussion can be allowed; what is said should be pertinent.

Plato



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Consistency



Critical thinkers prize truth and so are constantly on the lookout for inconsistencies, both in their own thinking and in the arguments and assertions of others.



Practical inconsistency



Logical inconsistency

Critical thought requires consistency!



And the Rest...

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Logical Correctness

We must follow the rules of inference as we support our conclusions with evidence.

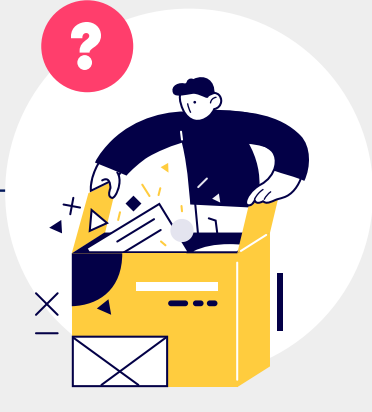
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Completeness

As a rule, critical engagement benefits from a deep treatment rather than a quick and superficial glossing.

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Fairness

Critical thinkers strive to be open-minded and impartial. Strive to give all "fair" hearing to the ideas under consideration!

Source | Bassham et al (2023) Critical Thinking; A Student's Introduction (7th Edition). Supplement for Chapter One.



Professor Stuke