

Part One
Using *Thinking Critically*

SECTION 1

History of *Thinking Critically*, Eighth Edition

- The Evolution of *Thinking Critically*
- Critical Thinking at LaGuardia College

THE EVOLUTION OF *THINKING CRITICALLY*

My favorite quotation about thinking is by the British philosopher Bertrand Russell, who said, “Most people would rather die than think—in fact, they do!” Thinking is a cognitive process that enables us to understand what is happening in our experience and to make informed decisions based on this understanding. Yet, as Russell aptly points out, most people do not take full advantage of their thinking abilities and often suffer the unpleasant—and sometimes fatal—consequences.

Thinking Critically is based on the conviction that thinking is an ability and, like other abilities, can be improved through proper guidance and practice. It has grown out of my experiences of teaching students to think more critically and creatively over the past twenty years in two distinct courses: Critical Thinking and Creative Thinking: Theory and Practice.

When I first began to develop a course to help students develop sophisticated, higher-order thinking abilities, I wasn’t sure quite how to proceed. Although everyone thinks, its commonplace appearance is deceiving. When we turn our attention to the thinking process, we find that it is slippery, amorphous, and extremely difficult to define. To complicate the situation even more, trying to understand the *concept* of thinking involves the *process* of thinking. Trying to get outside the thinking process is as difficult as trying to escape your shadow—it sticks with you no matter how you twist and turn. Finally, even if we develop a clear understanding of the thinking process, this gives us little insight into how best to *teach* thinking abilities. Most books and many courses on thinking confuse giving information about thinking with actually developing thinking abilities. My own quest to understand the thinking process and to devise effective approaches for teaching thinking abilities has drawn on the insights of a variety of disciplines, including the fields of philosophy, psychology, and language. After all, thinking is not confined to any one discipline, and to understand this complex human process, one must view it from a variety of perspectives.

Philosophy

Much of my academic preparation has been in the field of philosophy, a discipline that has traditionally focused on exploring the nature and possibilities of human thought. A philosophical perspective embodies a disciplined and systematic approach to thinking. It also encourages an attitude of critical reflection, one of the essential qualities of thinking critically. As a result, when I first embarked on this project, it was natural to begin with philosophical work in the area of thinking skills.

When I reviewed the textbooks and literature available in this field, it was clear that philosophy tends to see thinking abilities through the prism of logical forms, including deductive arguments, inductive arguments, informal fallacies, and symbolic logic. These are exceedingly important abilities required to analyze and evaluate the myriad arguments presented to us by advertisers, politicians, professors, religious authorities, reporters, family members, employers, and friends. Yet when I introduced this perspective into my Critical Thinking class, the results were not entirely satisfactory.

In the first place, many students lacked the conceptual abilities necessary to understanding and performing complex logical operations. Even the most elementary logic books seemed to presuppose a wide range of thinking abilities that are not sufficiently developed in many students. Second, although the systematic evaluation of arguments and the detection of fallacies are important abilities that we use in our everyday lives, these abilities represent only one dimension of the thinking process. The limitations of exclusively pursuing a logic/argument approach to teaching critical thinking abilities is articulated by John E. McPeck in his book *Critical Thinking and Education*:¹

Logic, as such, is used for the assessment and justification of arguments and theories once they have been presented. But it cannot generate (or formulate) hypotheses, theories or arguments in a problem-solving situation. It can only be used to verify those hypotheses. Having the tools of logic available to help us do this checking is valuable indeed; but they are virtually useless in helping us find our way out of problematic situations the solutions to which depend on possibilities and hypotheses. Logic can help to eliminate hypotheses, conjectures and plausible solutions, but it cannot provide them. In the most common problem-solving situation within disciplines and working fields of knowledge, the most difficult—and perhaps most important—phase is that of producing a hypothesis, conjecture or alternative that is worth checking or trying out.

In short, logic does not directly aid us in producing more effective ideas, solutions, or hypotheses. At best it can help us evaluate these products of thought once they exist. As a result, it seems unlikely that focusing on examining the products of others' thinking will have any significant impact on our own. Our thinking abilities develop best when we are challenged and have the opportunity to use these abilities. This means not merely reviewing the thinking of others but also working through thinking situations on our own and then reflecting critically on our thinking so that we can sharpen and improve it.

In response to these considerations, the chapters dealing with argumentation, logical forms, and fallacies (Chapters 10 and 11) in *Thinking Critically* are located at the end of the text, after students have had the opportunity to develop the thinking abilities needed to produce higher-order thoughts. In addition, the treatment of argumentation helps students produce arguments of their own, not simply evaluate the arguments of others.

Psychology

The insight that we develop our thinking abilities through experiential explorations is one of the underlying principles of cognitive psychology, another discipline that has shaped *Thinking Critically*. Based on the work of developmental psychologists such as Jean Piaget, this approach to teaching thinking skills describes and analyzes the structured, sequential process by which thinking abilities develop, a process delineated by recognizable stages. If a student does not complete one stage satisfactorily before moving on to the next, subsequent development is distorted and limited. These theories are based on exhaustive empirical research.

Harvard psychologist William G. Perry has developed a powerful conceptual framework for understanding the holistic growth of the critical thinking person. Perry conducted research on college-age students and was able to distinguish a series of stages that they pass through in developing a sophisticated understanding of knowledge and the world. These stages represent coherent, interpretive frameworks that people use to make sense of their educational experience and are arranged in orderly sequence from the simple to the more complex. In the simplest stage, dualism, knowledge is viewed as a discrete, factual quantity that is distributed by “authorities.” Given the appropriate experiences, people gradually come to recognize the inadequacy of this way of thinking about the world. The

¹St. Martin's Press, New York, 1981, p. 15.

conclusions of authorities often conflict, and there are many areas in which no definite answers exist. The next stage, multiplicity, also is not satisfactory because it often leads to cynicism and the belief that all views are equal. In the most sophisticated stage (which Perry calls “commitment in relativism” but which I would term “developing a critical epistemology”), people understand that some views make more sense than others based on the quality of the writer’s supporting evidence and reasons for those views.

Each of us must take responsibility for constructing our understanding of the world: examining all of the various perspectives and the supporting evidence, engaging in our own comparative analysis, and developing informed conclusions based on our own critical reflection and synthesis. Thinkers at this level also recognize that in many instances knowledge is not absolute and unchanging but instead depends on a specific context and evolves over time. Despite this uncertainty, we must be prepared to commit ourselves to a world view, recognizing that this view is likely to evolve as we learn new information and develop improved insight.

As impressive as the work in cognitive psychology has been, there has been much less success in translating theoretical insights into actual classroom practice. It is one thing to describe the process of intellectual growth, but it is quite another to devise strategies that stimulate and guide people to achieve this growth. Although an effective course in thinking abilities must exhibit a developmental logic and coherence, it also must engage students in their immediate situation. It must make use of their current concerns, their accumulated experience, and their abilities to reflect, engage in dialogue, and create and express meaning. *Thinking Critically* seeks to apply the insights of cognitive psychology to the classroom, developing an integrated sequence of educational experiences that will stimulate students to grow not just intellectually but personally as well.

Language Disciplines

Not only philosophy and psychology, but also the academic disciplines focusing on language—including linguistics, composition, reading, and oral communication—have made important contributions to the development of *Thinking Critically*, Eighth Edition. As the research of linguists such as Lev Vygotsky and A. R. Luria suggests, thought and language are distinct processes that begin to intertwine at a very early stage of human development. As a result, they are reciprocal, interactive processes that we use in an integrated fashion to construct our understanding of the world. For example, when we write or speak, we are using language to express our thinking process. And when we read, we are actively using our minds to comprehend the thinking process of someone else. At the same time, the process of using language stimulates thought, and the language we use shapes and influences the thinking of others.

In using our thinking capacities to make sense of the world, we are actively composing it, and language is the main tool for accomplishing this end. At every given moment, we are constructing our understanding of the world to make sense of it, and in so doing we are continually using the complex set of integrated thinking/language abilities addressed in *Thinking Critically*. Among these abilities are organizing, naming, defining, classifying, articulating relationships, solving problems, inferring, deducing, judging, describing, predicting, hypothesizing, conceptualizing, exemplifying, and generalizing. The implications for the classroom are clear: we have to teach language abilities in order to teach most thinking skills effectively, and we have to teach thinking abilities in order to teach language abilities effectively.

Thinking Critically uses an integrated approach to develop thinking and language abilities together. This approach is versatile, synergistic, and engaging. Students are stimulated and guided to explore the important thinking concepts introduced through provocative, informative readings drawn from a variety of disciplines; to engage in structured, analytical writing assignments; and to explore the topics through the thoughtful exchange of ideas in dialogue with others.

For example, when students explore the concept of thinking critically in Chapter 2, they are asked to read essays that analyze controversial issues, to engage in organized debates on topics they select, to view a videotape (“Thinking Towards Decisions”) that dramatizes the critical thinking process, and to write essays that grow out of this foundation.

Chapter 3, “Solving Problems,” introduces students to an organized approach for solving complex problems that they learn by discussing essays describing problems such as security and privacy, analyzing an important unsolved problem in their own lives, preparing a written analysis of this problem, and presenting their conclusions to the class.

While exploring the concept of perceiving in Chapter 4, an active process that involves perspective-taking, students analyze contrasting media versions of the World Trade Center and Pentagon attacks. They explore the process by which our perceiving “lenses” are formed by reading essays such as “Plato’s Allegory of the Cave” by Sonja Tanner and by writing about a significant event in their own experiences that shaped the way they see the world.

Students explore the concepts of reporting, inferring, and judging in Chapter 9 by reading essays such as “The End of My Childhood” (N. Scott Momaday) and “Evolution as Fact and Theory” (Stephen Jay Gould). The topics addressed by these authors, enriched by videotapes such as the “NOVA” episode *God, Darwin and Dinosaurs*, provide rich opportunities for writing assignments and class discussions.

As you tailor this book to your individual instructional needs, I would encourage you to introduce substantive writing assignments, readings, and discussion activities. The great conductor Arturo Toscanini once said, “You don’t do anything in a performance that you haven’t done a thousand times in practice.” Thus, if our students are going to become articulate thinkers, writers, speakers, and readers, they must be given the ongoing opportunity to develop these abilities through a variety of carefully planned activities.

The Whole Student

The work in various disciplines to promote critical thinking has led to the conclusion that effective education must address the “whole” student—the writer, not just the writing; the thinker, not just the thoughts. For students to develop the self-insight and motivation needed to excel in their college studies, they must be encouraged to relate what they are experiencing in the college classroom to their life experience—their goals, values, and self-concepts. This critical thinking approach to education is embodied in *Thinking Critically* and is illustrated in the following passage written by Dr. Gilbert Muller, a professor in the English department at LaGuardia College, which describes the experiences of one of his students:

Typical of these individuals was Diego, a young man thoroughly confused about life and congenitally innocent of academic experience. Diego had been placed on three years’ probation for robbery prior to coming to LaGuardia. For him, the classroom was at the outset as much a refuge from the world as a place in which to learn. Yet at an early point—perhaps during the second week when he analyzed critical and uncritical thinking in an essay that dealt with the period when he and other gang members were robbing delivery boys of their Chinese food and money—Diego discovered that ideas *are* important. Ideas and the self exist in the world; both must be tested and evaluated; both demand scrutiny. Responsible thinking and action must be achieved if we are to lead authentic lives. Diego’s essay on his failure to think correctly and critically was not a passing paper by the standards set by the exit exam committee. But it was a “transformational” paper in terms of self-discovery and Diego’s commitment to work energetically and competently to pass the course. Spending more time in the Writing Center than any other class member, Diego moved in ten weeks’ time from a state of functional illiteracy to one of relative fluency.

Thinking Critically attempts to knit together the thinking abilities being explored with the fabric of the student's experience. It is hoped that the skills students learn in this fashion will become part of who they are—how they perceive their world, how they experience themselves and others, and how they understand the contexts within which their choices and decisions are made. It is based on the conviction that thinking abilities can be taught effectively only through a process of synthesis, giving students the means to clarify and make sense of themselves and the world in which they live.

CRITICAL THINKING AT LAGUARDIA COLLEGE

The Critical and Creative Thinking program at LaGuardia College (a branch of the City University of New York) began in 1979 with the development of its keystone course, Critical Thinking, which was created to explore the cognitive process and help provide students with the higher-order thinking and literacy abilities needed for academic and career success. Fueled by two grants from the National Endowment for the Humanities, that initial seed has developed into an interdisciplinary program that involves more than eighteen hundred students annually. Critical Thinking has four basic aims:

- Develop and refine students' higher-order thinking, reasoning, and problem-solving abilities, which many people believe to be in decline
- Enhance and accelerate the development of students' language abilities, based on the conviction that language and thought are reciprocal partners that work together in constructing an understanding of the world
- Stimulate students to apply their evolving thinking and language abilities to important issues in their life experience and to large social issues
- Foster qualities like maturity, responsibility, and citizenship

The curriculum for the course is embodied in this text, *Thinking Critically*, Eighth Edition, which has grown out of the collaborative efforts of those involved in the program. Because the course is an elective, its growth to more than forty sections annually can be seen as one indication that the LaGuardia community believes that it makes a significant contribution to the lives of our students, as expressed in the following student quotation:

The words *critical thinking* will never leave my vocabulary because by learning how to think critically, I am learning how to organize my ideas, support my point of view with reasons, and solve my problems rationally. I have learned more effective ways of dealing with my life, my children, and my schoolwork.

Of course, any one course in critical thinking will have a limited impact on students' modes of thought unless these same abilities are reinforced by other courses. At LaGuardia, our efforts to accomplish this goal of infusing critical thinking across the curriculum have been funded by support from the National Endowment for the Humanities. The project is structured around teaching pairs, in which a section of Critical Thinking is joined with a section of another course selected from a variety of academic areas. Students enrolled in a course pairing have to take both courses, providing a vehicle for integrating the courses and reinforcing intellectual abilities. These course pairings, working in concert with weekly meetings, give faculty the opportunity and guidance to redesign their courses and refine their teaching methodology with the aim of fostering critical thinking and critical literacy abilities. The curriculum of the program also includes the course Creative Thinking: Theory and Practice, which specifically addresses the processes we use to create and elaborate on new ideas—ideas that can then be evaluated with our critical thinking abilities.

The Critical and Creative Thinking program at LaGuardia has been characterized by the Educational Testing Service as “a mature educational program, which has involved and succeeded with a wide

spectrum of students.” The National Endowment for the Humanities has called it “a very enlightened approach to undergraduate instruction.”²

²The program and its results are detailed in the document “Critical Thinking at LaGuardia College” (final report to NEH), available by writing to Dr. John Chaffee at LaGuardia College, 31-10 Thompson Ave., Long Island City, NY 11101.

SECTION 2

Overview of Critical Thinking

- Why Teach Critical Thinking?
- Critical Thinking Models: Teaching Versus Infusing
- Infusing Critical Thinking Across the Curriculum
- Using Critical Thinking as a Framework for Teaching Writing and Reading
- Practical Strategies for Teaching Critical Thinking

WHY TEACH CRITICAL THINKING?

Traditionally, a higher education is thought to produce literate and sophisticated thinkers equipped with the knowledge and intellectual abilities citizens need to be informed and successful in their chosen careers. Yet in a modern day re-enactment of the fabled *Emperor's New Clothes*, there is a growing awareness that many students are not leaving college clothed with the literacy, intellectual understanding, and depth of insight supposedly symbolized by the degrees they have earned. The need for higher education to foster the development of these sophisticated thinking abilities in mainstream college courses is thus emerging as a problem of national significance. Although academically successful students are typically able to absorb information, memorize facts, and learn fixed procedures, they often experience profound difficulties in thinking critically and creatively about what they are learning.

As a result, one of the most common complaints by faculty in college-level courses—as well as by employers—is that students can't think effectively. When people speak about “thinking” in this way, they generally are referring to a variety of complex, cognitive activities that include the following:

- Solving problems
- Generating and organizing ideas
- Forming and applying concepts
- Designing systematic plans of action
- Constructing and evaluating arguments
- Exploring issues from multiple perspectives
- Applying knowledge to new situations
- Critically evaluating the logic and validity of information
- Developing evidence to support views
- Analyzing situations carefully
- Discussing subjects in an organized way

Although these abilities are clearly needed for academic study and career preparation, and despite teachers' aspiring to teach them as an educational ideal, critical thinking is rarely taught explicitly and

systematically. For example, numerous empirical studies¹ have revealed that teaching behavior in most high-school and college classrooms tends to focus on the lowest cognitive level of knowledge—the dispensing of facts—while higher intellectual operations (such as application, analysis, synthesis, and evaluation) are typically ignored.

CRITICAL THINKING MODELS: TEACHING VERSUS INFUSING

One of the current controversies in education is whether critical thinking abilities should be taught directly in courses such as those at LaGuardia College or whether these skills should be developed as part of the regular curriculum by integrating them into the discipline. Naturally, the infusion of critical thinking across the curriculum is a necessary—and desirable—objective. College faculty can be guided to redesign their teaching approaches so that students reinforce critical thinking abilities while mastering course content. Because of the complexity of the various disciplines and the amount of material expected to be covered as they are now construed, however, it is unrealistic to expect faculty to focus specifically on thinking processes while simultaneously teaching their disciplines.

As a consequence, just as the need for freshman composition courses has not been eliminated by the “writing across the curriculum” movement, so there is a need to teach cognitive abilities directly in the form of critical thinking courses. Students by and large need a direct, in-depth opportunity to understand and systematically develop these sophisticated thinking abilities early in their academic careers so that they can use these abilities to negotiate and appreciate the complexity of their disciplinary studies. Unless we focus on these thinking processes and abilities in a discrete course, students will not develop them to the full extent possible. Other reasons for having specific critical thinking courses include the following:

- Critical thinking has evolved in recent years into a distinct field of study, a multidisciplinary initiative focused on the operation of the cognitive process and the design of strategies for improving the effectiveness of people’s thinking abilities. The field has spawned numerous books and articles, research studies, evaluation instruments, conferences, professional societies, and advanced degree programs. As such, it is an appropriate subject for study in an academic course or courses.
- There is persuasive evidence that a well-designed, effectively taught course in critical thinking can accelerate the development of students’ higher-order thinking and literacy abilities.² Of course, care must be taken in designing and teaching critical thinking courses. For example, these abilities cannot be taught in isolation; they must be applied to a variety of contexts to facilitate transfer of these abilities to life situations and academic course work. In addition, the proper intellectual abilities must be taught in a way that fosters active and lasting learning.

¹Examples of this research include Kenneth Sirotnik, “Consistency, Persistency, and Mediocrity in Classrooms,” *Harvard Education Review* (1983); Carol Fischer and G. E. Grant, “Intellectual Levels in College Classrooms,” *Study of College Teaching* (1985); and Raymond S. Nickerson et al., *The Teaching of Thinking* (1988).

²Examples of this evidence include John Chaffee, “Critical Thinking at LaGuardia College,” report to the National Endowment for the Humanities, 1985; P. Chance, *Thinking in the Classroom: A Survey of Programs* (Columbia University, New York: Teachers College Press, 1986); J. Lohead and J. Clement, eds., *Cognitive Process Instruction: Research in Teaching Thinking Skills* (Philadelphia: Franklin Institute Press, 1979); and I. S. Schoefeld, “Evaluation Issues in Teaching Thinking Abilities,” *American Psychologist* 42, 958–959.

INFUSING CRITICAL THINKING ACROSS THE CURRICULUM

There is a historical trend in colleges to view education as the transfer of information from teacher to student. Teachers operating under this *coverage model* view their primary responsibility to be covering content rather than encouraging students to think about and critically evaluate what they are learning. This information-transfer perspective has been described in various ways, ranging from the high-tech “data bank” theory (students are blank disks waiting to be programmed) to the more earthy “feedlot” model (students are emaciated cattle who graduate when they reach a certain weight).

This kind of academic bulimia is encouraged and supported by the educational system as a whole. It is the way most faculty were educated, it provides clear criteria of student mastery that can be easily evaluated, and it defines the structure of curricula and the rigor of courses. Under this coverage model, teachers present complex bodies of information through readings and lectures, whereas students develop and refine the abilities needed to master large amounts of information and to re-present this information on examinations. Faculty are thus viewed as the sources of knowledge and the arbiters of correct answers, while students are seen as relatively passive receptacles into which knowledge is being poured. As a result, students are not encouraged to develop the critical thinking skills and higher-order intellectual abilities that they will need in the world beyond these courses.

In contrast, the *critical thinking model* is based on the belief that students should not merely master information but also should develop a progressive understanding of the process each discipline uses to generate and “think” about information. From this perspective, instead of focusing on the presentation of the facts and theories of history, the role of faculty is to introduce students to the way a historian thinks about and perceives the world, a perspective that leads to the construction of historical information and analysis of the historical process. For example, a critical thinking approach in history will emphasize the intellectual skills used to evaluate the reliability and accuracy of eyewitnesses, observation, and sources of information in constructing our “knowledge” of historical events. When taught in this way, students come to realize that each discipline is not simply a repository of accumulated knowledge but instead a dynamic, creative thinking activity—a structure of concepts and methodologies used to organize experience, approach problems, and give explanations. By learning to think in these different ways—historically, philosophically, scientifically, and mathematically—students learn new ways of viewing their world and developing their intellectual abilities.

Many faculty are concerned that if they use a critical thinking approach to teach their courses, students will not acquire enough knowledge. But these teachers are not being forced to choose between knowledge and critical thinking. In fact, both educational aims are more effectively achieved when they are pursued together. When we are stimulated to think about a particular subject, we learn more effectively and our learning is more lasting because we have organized and constructed it ourselves. In contrast, when we are merely trying to absorb information structured by others, our retention often doesn’t extend far beyond the end of the course. The underlying aim of the critical thinking approach to education is to create independent learners who will share the responsibility for learning and continue on a lifelong journey of exploration and discovery.

USING CRITICAL THINKING AS A FRAMEWORK FOR TEACHING WRITING AND READING

Learning to think critically is an essential and powerful vehicle for developing both writing and reading abilities, a fact that has led to the adoption of *Thinking Critically* in many language arts courses. According to the English department faculty at LaGuardia College, using critical thinking as a framework for teaching writing is an effective approach for improving both the *technical* aspects of students’ writing (in terms of coherence, organization, detail, and use of grammar) and the *quality* of their writing (in terms of depth, insight, and sophistication). They cite the following reasons:

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1. Critical thinking provides an intellectual and thematic framework that helps writing teachers place structural and grammatical concerns in a meaningful framework. Because students are involved and concerned about what they are writing, they are increasingly motivated to master the technical aspects of writing in order to represent the rich fabric of experience and articulate their thinking with clarity and precision.
2. A critical thinking framework permits students to understand the reciprocal relationship between thought and language, between the process of thinking and the process of writing. Students are stimulated to explore their own composing processes, gradually mastering the forms of thought and critical thinking that are the hallmark of mature and thoughtful writing. Additionally, the emphasis on precision in thought reinforces the idea of precision in word choice and prose structure. The dual emphasis on the key language/thought categories of fact, inference, and judgment also benefits the students, giving them the means to apply these concepts appropriately.
3. The conceptual themes of critical thinking lend a rigor and seriousness to students' writing. Students are challenged—and guided—to think and write about important topics that build on the cognitive activities and critical explorations being undertaken.
4. The emphasis of critical thinking on the active exploration and discovery of ideas, both individually and in dialogue with others, challenges students to become actively engaged as a group in the learning/writing process. The focus on listening to others and carefully evaluating opinions, arguments, and information provides a context for collaborative learning/writing activities, enabling the group to develop from a collection of individuals into a community of concerned thinkers and writers. Students learn to examine their own opinions more analytically and relate these opinions to the world at large by assessing arguments and alternative points of view in dialogue with others.

According to LaGuardia reading department faculty, using critical thinking as a framework for teaching reading is an effective approach for improving both the mechanics and sophistication of students' reading abilities for the following reasons:

1. The critical thinking framework enables students to acquire the concept of reading as a thinking activity rather than as a series of decoding skills. This insight into reading as a complex, cognitive, and metacognitive activity—and its component skills and strategies—results in accelerated and enhanced reading development. Instead of expecting spoonfeeding of information and demanding, “What’s the answer?” students become active learners, involving themselves in the process of finding answers and learning from that process.
2. A critical thinking approach helps students to understand and develop the interrelated thinking abilities that constitute the reading process, including problem-solving, forming and applying concepts, and relating ideas to larger conceptual frameworks. For example, students learn how to approach challenging passages systematically by defining the comprehension problems, identifying and evaluating possible interpretations based on contextual clues, and arriving at provisional conclusions. Critical thinking also helps students to understand the organizational structures and thinking patterns that writers use to create and express meaning, such as classification, definition, causal and process analysis, and argumentation. At the same time, students are learning how to use these ways of conceptualizing, relating, and organizing experience in order to create and express meaning themselves.
3. The emphasis of critical thinking on thinking about thinking provides a foundation for the metacognitive abilities used by effective readers: monitoring understanding, setting goals, analyzing purposes, anticipating ideas and events, and evaluating the author’s point of view.
4. The critical thinking approach encourages students to examine their own opinions more analytically and to relate those opinions to the world at large. By engaging in spontaneous and

effective dialogue with others, they learn to assess arguments and alternative points of view synthesizing information and re-evaluating opinions. The net result is a sense of community and mutual support that greatly facilitates development, giving students the confidence to enter into the learning process in an open, collaborative fashion.

PRACTICAL STRATEGIES FOR TEACHING CRITICAL THINKING

A teacher, to paraphrase the philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche, is an artist with concepts. Effective teaching is an extraordinarily complex and intensely personal activity, and in the final analysis students often don't rise any higher than the people who stimulate, guide, and inspire them. For example, if one goal of higher education is for students to develop their critical and creative thinking abilities, they must be taught by faculty who are themselves critical and creative thinkers and who embody and engender these qualities in every phase of their teaching.

Although many college faculty would agree with the general aims of critical thinking, difficulties arise when translating those aims into specific strategies and activities. There is a very large and rapidly expanding body of literature on intellectual development. Following are some of the major themes in this literature that can serve as guidelines in conceptualizing your courses and planning your learning strategies.

1. *Articulate the critical thinking aims for your course.* The course objectives for academic courses are typically defined in terms of the content to be covered or the behavioral skills to be mastered, and this emphasis is expressed in the course structure and evaluative measures. Fostering critical thinking entails specifying the thinking and conceptual abilities students are expected to develop in various aspects of the course as well as in the course as a whole. Once these abilities are identified, faculty are in a position to design activities and implement teaching strategies that will foster the development of the abilities.
2. *Stimulate active learning.* Active learning lies at the heart of effective, lasting education. Strategies that stimulate an active discovery approach to learning include interactive teaching, which encourages student questioning and participation; collaborative group work based on peer analysis and evaluation; student-led discussion, which explores key concepts dialogically; projects that stimulate students to apply the knowledge they are gaining to develop and test hypotheses, generalize to new situations, and evaluate the reasoning being presented; and having students articulate their thinking/reasoning and receive feedback in order to encourage their awareness of their cognitive processes. These and other approaches encourage students to become actively involved in constructing their own understanding and sharing the responsibility for their learning.
3. *Encourage well-supported conclusions.* Everybody has beliefs. What distinguishes sophisticated thinkers is that their conclusions are informed, supported by reasons and evidence. In much of college study, there is an inordinate emphasis on the "correct answer." But the reasoning process one uses to reach conclusions often is more interesting than the conclusions themselves, and it is the effectiveness of this reasoning process that often helps determine our career and life success.
4. *Encourage perspective taking.* All individuals are involved in constructing their understanding of the world as they actively select, organize, and interpret their experience in order to decide what to believe, feel, and do. All aspects of the interactive process are colored by "screens"—individual values, interests, biases, and predispositions—that influence what we perceive, how we process information, and how we decide to act. Critical thinking involves becoming aware of our screens (and those of others) by examining various viewpoints on issues and situations. As a result, critical thinkers strive not only to support their views with reasons and evidence, but also to think within points of view or frames of reference with which they disagree and to understand the reasons that support these alternative perspectives.

For students to develop these abilities, faculty must introduce multiple viewpoints, ambiguity, and disagreement among authorities. In addition, they must encourage students to be open to other views and new ideas and be flexible enough to modify ideas in light of new information or better insights. For example, examining a variety of historical accounts regarding the Vietnam War leads to an appreciation of the complexity of the issues and the reasons for conflicting interpretations.

5. *Stimulate thinking and language use at all cognitive levels.* Benjamin Bloom³ identified a variety of ways in which people organize and interpret information (Bloom's Taxonomy), ranging from relatively simple levels (recall and comprehension) to more complex levels (application, analysis, synthesis, and evaluation). As noted earlier, research shows that most secondary-school and college teaching focuses on the simpler cognitive levels, recall and comprehension. If students are to develop higher-order thinking abilities, they must be challenged to do so within their course activities. Here are some sample questions that can be used to stimulate use of the various levels of cognitive functioning:

Recall: Identification and recall of information

Who, what, when, where, how _____?

Describe _____

Comprehension: Organization and selection of facts and ideas

Retell _____ in your own words.

What is the main idea of _____?

Application: Use of facts, rules, and principles

How is _____ an example of _____?

How is _____ related to _____?

Why is _____ significant?

Analysis: Separation of a whole into its component parts

What are the parts or features of _____?

Classify _____ according to _____.

Outline/diagram/web _____.

How does _____ compare/contrast with _____?

What evidence can you list for _____?

Synthesis: Combination of ideas to form a new whole

What would you predict/infer from _____?

What ideas can you add to _____?

How would you create/design a new _____?

What might happen if you combined _____ with _____?

What solutions would you suggest for _____?

Evaluate: Development of opinions, judgments, or decisions

³Benjamin Bloom (ed.), *Taxonomy of Educational Objectives: Cognitive Domain/Affective Domain* (New York: McKay, 1956).

Do you agree that _____?

What do you think about _____?

What is the most important _____?

Prioritize _____.

How would you decide about _____?

What criteria would you use to assess _____?

6. *Promote critical literacy.* The development of our thinking abilities is closely tied to the development of our language abilities, and vice versa. This is due to the interwoven and reciprocal relations between thinking and language. Although colleges have traditionally been committed to the goal of developing articulate and literate thinkers, writers, speakers, and readers, a review of typical college courses and textbooks reveals an absence of critical literacy. Many examinations are objective, giving students little opportunity to express their thinking in any systematic and developed fashion. Much of the reading they are required to do has as its main goal the transfer of information, not the critical evaluation of the ideas being presented. And many of the classes are cast primarily in a lecture format, reinforcing the notion that students are passive receptacles into which information is poured, not thinkers who can question, reflect, and exchange ideas with others. If students are to develop these sophisticated language/thinking abilities, they must have consistent opportunities to complete substantive writing assignments, critically evaluate challenging readings, and discuss ideas thoughtfully and systematically with other members of the class.
7. *Build from students' experience.* Effective learning involves relating what students are learning to their own experience, building systematically from their concrete, familiar contexts to more abstract, conceptual understandings. One of the key insights of modern cognitive psychology is the fact that we create explanations and solve problems in ways that are consistent with our ways of thinking, and unless instruction is somehow "matched" to the student's way of making sense of reality, the students will learn little. If we merely try to transfer our knowledge and insights, oblivious to the students' context and ways of thinking, much of their "learning" will be rote, involving memorization of key facts and manipulating bits of information that have no coherent or lasting meaning for them.

A more effective approach is to enable students to expand their frame of reference gradually, building on what they know by systematically integrating new information into their framework of meaning. For example, if we are teaching students strategies for problem solving, we might begin by having them solve problems from their own experience before moving on to more abstract, less personalized contexts. This approach gives them the opportunity to internalize the problem-solving methodology that is being developed as they begin thinking like problem solvers. Once internalized, this way of thinking becomes an ongoing part of the way they make sense of the world and equips them to move progressively to more abstract applications.

SECTION 3

Teaching a Critical Thinking Course

- The Challenge of Teaching Critical Thinking
- Introducing Students to the Course
- Constructing a Syllabus
- Sample Syllabi
- Teaching Strategies
- Additional Critical Thinking Activities
- Evaluating Student Progress
- Examination Questions
- Critical Thinking Examinations

THE CHALLENGE OF TEACHING CRITICAL THINKING

The prospect of teaching a course in critical thinking is both daunting and inspiring. It is daunting because the thinking process is so complex and elusive. To complicate matters even more, we have to use our thinking process to explore our thinking process. And finally, if a course in critical thinking is to be effective, students must not simply learn *about* the thinking process; they must be stimulated and guided to think more effectively in their everyday lives.

Teaching a course in critical thinking also is one of the most inspiring and rewarding experiences that a teacher can have. Because the thinking process is such an integral part of who we are as people, the prospect of expanding students' thinking implies expanding who they are as human beings—the perspective from which they view the world, the concepts and values they use to guide their choices, and the impact they have on the world as a result of those choices. Teaching people to become critical thinkers does not mean simply equipping them with certain intellectual tools; it involves their personal transformation and its commensurate impact on the quality of their lives and those around them. This is education at its most inspiring!

As explained in the first section of this *Instructor's Resource Manual*, the book *Thinking Critically*, Eighth Edition, is designed to serve as a comprehensive introduction to the cognitive process while helping students develop the higher-order thinking abilities needed for academic study and career success. Based on a nationally recognized interdisciplinary program in critical and creative thinking established in 1979 at LaGuardia College, this academically rigorous and innovative course integrates various perspectives on the thinking process drawn from a variety of disciplines such as philosophy, cognitive psychology, linguistics, and the language arts (English, reading, and oral communication).

The LaGuardia course in critical thinking, taken by more than eighteen hundred students annually, is designed to address a crucial need in higher education by introducing students to the rapidly emerging field of critical thinking and fostering sophisticated intellectual and language abilities. The course and its text, *Thinking Critically*, are constructed so that students apply their evolving thinking abilities to a variety of subjects drawn from academic disciplines, contemporary issues, and their life experiences. The course and the text are based on the assumption, supported by research, that learning to think more effectively is a synthesizing

process, knitting critical thinking abilities together with academic content and the fabric of students' experiences. Thinking learned in this way becomes a constitutive part of who students are.

With these considerations in mind, it should be clear that teaching a course in critical thinking involves embarking on a journey that is full of unanticipated challenges and unexpected triumphs. I have written *Thinking Critically* to serve as an effective guide for this journey. Additionally, this *Instructor's Resource Manual* is designed to complement the text in useful, practical ways. In the final analysis, however, you must embark on the journey alone, relying on your experience, expertise, and critical thinking abilities to provide productive education experiences for your students. The more you engage in this challenging process, the more comfortable and proficient you will become. And in time, you may have the opportunity to help colleagues embark on their own critical thinking journeys.

INTRODUCING STUDENTS TO THE COURSE

Students entering your critical thinking course will have at least as many questions, anxieties, and uncertainties as you do. Since critical thinking is a field with which students are probably unfamiliar, it is important to spend some time familiarizing them with this area of inquiry, as well as the nature and purpose of your course. You might begin by asking them, individually or in groups, to describe the thinking process and explain why it is important. In the subsequent discussion, their views can be *analyzed* (What are the various dimensions of the thinking process? What exactly is going on in our minds when we think? How do various perspectives compare and contrast?), *synthesized* (How can we relate these various perspectives into an integrated whole?), *exemplified* (What are examples of the thinking process in action?), and *evaluated* (What are the criteria for determining effective thinking?).

To help familiarize students with the purposes and history of the critical thinking course and text, the Introduction to Critical Thinking handout on pages 17-18 can be distributed, incorporated into the syllabus, or simply used by you to guide initial discussions regarding these issues.

CONSTRUCTING A SYLLABUS

Every course begins with a syllabus, a document that expresses the basic philosophy of the course, its educational objectives, and an outline of the topics and assignments. Because a course in critical thinking is an unfamiliar quantity to most students, creating a coherent, detailed syllabus takes on added importance. As with most syllabi, the first part will probably include basic information about the course, as well as a general statement of the course objectives. Several sample syllabi from the critical thinking course at LaGuardia College follow in the next section.

The second part of the syllabus typically contains the outline of topics and assignments for the semester.

There are many Thinking Activities in the text. These Thinking Activities are crucial to the success of your course because they give students the opportunity to express their thinking in a systematic fashion, to apply the concepts they are exploring, and to improve their thinking by sharing their ideas with their classmates. It is not realistic to have students complete all of the Thinking Activities in the text; you can select the ones that you believe will be most productive in accomplishing your specific aims.

To make full use of the text, you can divide the homework assignment section of your syllabus into two sections, as shown by the following example:

Homework Assignment

Class Number	Class Topic	Read Text	Hand-in Exercises
1	Introduction to thinking	Pages 1–10	Thinking Activity 1.1
2	Solving problems	Pages 11–27	Thinking Activity 1.3

Although a great deal of thought went into the organization of the text and the sequence of the chapters, it is likely that you will create a course structure that is appropriate to the niche your critical thinking occupies in the curriculum, to the students who are enrolled, and to your own areas of expertise and interest. Similarly, there are some sections of the text that you will choose to cover quickly or skip entirely and others that you will explore in depth, perhaps supplementing the text with additional materials. This is precisely the way that *Thinking Critically* is designed to be used: as a flexible teaching resource that you tailor to your own situation.

SAMPLE SYLLABI

Introduction to Critical Thinking

Welcome to this course in critical thinking. We have worked very hard to make this course stimulating, informative, and entertaining, and we hope that you will find the experience of taking it worthwhile.

This course has two general goals. First, it is designed to help you understand what the thinking process is, a fascinating journey that is full of unexpected twists and turns. Second, by engaging you in a systematic exploration of the thinking process, our aim is to stimulate and guide you to think more clearly, insightfully, and creatively.

You may be asking yourself, “Why should I take a course in thinking? Don’t I already know how to think?” Of course you do, and quite effectively as well. If you were not an effective thinker, you would not be enrolled in college, working in a career, raising children, or performing the many other activities that make up your life. However, thinking is an ability that we can all improve, since few (if any) of us use our thinking abilities to the full extent. In this regard, thinking is like many other human abilities. For example, if we examine the people who are at the top of their careers—baseball players, doctors, ballet dancers—we find that one thing they have in common is their desire to improve their abilities, even though they are more proficient than the vast majority of people. We must have that same commitment to excellence if we are to achieve our potentials as well.

Although everyone thinks, most of us have not spent much time trying to understand the thinking process—thinking about our thinking. In recent years, people have learned a great deal about the cognitive (thinking) process and how it operates, and we will be exploring many of these discoveries during this course. By understanding how the thinking process functions, we can learn to do it better through systematic study and guided practice.

Attending college is another reason to study the thinking process. As you may have discovered, college is a somewhat different world from that with which many people are familiar. To succeed at college, you must be able to think in special, sophisticated ways. Not only are you expected to master large amounts of information, but you also must understand complex and abstract ideas, systems of thought, and methodologies. In addition to learning information, your best classes will require that you think about and use the information you are learning—to apply, analyze, synthesize, and evaluate. Performing these tasks successfully means that we must be able to use our minds to think in sophisticated, effective ways.

In addition to thinking effectively, success in college and most careers requires that we use language effectively. We must be able not only to think clearly but also to express our ideas clearly to other people. We also must be able to understand the ideas of others by reading about those ideas (as you are doing now) or by listening to people explain them. And finally, we must be able to exchange ideas with other people through organized discussions.

To perform these language activities effectively, we also must be able to think effectively. Although language and thinking are separate processes, they are very closely connected and continually interact with each other.

CONTINUED

For example, have you ever tried to explain your ideas to someone either orally or in writing when you weren't really clear about those ideas yourself? In most cases, these efforts are not successful because expressing your ideas clearly means you must first understand them clearly. At the same time, developing our abilities to use language clearly and precisely also helps us think more clearly and precisely. Thinking and language work together to produce effective thought and communication.

Finally, improving our thinking abilities should help us in our personal lives as well. Each day we are confronted with problems to solve, decisions to make, information to understand, and goals to strive for. Our ability to meet these challenges depends in large measure on the quality of our thinking abilities.

In summary, it is our hope that by taking this course you will learn about the cognitive process while improving the thinking and language abilities required for academic study and career success, acquiring the intellectual tools needed to be powerful thinkers and informed citizens.

History of the Course

The book *Thinking Critically* is based on a highly successful course developed at LaGuardia College, a branch of the City University of New York, and replicated at colleges and universities around the country. The original course, Critical Thinking Skills, was developed to explore the cognitive process and promote higher-order thinking, reasoning, and problem-solving abilities. In addition, the course was designed to explore these thinking and language abilities within students' lives, giving them the opportunity to apply these evolving abilities to issues and problems in their own experience. As one student expressed it, "The words *critical thinking* will never leave my vocabulary because by learning how to think critically, I am learning how to organize my ideas, support my point of view with reasons, and solve my problems rationally. I have learned more effective ways of dealing with my life, my children, and my schoolwork."

This course will introduce you to the field of critical thinking, an area of study that involves the contributions of many disciplines. The field of critical thinking is of necessity interdisciplinary because the human mind is far too complex to understand itself in any one-dimensional way. We will never understand how we see a sunset, speak a language, solve a problem, write a poem, swallow our pride, or even add two numbers merely by following a single line of inquiry. As a result, the goal of critical thinking is to integrate the methods of the various disciplines into a comprehensive picture of the mind.

Critical Thinking

M W TH 9:15–10:15
Fall

Instructor:
Office Hour: W 11:30–12:30
Office: Hum Dept. Room 202

Course Description

The goal of this course is to sharpen *your* ability to *think* effectively. Critical Thinking helps us to understand ourselves and the world around us. We may use our critical thinking skills in a wide range of situations from identifying and correcting problems on a national or global scale to achieving our personal goals. Critical thinking enables us to solve problems and to make the best choices in our academic, professional, and personal lives. Effective thinking involves close attention to detail, an ability to stand back from situations, weighing of pros and cons (the positive and negative attributes involved in every situation), and ultimately a willingness to make decisions based on information that has been collected and to take responsibility for those decisions once they have been made. In this way, critical thinking involves how we see the world, how we organize what we see, *and* how we behave in the world.

In our society, the skills of reading, writing, speaking, and listening are essential to critical thinking. The exchange of ideas with others is a crucial component of critical thinking in action. For this reason we will have extensive reading and written assignments in this class. Class discussions will be frequent and lively. Everyone will be expected to contribute. Your success in this course depends on your willingness to commit yourself to developing the thinking potentials that you possess.

Course Requirements

Attendance

All students registered for this class must be available to be in class every day for the duration of the class. If you are not able to be here for the whole class, you shouldn't be taking it. **Four absences** from class are allowed. Anyone missing **five** or more classes will receive a failing grade. Persistent **lateness** will not be tolerated. Anyone not present when attendance is taken will be marked absent. It is your responsibility to talk to the Instructor after class about the reasons for your lateness. If a student is late **four** times, he or she will be credited an absence.

Text

Thinking Critically by John Chaffee is available at the LaGuardia Bookstore. Recommended: a good portable dictionary (that you can bring to class).

Grading

Student performance and progress will be evaluated on the basis of attendance, homework, class participation, quizzes and tests, debate performance, papers, and a final examination.

CONTINUED

Note Taking

You are expected to take notes during all classes and encouraged to take notes on the reading assignments. It is crucial to your success as a student that you learn to take notes that are adequate and precise. The ability to take “good” notes requires that you use two clearly defined skills: *summarizing*—being aware of the main idea or theme of the topic being discussed and of the major points offered in support of the main theme—and *paraphrasing*—restating these ideas in your own words. The best way to develop these skills is through practice, and we will do some activities in class to help you develop them.

Class Participation

The aim of this course is to develop your interest and ability to *think*. Bertrand Russell once said, “Most people would rather die than think—and most do!” Thinking and reflection are essential for our survival and for our development as mature, aware human beings. The best way for you to develop and sharpen your capacity to think is for you to be *actively involved* in the classes. This means not only being *attentive* in class, but also *participating* in the class discussions. Thoughtful participation in class will be an important consideration in the final grade you receive in the course.

Homework

There will be frequent reading and writing assignments in this class. Homework is an important part of the course in terms of learning and also your grade, and it must be completed before the beginning of class.

Examinations

There will be two examinations during the course. The questions will be in the form of short essays and will require that you demonstrate the thinking abilities that you have acquired. They will test for your understanding of important concepts that we have studied, the ways that you work with ideas, and your ability to express your thinking clearly and coherently.

Writing Assignments

In all of the written work that you do for this course, you should make certain that (1) your work is typed, on a computer with word-processing software if possible; (2) spelling and punctuation are accurate; and (3) grammar and syntax are correct. Before you hand in any written assignment, be sure to *proofread* your work, paying particular attention to the errors you know frequently occur in your own writing.

CRITICAL THINKING

LaGuardia College

Fall

David Ting Yih

Syllabus

“The unexamined life is not worth living. . . .”—Socrates

“Homework” refers to reading; “HW” refers to written assignments.

1. (Tuesday, September 7) Introduction:

- Introduction.
- Class responsibilities and requirements.
- Why is the mind a terrible thing to waste?
- What is thinking?

Homework: Read the “Preface” and through Malcolm X’s “From the Autobiography of Malcolm X” in Chapter 1 of your textbook. HW1: Write a one-page response to the passage with the following question in mind: Are Malcolm X’s experiences similar or different from your own? Use “Questions for Analysis” to help formulate your response.

2. (Thursday, September 9) Defining Goals:

- Why are you here today?
- How are Malcolm X’s experiences similar to or different from your own?
- Working toward goals.
- “Thinking Activity 1.1.” Analyze a goal you have achieved.

Homework: HW2: List five short-term goals you would like to achieve by next week. Rank them in order of importance, estimate how much time each will take to accomplish, and fit them into your daily schedule. Use “Achieving Short-Term Goals” as a guide. Hand in a Xerox copy; keep the original for your record. You will share in class next week your reasons for achieving or not achieving your goals.

3. (Monday, September 13) Working Toward Your Goals:

- Working toward short- and long-term goals.
- Project One discussion (see handout).
- “Thinking Activity 1.2”; long-term goals.

Homework: Read “An Organized Approach to Making Decisions” and “Deciding on a Career” in Chapter 1. HW3: Do “Thinking Activity 1.4.” Start research for Project One: Go see a movie.

4. (Tuesday, September 14) Making Decisions:

- Impulsive, intuitive, and analytic decision-making.
- Five steps to organized decision-making.

CONTINUED

- “Thinking Activity 1.4.”

Homework: HW4: Do “Thinking Activity 1.5.”

Monday, September 20, no class

Tuesday, September 21, no class

5. (Thursday, September 23) “Be All That You Can Be”:

- Fulfill your potential.
- “Thinking Activity 1.6.” “Identifying Your Abilities.”

Homework: Read “What Are Your Abilities?”

6. (Monday, September 27) Discovering “Who” You Are:

- Who are you? What do you like to do? What are your abilities? Thinking Activity 1.7. Define your interests.

Homework: Read the entire section on “Living Creatively” in Chapter 1.

7. (Tuesday, September 28) Analyzing Issues:

- Thinking “Activity 1.7.” Describe your current and future self.
- Homework: Read the rest of Chapter 1. HW7: Choose any of the remaining “Thinking Activities,” and be prepared to discuss overcoming blocks to creativity and sharing strategies in class.

8. (Thursday, September 30) Summary:

- Summarize Chapter 1.
- Thinking critically and thinking creatively.
- Project One due.

Homework: HW8: Get a copy of the *New York Times* (or log on to the web site; registration is free). Clip or print out the article that interests you the most and one that bores you. Write a brief explanation as to why you feel the way you do about each.

“Thinking Critically is thinking *about* your thinking so that you can clarify and improve it.” John Chaffee, *Thinking Critically*.

9. (Monday, October 4) Oral Presentation Activity:

- Newspaper article presentation and oral presentation activity.
- Expand your vocabulary by listing words you are unfamiliar with from various reading materials (textbooks, newspapers, magazines, or books) and see if you can utilize the words in your writing assignments. List the new words and their definitions on the bottom of the page.
- Read the *New York Times* regularly, clipping or printing out articles that interest you for class discussion.

Homework: Read the first part of Chapter 2 (up to the section titled “Thinking Actively”) and the “Thinking Passages” on “Liberty v. Security” at the end of the chapter. HW9: Do “Questions for Analysis” at the end of the chapter.

CONTINUED

10. (Tuesday, October 5) Active Thinking:

- Be an active thinker: Get involved, take initiative, follow through, and take responsibility.
- Discuss “Questions for Analysis” at the end of the chapter.
- Discuss Project Two (see handout).

Homework: Read “Thinking Actively” section in Chapter 2. HW10: Do “Thinking Activity 2.3.”

11. (Thursday, October 7) Active Learning, Active Questioning:

- Six categories of questioning: fact, interpretation, analysis, synthesis, evaluation, and application.

Homework: Read “Carefully Exploring Situations” with “Questions and Thinking Independently” in Chapter 2. HW11: Do “Thinking Activity 2.5.”

Monday, October 11, Columbus Day, no class

12. (Tuesday, October 12) Thinking Independently, Understanding Others:

- “Thinking Activity 2.4.” Are you sure the earth is not flat?
- Is the way you see things the way things really are?
- “Thinking Activity 2.5.” We could all be wrong.

Homework: Read “Viewing Situations from Different Perspectives” and “Supporting Diverse Perspectives with Reasons and Evidence” in Chapter 2. HW12: Do “Thinking Activity 2.7.”

13. (Thursday, October 14) Different World Views:

- Diverse perspectives.
- Reasons and evidence.
- Agree to disagree.

Homework: Read “Discussing Ideas in an Organized Way” in Chapter 2. HW13: “Do Thinking Activity 2.8.”

14. (Monday, October 18) Organized Discussion:

- See beyond our “lenses”: Do you have a dialogical or a monological relationship to the world?
- Strategies for discussing ideas in an organized way: Listen; support views with reasons and evidence; respond appropriately; ask the right questions; and increase understanding.
- Dialogue as a continuous process.

Homework: Read the rest of Chapter 2. HW14: Respond to “Questions for Analysis” at the end of the chapter.

15. (Tuesday, October 19) The Practice of Critical Thinking:

- View Video: *Thinking Toward Decisions*.

Homework: No homework; concentrate on Project Two.

16. (Thursday, October 21) Becoming a Critical Thinker:

- Discuss Video.
- Discuss HW14: “Questions for Analysis.”

CONTINUED

Homework: No homework; concentrate on Project Two.

17. (Monday, October 25) Dialogue Enactment:

- Project Two due.

Homework: Read “Thinking Critically About Problems” and “Introduction to Solving Problems” in Chapter 3. HW15: Prepare for “The Trial of Mary Barnett.”

18. (Tuesday, October 26) Continue Dialogues and Course Review:

- “The Trial of Mary Barnett”: What are the issues? What is the evidence? What are the arguments from the prosecution and the defense? What is the verdict from the jury?
- Course review.

HW #16: Answer the “Questions for Analysis” at the end of the chapter, and reflect on your verdict.

Thinking is problem solving.

19. (Thursday, October 28) Introduction to Problem Solving:

- My friend with a drug problem.
- Five steps to approach the problem: (1) What is the problem? (2) What are the alternatives? (3) What are the advantages and/or disadvantages of each alternative? (4) What is the solution? (5) How well is the solution working?
- “What’s your problem?”

Homework: Read “Solving Complex Problems,” “Accepting the Problem,” and Steps 1–5 in Chapter 3.

HW #17: Do “Thinking Activity 3.2.”

20. (Monday, November 1) Solving Complex Problems:

- The advanced version of the five-step method of problem solving.

Homework: Read the rest of Chapter 3.

21. (Tuesday, November 2) Money Management and Time Management:

- Five steps to better money and time management.
- Prepare for the “Liberty Versus Security” team discussion.

Homework: Read “The Current Emergency Justifies a Shifting of the Balance” and “National I.D. Cards: One Size fits All.”

22. (Thursday, November 4) “Liberty Versus Security” and Solving Nonpersonal Problems:

- Discuss “The Current Emergency Justifies a Shifting of the Balance” and “National I.D. Cards: One Size fits All.”

Homework: Read “Living Under an Electronic Eye” and “Construction of an Enemy.”

23. (Monday, November 8) “Liberty Versus Security,” continued discussion

- Discuss “Living Under an Electronic Eye” and “Construction of an Enemy.”
- Discuss Project Three (see handout).

Homework: Respond to “Who am I?” part 1 of Project Three (see handout).

CONTINUED

24. (Tuesday, November 9) “Who Are You?”

- Discuss “Who am I?”
- Discuss Project Three.

Homework: Research part 2 of Project Three (see handout). Read the beginning of Chapter 4 through “Thinking Activity 4.2.”

Understanding Perception

25. (Thursday, November 11) Introduction to Perception:

- What do you see, hear, feel, smell, and taste?
- Which do you see: young woman or old woman?
- What is the guy doing?
- What is the monkey doing?

Homework: Read “Viewing the World Through Lenses,” “Selecting Perceptions,” “Organizing Perceptions,” “Interpreting Perceptions,” and “Analyzing Different Accounts of the Assassination of Malcolm X” in Chapter 4.

26. (Monday, November 15) World of Different Perceptions:

- What is your area of expertise? How does your knowledge differ from others’?
- Five accounts of the Assassination of Malcolm X.

Homework: Read accounts of the 9/11 terrorist attacks, “Thinking Passage: Acquired Knowledge,” “Thinking Critically About Perceptions,” and “Thinking Passage: Sonja Tanner” in Chapter 4.

27. (Tuesday, November 16) Your Experience, Your Perception:

- Thinking critically about perception.
- Your perception, my perception, watch out for stereotypical perception.

Homework: Prepare for part 2 of Project Three.

28. (Thursday, November 18) Project Three, part 2: Essay Presentation

- Group presentation of assigned essays.

Homework: Complete part 3 of Project Three. Read “Thinking Passages: Perceptions and Global Conflict” in Chapter 4.

29. (Monday, November 22) Global Conflict:

- Class discussion: Perceptions of Global Conflict.
- Part 3 of Project Three due.

Homework: Answer Questions for Analysis at the end of Chapter 4.

30. (Tuesday, November 23) Your Perceptions on Global Conflict:

- Class discussion: Personal approaches to global problems.

Thursday, November 25, Thanksgiving, no class

“You can believe what is not so, but you cannot know what is not so.”

CONTINUED

31. (Monday, November 29) Believing and Knowing:

- Believing and perceiving.
- Believing and knowing.

Homework: Read Chapter 5 up to “Thinking Activity 5.6.” HW18: Do “Thinking Activity 5.6.”

32. (Tuesday, November 30), Art Trip:

- Class visits an art museum exhibit.

33. (Thursday, December 2) Knowledge and Truth:

- Knowledge and truth.
- Believing and knowing.

Homework: Read the rest of Chapter 5.

34. (Monday, December 6) Belief and Astrology:

- Belief based on indirect experience.
- Astrology.

35. (Tuesday, December 7) Conclusion:

- What is thinking?

36. (To be announced) Final Exam

CRITICAL THINKING

LaGuardia Community College

David Ting Yih

Project One

Write a three-page letter, telling me about a movie you saw and liked a lot, and try to convince me to go see it. *This is not a film report*, so limit your description of the film to one page only. On the second page you want to explain what the film means to you (for example: “The movie *Saving Private Ryan* meant a lot to me because my grandfather fought in World War II. After seeing the film I feel that I can understand what he went through . . .”). The final section must include thoughtful reasoning about why I should go see it (for example: “Even though you do not know my grandfather, seeing this film will allow you to witness the horror of war . . .”). Sometimes, personal reasons are more meaningful than purely aesthetic ones. You have no idea what my taste is in cinema, but it does not matter, because it is not about what I like, rather it is about *why* I *should* like it.

The letter must be typed, as all project papers must be typed. I will not accept handwritten work. All projects should be double spaced with your name and class on the upper left corner. You may start with “Dear David.”

CRITICAL THINKING

LaGuardia Community College
David Ting Yih

Project Two

There are different ways of conveying ideas. One of the oldest is by a method called dialogue. The passage I read to you in the first day of our class was by the ancient Greek thinker named Plato whose many philosophical treatises were written in the dialogue form around 400 B.C.E. In fact, it was not until the sixteenth century that the essay as a style of writing became the dominant means of expounding ideas or opinions.

Part 1

For this project, find a partner in your class and create a dialogue dealing with any topic you wish. Each of you will take a different position regarding this topic and engage in a thoughtful discussion. You may want to approach the project as if it were a dialogue for a movie or a theater piece consisting of dramatic effects, such as: Two old friends confronting certain deep disagreement over a family issue; or two strangers involved in a discussion by chance, over a public incident about which they hold conflicting opinions.

You may want to imagine a setting such as a cafe in the Village, on the #7 train going to Flushing for a dinner, a hallway in LaGuardia College, or anywhere you want. Make sure you and your partner express two opposing sides of the same issue. Other important points to consider: Depict the partners as careful listeners by having them respond directly to what is said; show the partners answering and asking sincere questions in an attempt to attain a richer understanding of the subject matter.

The dialogue must be more than five pages.

Part 2

You will enact the dialogue in class, and the class will help me grade it.

Part 3

After completing the dialogue, each of you will write an essay summarizing your partner's point of view. You want to offer a detailed explanation of the viewpoint that is different from your own to demonstrate that you understand the reasoning behind the other viewpoint, even though you disagree with it.

(Part 1 of this project is based on lesson 15, and on the textbook *Thinking Critically*. If you have any questions please refer to the guidelines for Discussing Ideas in an Organized Way, in Chapter 2 of the textbook, or talk to me.)

CRITICAL THINKING

LaGuardia Community College
David Ting Yih

Project Three

We have so far explored the various mechanics of our thinking process. We have also learned constructive ways to ask questions and different methods of examining issues and problems from multiple perspectives. There are many things in this world we cannot know, but what we can be certain of is our existence, that we exist and that we are here. Two questions have perplexed the minds of thinkers since the beginning of human consciousness: “Why am I here?” and “Who am I?” The answer to the first question is nearly impossible for us to know; it begs for metaphysical explanations, which we are not equipped to explain here. But we can consider the second question because we are able to draw an answer from our experience based on social, political, and historical norms. As we have learned, however, our perception colors our experience, and our experience in turn affects our perceptions; we cannot rely uncritically on either.

The objective of this project is to apply the strategies of critical thinking to the questions of our identity: Who are you as a specific person? Why do you think so?

Part 1

Select one (only one) from the four categories of identity below and write a short essay (two typed pages) offering reasons and evidence for your choice.

Start by asking yourself: “Who am I?”

1. I am a person defined mostly by race, ethnic group, or country of origin. I am an **essentialist**.
2. I am a person defined mostly by a social community such as a church group, social club, gang affiliation, or a particular neighborhood. I am a **communitarian**.
3. I am a person who is at ease no matter where in the world or in what local communities I may be involved. I am a **cosmopolitan**.
4. I am a person who is uncomfortable everywhere in this world. I am a **stranger on this earth**.

Part 2

After responding to the question of “Who am I?” we turn our attention to two prominent intellectuals writing about problems in African-American identities. The class will be divided into two groups; each group will be assigned an essay to read (the two books are on reserve in the library). You have a week to read the essay on your own, then you will meet with your group in class and spend twenty-five minutes discussing the article. Afterward, each group will do a presentation of their article. Each member will be asked to say something: you want to explain the main ideas of the article, what you have learned from it, whether it affected your answer to the “Who am I?” question, if these ideas carry any applicability to your own life experience, etc. Once the presentation is done, each side will ask the other side questions, give feedback, and offer their thoughts.

Part 3

Conclude the project by writing an essay that summarizes what you have learned from this project and offer your final thoughts regarding the question of identity and racial politics today.

CRITICAL THINKING

LaGuardia Community College
David Ting Yih

Project Four

This project involves sending the class to a current art museum exhibit. Because the exhibit changes each semester, each semester's project description handout changes as well. The aim of this project is to expose students to the perplexing world of modern (or postmodern) art: from an exhibit of a video installation artist at the Whitney Museum of American Art, to the barn-size splatter paintings of Jackson Pollock at the Museum of Modern Art, the experience of which often disarms the students' more conventional understanding of art and forces them to take up the semester's lessons and to think critically about what they are seeing. Handouts for this project in the past have varied from a page of detailed instructions to a simple question: "What do you think?" without any instructions. The class meets back in school for discussions, and a paper is produced in the end.

Sample Syllabus for a Six-Week Course

Santa Fe Community College

Dawn Graziani

REA 2205 CRITICAL THINKING AND COLLEGE READING

SYLLABUS

Instructor: _____ Section: _____ Term: _____ Phone: _____ Email: _____ Office: _____

Introduction

Welcome! Critical Thinking and College Reading is developed and offered by the Reading Faculty in Academic Foundations. We continually revise and improve this course by reflecting on the following questions each semester:

1. What knowledge and skills are required for reading effectively and thinking critically and creatively in college and in a democratic, digital society?
2. How can students and teachers best construct that knowledge and develop the above skills in ways that will have a lasting impact on the learning process?
3. Why are creative and critical thinking important? What are the academic, professional, and personal contexts to which creative and critical thinking can be applied?
4. What does current research and expert opinion offer about the knowledge, skills, and applications of reading and creative and critical thinking?
5. Who are our students? What individual circumstances, backgrounds, interests, and goals do you bring to our classes that enrich and enlighten our collective learning experience?

This course assumes that effective thinking and communicating are fundamental to successful college learning and everyday living. Thus, we will begin by constructing understandings of thinking critically and creatively, learning actively, and communicating effectively. We will examine the general characteristics and practices of advanced learners, with a major focus on self-monitoring, self-assessing, and self-correcting thinking and learning patterns. We will also examine the specific attitudes, structures, processes, and applications of thinking central to comprehending and communicating ideas, solving problems, and making decisions. We will improve skills in analyzing and evaluating information, asking probing questions, and drawing logical conclusions with improved accuracy and fair-mindedness. We will also practice reading and listening with heightened awareness and empathy, writing and speaking with improved clarity and precision; and thinking and inquiring with originality. This course promotes making connections within and between academic disciplines, career areas, and personal life. The course applies core thinking and learning processes to college content areas and real-life scenarios, and it promotes the development of lifelong-learning habits. With these questions as guides, we can work together this semester to have a stimulating, informative, and enriching experience that will be valuable and lasting for each of us!

CONTINUED

Pre-requisites: College-level reading placement score *or* Successful completion of REA 0010

Outcomes

This course is designed for students to achieve the following outcomes. Use the column at the right to list specific activities that show how you know you have achieved each outcome:

You should be able to:

You have done this by:

- ✓ Construct and articulate operational definitions of the processes of critical thinking, creative thinking, active learning, and communicating.
- ✓ Articulate the significance of the above processes to successful college learning and everyday living.
- ✓ Make explicit connections between communicating, thinking, and learning, with emphasis on the transaction between reader/listener and writer/speaker.
- ✓ Recognize and develop attitudes and characteristics (traits) of effective thinkers, learners, and communicators.
- ✓ Evaluate and improve structures and processes of thinking, learning, and communicating by practicing systematic reflection, establishing intellectual standards, and striving for originality.
- ✓ Apply critical and creative thinking skills to problem solving, decision-making, and meaning making in various contexts.
- ✓ Assess and improve the effectiveness of interpretations, solutions, and decisions, or other outcomes of thinking by evaluating them according to standards of thinking.
- ✓ Use language to clarify thinking and communicate effectively by attending to the perceptual and contextual dimensions of language use.
- ✓ Understand words in context, interpret denotative and connotative language, and interpret inferences by attending to the perceptual and pragmatic dimensions of language.
- ✓ Recognize and understand topics, explicit and implicit main ideas, supporting details, and patterns of organization of text by representing them in notes, outlines, annotations, mind maps, and summaries.
- ✓ Recognize other's and one's own purpose, point of view, tone and style as represented in linguistic text.
- ✓ Distinguish between fact and opinion and detect bias.
- ✓ Draw valid inferences and conclusions.
- ✓ **Recognize, understand, develop, and demonstrate**

CONTINUED

ability with deductive and inductive reasoning processes.

- ✓ Assess the credibility of other's and one's own reasoning.

Evaluation

The following points will determine your course grade. Your instructor makes the final determination of awarding credit based on assignment criteria and deadlines. Your instructor is not obligated to provide extra credit or to accept late work. You are encouraged to attend all classes, complete all assignments, and meet all deadlines. Avoid making assumptions or neglecting expectations. Instead, ask questions and clarify expectations on all assignments. The information below provides more specific criteria for each component of the course.

A. Attendance & Activities	100 pts.
B. 3 Projects	300 pts.
C. 3 Tests & Final Exam	400 pts.
D. Portfolio & Reflection Paper	200 pts.

TOTAL = 1000 pts.

Attendance & Activities
100 pts.

Attendance is required for this course! You will receive points per day attended as determined by your instructor. Use the chart below to keep track of your attendance. For daily classwork and homework, you will be assigned a variety of activities worth various points in which you apply course content to specific readings, writings, and/or situations. Activities may require individual assessment (such as quizzes), participation in class, individual work outside of class, and/or participation in WebCT emails and discussions. Use the chart below to keep track of your activities points. *File all assignments in your portfolio.* **NOTE:** You are responsible for completing assigned readings and activities and studying class notes on a regular basis. **If you miss class or any portion of class, you are responsible for contacting your instructor and classmates to get any missed notes and assignments and to be prepared for the next class meeting. Your instructor makes the final determination of awarding attendance credit, accepting late work, or allowing make-up work based on her assignment policies as well as communication with individuals.**

Days Present and On Time									
<i>Your total days =</i>		/	<i>total days possible =</i>		<i>pts. (*add to total below)</i>				

CONTINUED

Activities			
*Attendance=	/	pts	
<i>Your total points=</i>		/	<i>total days possible =</i> /100 pts

Projects 300 pts.

You will complete three projects worth one hundred points each in which you apply the reading and critical thinking concepts and skills that you learn in class. Specific guidelines for each project will be provided separately. You are responsible for meeting all the guidelines and turning in each project by the scheduled due dates to be eligible for full credit.

Tests & Final Exam 400 pts.

You will take three multiple-choice tests worth one hundred points each on which you will demonstrate understanding of the reading and critical thinking concepts and skills for each portion of the course. Specific content for each test will be discussed separately. The final exam is comprehensive, testing all of the reading and critical thinking concepts covered throughout the entire semester. It is given on the pre-scheduled exam date and time. ****See the Final Exam Exemption option below.**** You are responsible to know the designated material by the test date. You must attend the scheduled tests to be eligible for full credit. **NO MAKE-UPS!!!**

****Final Exam Exemption****

If you have an A- average on your tests (min. 270 points, calculated after Test #3), you do not have to take the final exam. If you exempt the final exam, your A-average will be used as your exam score, or you may opt to take the exam and use your score if it improves your overall grade.

Day: _____	Date: _____	Time: _____	Room: _____	Bring: _____
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Course Portfolio & Reflection Paper 200 pts.

The course portfolio is a collection of and reflection upon your learning experience in this class. It is a 3-ring binder with dividers in which you organize handouts, notes, quizzes, activities, projects, and reflections. Thus, be sure to save *everything* from this class! **Everything** that you do for this class, including *taking class notes* and *saving returned papers*, counts as a portion of your portfolio grade. You will write a final reflection paper to synthesize your learning experience in this class. You will receive additional specific guidelines for the portfolio and reflection paper separately.

CONTINUED

Dropping & Withdrawing

Don't receive a failing grade for a course you stop attending. You need to drop or complete a withdrawal form (Office of Records R-110) by the scheduled deadline. If you don't, you will receive a failing grade for the class and this failure becomes part of your permanent record.

DROP DATE: _____ **WITHDRAW DATE:** _____

Required Materials

Text: *Thinking Critically, 8th ed.*
John Chaffee
Houghton Mifflin
2006

4 Scantrons

Also:

- ✓ pocket dictionary
- ✓ 3-ring binder, dividers
- ✓ loose-leaf paper
- ✓ pens, #2 pencils, highlighters
- ✓ stapler, hole-puncher
- ✓ index cards

Other: _____

You can find the required textbook and supplies at the Santa Fe Bookstore in S-003. You are encouraged to find an unmarked copy of the text so that you can make your own annotations.

Expectations

You, your classmates, and your instructor will collaboratively construct any additional expectations on this syllabus. Each student is responsible for upholding and meeting the requirements of this syllabus as well as additional expectations developed by you and your instructor throughout the semester.

CONTINUED

Academic Integrity & Student Conduct

SFCC students are expected to conduct themselves in a manner that will reflect favorably on the college, the community, and themselves. *Cheating, plagiarism, or any act of academic dishonesty* of any kind is grounds for failing the course and/or further disciplinary action as appropriate according to the Student Conduct Code. Each student is advised to become familiar with and to abide by the general regulations and rules of conduct listed in the SFCC Student Handbook.

Special Circumstances

If you have any special circumstance such as a learning disability, religious, military, or intercollegiate athletics obligation that could affect your participation in this course at any time throughout this semester, it is your responsibility to bring it to your instructor’s attention and review the appropriate documentation and procedures for each circumstance.

You	Your Peers	Your Instructor

Statement of Commitment

This syllabus is a contract that prescribes the expectations and standards required for completion of this course. Thus, I understand that it is my responsibility to be aware of, uphold, and meet all of the expectations, standards, and requirements herein prescribed in order to complete this course. Furthermore, this syllabus is a working document that requires students and instructors to collaboratively complete certain components throughout the semester. Thus, I understand that it is my responsibility to regularly review and keep records in this document and to maintain communication with my instructor about my progress.

SIGN: _____ _____	DATE: _____
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CONTINUED

Progress

Use the charts below to record your grades, take notes on communication with your instructor, and/or keep track of your participation in SFCC learning labs throughout the semester. You are encouraged to meet at least once with your instructor to discuss your needs, goals, and/or anything related to your progress in this course. You are also encouraged to visit the Critical Thinking/Reading Lab, Writing Lab, and/or ESL Lab to review material before each test and exam, practice skills for reading projects, and get individual feedback on your writing.

- *Critical Thinking & Reading Lab G-36*
- *Writing Lab G-006*
- *ESL Lab I-001*

Date	Summary & Recommendations	Initial

Course Grade

Description	Date	Your Points	Possible Points
Attendance & Activities			100
Project #1			100
Project #2			100
Project #3			100
Test #1			100
Test #2			100
Test #3			100
Final Exam			100
Portfolio			100
Reflection Paper			100
TOTAL GRADE			1000

Grade Scale

Letter Grade	Percentage	GPA Points
A	900 - 1000	4.0
B+	860 - 899	3.5
B	800 - 859	3.0
C+	760 - 799	2.5
C	700 - 759	2.0
D+	660 - 699	1.5
D	600 - 659	1.0
F	599 - Below	0.0

TEACHING STRATEGIES

Integrating the Textbook, Homework Assignments, and Class Discussions

Learning is a process of making connections and constructing relationships. Thus, when all the elements of a course work together harmoniously, the result is synergistic. Consider, for example, the opening section of Chapter 3, “Solving Problems.” The chapter begins with an example that students may find familiar—a friend with a drug problem—and asks them to analyze it in a systematic fashion. This is a useful project for the class to work on together, either as a whole or in small groups. The goal of this activity is for students to see that thinking is something that we do all the time (though we are often not aware of it) and that effective thinking is usually organized. By carefully examining effective thinking, we can abstract the key concepts and methodologies and then apply them to our own thinking processes.

Thinking Activity 3.1, which can be assigned for homework, asks students to describe a problem that they have solved recently and then to analyze how their minds operated in solving the problem by using the same five-step method they have just examined in the class discussion. This Thinking Activity is particularly valuable because it demonstrates to students that they already think effectively and that the purpose of the course is to develop their thinking abilities further by carefully examining the thinking process.

If this assignment is completed for homework, it can be used as a basis for class discussion. This approach gives students the opportunity to present their ideas to their classmates and have them respond to their thinking. One productive strategy is to have each student describe his or her problem to the class. The class as a group can then analyze the problem as you record their responses on the board. Finally, the student can share his or her analysis and solution with the class. This approach places the class in a much more active role and introduces the concept of group discussion, which you will want to develop as the course progresses. This first sequence of activities illustrates a pattern that is repeated throughout the book:

- A thinking concept is introduced (problem solving).
- The concept is illustrated and analyzed (the drug-addicted friend).
- Students generate an example from their own experience and analyze it in the same way (the unsolved problem).
- Students discuss and analyze their ideas in class.

This sequence gives students the opportunity to understand the concepts clearly, to practice applying them, and to internalize the mode of thinking embodied in the examples. By using Thinking Activities such as this one as the basis for class discussions, students are engaged naturally because they are sharing and analyzing the thinking they did outside class. It also encourages them to think about and practice using the thinking abilities that the course is addressing both within and outside the classroom.

Class Discussions

It is a good idea to keep the following strategies in mind when conducting class discussions:

- Use writing and/or reading assignments as a basis for discussions. This encourages thoughtful participation because students have had the opportunity to think about the issues and express their thinking outside class.
- Try to involve all members of the class on an ongoing basis. Call on quiet members if they don’t volunteer, and give them whatever encouragement or support they need.

- Try to remove yourself as the dominating force in the discussion. Students should be speaking and listening to one another, not simply waiting for you to provide the “correct” response. When someone asks you a question, instead of simply giving an answer, ask the questioner or the class to try to answer it. One of your key roles is that of facilitator, guiding the discussions but having students explore the issues and work for insights themselves. Once you give your view, the discussion usually ends, as students believe that they have the “answer.”
- Develop the habit of presenting ideas by asking questions. As students respond to your questions, you can use their responses to elicit and illustrate the points you want to make. This format encourages students to be more active learners. Of course, students must be given enough of a framework regarding the subject so that they have the ability to relate to your questions.
- Encourage students to be specific in their responses and to provide cogent reasons to support their positions. When a student gives a vague or general response, ask him or her to rephrase it in more specific terms, to give an example that illustrates the point, and to cite reasons that support his or her view.

ADDITIONAL CRITICAL THINKING ACTIVITIES

To supplement the Thinking Activities in the book, faculty members teaching the Critical Thinking course often create additional activities. I have included a sampling below (handouts follow these brief descriptions).

If you would like to share activities you have developed via the Web site being developed for *Thinking Critically*, please forward them to me at JCthink@aol.com or LaGuardia College, 31-10 Thomson Avenue, Long Island City, NY 11101.

Career Exploration Project

This activity is designed to help students synthesize their career exploration activities in Chapter 1 and provide them with a research document that they can use to guide their search for a fulfilling career.

Arguing a Position

This activity (developed by Ray Robbennolt) is an effective way to help students prepare for the more dynamic give and take of organized debated.

Debate Activity

Student debates are powerful vehicles for applying many of the principles of critical thinking and critical literacy, while engaging students in a fascinating and challenging activity. If the debates are to result in the presentation of substantive, well-supported views, however, careful preparations must be made before the debates actually take place. The format that I use for class debates is detailed in this activity sheet.

Thinking Critically with Oprah

A productive variation of the debate format is the talk-show format, a cultural form with which students are intimately familiar.

Oral Presentation Activity

This activity (contributed by Eric Bienstock) is designed to reinforce the students’ ability to think on their feet and present their ideas clearly and succinctly.

Concept Collage

This activity (created by Dawn Graziani) encourages students to use mixed media and visual learning skills to express and articulate an abstract concept.

Research Project: The Holocaust

This project was developed in coordination with Richard Lieberman, a historian who created the LaGuardia Archives. In addition to challenging students to think about the pervasive evil of genocide, it also provides the opportunity to conduct research with historical documents and to synthesize their findings into a carefully reasoned paper.

Conceptualizing Activity

This activity (contributed by Stephen Brauch) is designed to work in conjunction with the articles “Femininity” and “The Return of the Manly Men” in Chapter 7, “Forming and Applying Concepts.” The goals of the activity include helping students make explicit their understanding of complex concepts and to develop insight into the way concepts are formed and evolve over time.

Constructive Analysis of an Institution

This activity (developed by Ray Robbennolt) encourages students to take an analytical look at an institution in their lives and to make constructive suggestions to improve its functioning.

Creating a Video for Social Commentary

This activity (contributed by Ray Robbennolt) is an innovative way for students to engage in critical analysis through a visual medium. One powerful student video on homelessness included moving interviews with homeless people accompanied by a soundtrack of John Lennon singing his song “Imagine”—a truly Emmy-worthy creation! Project guidelines are included.

Newspaper Journal

This activity (developed by Lorraine Kenny) encourages students to read carefully and critically evaluate relevant articles in newspapers and provides the foundation for composing meaningful “Letters to the Editor.”

Letter to the Editor

Letters to the Editor are productive ways to encourage students to think analytically and express their ideas cogently. The activity (developed by Ray Robbennolt) provides a well-structured framework for students.

Civil Disobedience

Civil disobedience has a long and respected history in the United States, and it relies on people thinking critically about social laws that they consider to be unjust. This activity provides the opportunity to envision a circumstance in which students might consider civil disobedience in response to laws that violate their moral sense of right and wrong.

Tiananmen Square

These two activities provide opportunities to extend Thinking Activity 5.6 in Chapter 5 dealing with conflicting accounts of the confrontation at Tiananmen Square. The first activity makes use of the video “Tragedy at Tiananmen,” while the second relates these events to analogous protests in Ireland and the United States.

Horoscope Activity

This ingeniously designed activity (developed by Alice Rosenblitt) encourages students to think critically about the truth of horoscopes and astrology by engaging them in an “experiment” to “test” the validity of daily horoscope predictions.

Writing a Speech

This activity extends the idea of writing a Letter to the Editor to writing a speech for a specific audience.

Priorities, Evidence, and Arguments

This activity (developed by Gary Richmond) challenges students—individually and in a group—to prioritize social problems and then construct arguments to support their ranking.

Analyzing Perceptual Lenses

This activity (developed by Alice Rosenblitt) introduces students to the active nature of the perceiving process by having them identify some elements of their perceptual “lenses” and then compare their lenses with those of other students.

Peer Evaluation of Group Project

This form (developed by Karen Cantrell) provides a structured framework for students to evaluate and provide feedback to their classmates when presenting group projects.

CRITICAL THINKING

Dr. John Chaffee

Career Exploration Project

The purpose of this assignment is to provide you with an opportunity to synthesize your explorations regarding your career choice. This is one of the most important decisions you will have to make, and this project will serve as an important point of reference.

Cover Page: Design a cover page that includes your name, address, phone number, and the date. Also include a recent photo of yourself (this can be a photocopy of your student I.D.).

Dream Job: Describe your “dream job” by completing Thinking Activity 12.2.

Personal Interests: Identify a list of interests in your life and match them with potential careers by completing Thinking Activity 1.7.

Personal Abilities: Identify special abilities you have by completing Thinking Activity 1.8.

Career-Transfer Resource Center: Based on the research you did in the previous activities and your visit to the Career-Transfer Resource Center, identify careers that you believe match your interests and abilities. For each potential career

- Describe the career;
 - Explain why you believe your interests and abilities match the career;
 - Describe what additional information you will need to make a final career decision, and identify the sources you can use to get this information.
-

ARGUING A POSITION

Thinking Exercise

“We live in a complex world filled with challenging and often perplexing issues that we are expected to make sense of. Usually the media or others in authority will define these issues for us; as effective thinkers we have an obligation to develop informed, intelligent opinions about these issues so that we can function as responsible citizens and also make appropriate decisions when confronted with these issues in our lives.”

“Almost everyone has opinions about events and their meaning. Some opinions, however, are more informed and well supported than others.” We must be aware of how we form our opinions and see if we can support our opinions with well-constructed arguments and evidence.

Your assignment is to identify an issue, name it, take a position, and argue for that position. You will participate as a member of a debate team.

Remember the steps to take:

1. Name the issue
2. State the arguments
3. Support each argument with evidence. Evidence is not an opinion; it is experience that can be confirmed by others and is used to support an argument. Evidence can take the form of first-hand experience, statistical analysis, or expert testimony

You will give a two-minute oral presentation in class. It will consist of the following:

1. Statement and definition of issue
2. Statement of position on issue
3. Argument 1—argues for your position on issue
4. Evidence 1—supports Argument 1
5. Evidence 2—supports Argument 1

Example:

1. There is a current debate among educators about what should be taught in humanities courses such as literature and history. One faction seeks a return to the “classics,” while another faction believes we should diversify our cultural studies to include a variety of expressions from many cultures. The emphasis for both groups is what to study. I believe that they both have it wrong. The issue is not *what we should teach* but instead is *how we should teach*.
2. I believe that the emphasis on cultural studies should be placed not on content of lessons but instead on the critical thinking skills needed to accumulate knowledge, regardless of content.
3. My first argument is this: students who are given information without the critical skills to analyze it will not be able to apply this information; therefore they will not be “educated” in either “classical” or multicultural studies.

CONTINUED

4. As an instructor for the last several years, I have observed that students who do not have critical thinking skills become frustrated with their studies, no matter what the content. After twelve weeks of attending my class, 85 percent of all students completing my class indicated that the skills they had developed made studying easier and more relevant to their lives. This information was obtained by end-of-the-year reviews taken by the LaGuardia Community College Faculty Assessment Questionnaire.
 5. According to Kevin O'Reilly, author of *Evaluating Viewpoints: Critical Thinking in United States History, Book One: Colonies to Constitution*, students who use traditional methods of rote learning do not retain information beyond testing dates, while those who apply a critical analysis to the information given to them retain information for longer periods of time, because of their ability to synthesize this information into their pre-existing body of knowledge.
-

DEBATE ACTIVITY

1. Divide into groups of four.
 2. Each group should select a topic to analyze and discuss, chosen from the list produced by the class or developed by the group.
 3. Two members of the group will be identified as supporting the issue, and two members will take the opposite position. (Your personal views need not correspond to the position you will be defending.)
 4. Each two-member “team” will spend approximately twenty minutes developing reasons, arguments, and evidence that support its position. Keep a record of these ideas and information.
 5. For homework, each person will locate an article that relates to the issue being discussed. Photocopy this article and bring it to class to enrich your deliberations.
 6. The two teams in each group will then discuss the issue being analyzed. As you discuss these issues, pay particular attention to the following points:
 - a. *Listen carefully* to the points that are being made.
 - b. *Comment directly* on the points that are being made by the opposing team.
 - c. *Keep a record* of the additional insights regarding the issue that your discussion uncovers. These notes can be used for reference during your debate.
 7. At the next class, each group will have twenty minutes to present a debate to the class. Following the debate, class members will have ten minutes to ask questions and make comments regarding the topic being discussed.
 8. At the class following your groups’ debate, hand in a two-page paper that analyzes the issue from your viewpoint. Describe arguments for both sides of the issue and conclude with your perspective and the reasons that support it. Attach the copy of the article that you researched.
-
-

CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS

Prof. Rosenblitt, Instructor
 LaGuardia College
 HUP100.04, Humanities Dept., Fall Semester—Session I

Guidelines for the In-class Debates and the Debate Analysis Paper

Participation in an In-class Debate is **required** once of every student during the semester. Debaters should obtain a **research article** on their debate topic prior to the day of their debate. Students in the “audience” are required to **participate actively** by **taking notes** during the debates (to be used for the Debate Analysis Papers) and by **critically questioning** the debaters afterward. The notes you take during the debates will help you to answer the questions listed below, which must be discussed in your Debate Analysis Paper:

1. How is *listening* being demonstrated, or not demonstrated, here?
 Are people *responding* to the ideas of others?
 How are the debaters succeeding and/or not succeeding in looking at the issue from many different perspectives? Are they demonstrating an attempt to *think about the issue from the opposite side’s perspective*?
 Are people *thinking for themselves*, yet still *considering others’ ideas*?
2. How are the debaters *supporting what they believe* with arguments *based on facts and evidence*?
 What are the *sources* of their facts and evidence?
 Are they relying solely on *personal experience*?
3. Do the debaters show an *awareness* of the strengths and weaknesses of the *sources* of their information (including personal experience)?
 What is your evaluation (judgment) of the strengths and weaknesses of these sources of information (including personal experience)?
4. What types of *questions* are the debaters asking one another?
 What types of questions are people in the audience asking the debaters?
 How do these questions help to create a meaningful discussion of the debate topic?
 What *categories* (from the six types of critical questions) do they fall into?
5. What did you learn about *the ways that other people think* from this debate?
 What did you learn about *the ways that you think*?
 How did you become more aware of your own thinking processes, and those of others?
 In general, think about the ways in which others seem to be thinking and how you are thinking during the debates. How is this *critical thinking*?

These debates are not “win or lose” contests; rather, they give us a chance to learn about the thinking process through the exercise of it.

Please remember that attendance is *required* on Debate days even if you are not a member of the group debating. In preparation, audience members are required to write two critical questions on the Debate Topic

CONTINUED

and to identify which of the six categories of critical questions these questions belong to.

Be careful to represent the information your source provides in an *accurate* way. For example, if your book or magazine says, “A scientist named George Romane in the eighteenth-century tried to prove that women had smaller brains than men, but today, this is recognized to be scientifically untrue,” do not quote this source as saying that a scientist named George Romane showed that “women had smaller brains than men,” since this would be a misrepresentation of your source’s information.

The Debate Analysis Paper must be at least four *typed* pages (double-spaced). A copy of the research article you consulted for your debate should be attached. Students should write on the copy of the article the following information:

- the author’s name
- the name of the book, magazine, or newspaper containing this article
- the editor of the book or magazine (if applicable)
- the publisher’s name
- the date (or year) of publication
- the page numbers of the article

For your Debate Analysis Paper, do not merely summarize your research article nor simply type up your opening statement from the debate you were in. Rather, your paper must address *both* sides of the *two* debate topics you are writing about.

Remember to discuss the debate you participated in *and one other debate* from our debates this semester. Your paper should address *all* of the five categories of questions listed on the first page of this handout, and your grade will be based on how well you discuss these five categories of questions.

Remember to *give specific examples* in your paper of how critical thinking occurred (or did not occur) during these debates to *illustrate* and *support* your analysis of these debates.

THINKING CRITICALLY WITH OPRAH

1. Each group of four will select an important social problem to discuss and try to solve, for example: racism/sexism/homophobia; spread of AIDS among young people; date rape, etc.
 2. In each group there will be
 - a. one **moderator** who conducts the discussion, asks relevant questions, and tries to get all perspectives on the problem;
 - b. two **guests**, each holding contrasting views on the problem;
 - c. one **expert** who comments on the topic and applies his or her knowledge and experience to what the guests are saying.
 3. For homework, each person will locate information that relates to the topic. This information can be obtained from magazines, newspapers, or books. Photocopy one source of information and bring it to the next class to use as reference material during your discussion.
 4. Each group will have twenty minutes to present their program, followed by a ten-minute question and comment session with the audience. Each person must be an active participant.
 - a. The **moderator** introduces the topic, gives an overview of the issue, and presents the guests. It is the responsibility of the moderator to ask pertinent questions and to keep the discussion on track. Also, the moderator fields questions from the audience and refers them to the appropriate participants.
 - b. Each **guest**, engaging in role-playing, acts the part of an individual who has a particular point of view on the topic. (You can be young, old, professional, amateur, mother, father, recovered alcoholic, drug addict, etc.) You must fully adopt the role you are playing and portray the viewpoint of that person (though it may not be your actual viewpoint).
 - c. The **expert** comments on the information presented by the guests. To avoid an unbalanced discussion, the expert should be as impartial as possible.
 5. At the class following your program, hand in a two-page paper that analyzes the issue from your viewpoint. Attach a copy of the material that you researched.
-

ORAL PRESENTATION ACTIVITY

In advance, prepare twenty slips of paper, fold them, and place them in a large envelope. On each slip write a provocative question such as “What do you think of blind dates?” and “Is there any point to studying history?”

One at a time the students come to the front of the room, reach into the envelope, and remove one of the slips of paper. He/she then has two minutes to talk, during which time he/she must make “four intelligent points.” The points can be pro, con, or neutral (or some of each); they can reflect the student’s actual opinion or his/her understanding of some other opinion.

Tell the students to imagine that they are out on a date with someone they like and want to impress and who is of above-average intelligence; that person would expect to hear an intelligent response from someone who is a college graduate.

Most students have no trouble coming up with two points. Some have trouble with the third, and most have trouble with the fourth. A common problem is that they get locked into one train of thought (established by their first point) and then have difficulty switching to another track to make a new point.

Furthermore, most of them seem to experience a good deal of anxiety. Only one or two students in each section will be able to do the exercise with ease and comfort. You will likely, however, notice general improvement as the quarter progresses.

There is a tendency for the other students to try to help out a struggling speaker. This may be due to their own discomfort triggered by the speaker’s anxiety when he/she appears to be struggling. Prepare the students for this in advance and ask them to resist the temptation to interfere. (There is always spontaneous applause at the end of the two minutes!)

Despite these difficulties, the students *overwhelmingly* are in favor of the exercise. They see the value of it and realize that it gives them needed practice in “thinking on their feet,” verbalizing their thoughts, and becoming more comfortable with thinking and speaking under pressure.

This exercise works well as Part II of each of the course’s two exams. One can comfortably go through an entire class of eighteen students in seventy minutes.

Following are suggestions for topics:

- How does your college rate academically?
- At what age should a person get married?
- At what age should a couple have children?
- Should a couple be married before having children?
- Is there any value to studying history?
- Is there any value in reading romance novels?
- Should a person be allowed to commit suicide?
- How do you feel about a person quitting high school and going to work?
- At what age should a person be allowed to drink alcohol?
- What is your opinion of politics and politicians?
- Are beauty contests a good idea?

CONTINUED

What is the value of watching sporting events?

What is your opinion of the welfare system?

What should be considered “cheating” in a romantic relationship?

At what age should a person be required to retire from work?

At what age should a child start school?

Is there any value to watching television?

What do you think of vouchers – that is, providing taxpayer funds to families of children in low-performing school districts so that they can send their children to private, including parochial, schools?

Should we be spending billions of dollars on exploring space when there are still people on Earth who are starving?

Is there anything good about graffiti?

Is the easy availability of online pornography dangerous?

Some people say that all the world’s problems are caused by the fact that there are just too many people. What do you think?

To reduce traffic congestion in Manhattan, someone has proposed that private cars be charged \$20 a day to enter Manhattan. What do you think?

How can we reduce littering in our city?

Train and bus fares keep going up, but it seems that the service keeps going down. Is that fair?

Should we try to negotiate with terrorists or be tough with them, even though this might risk lives?

How much of your personal privacy would you be willing to sacrifice in the name of national security? For example, the PATRIOT Act allows law enforcement agencies to monitor the books an individual borrows from the library. Is that safe, effective, and fair?

Some people believe that no one should live in cities, that everyone should live in the country. What do you think?

Should high schools be permitted to distribute contraceptives to students without their parents’ knowledge?

Most people do *not* vote. Is this a serious problem?

The standard workweek is eight hours a day for five days a week. An alternative might be ten hours a day for four days. What do you think?

Should men and women always be paid the same amount for the same job?

Suppose that instead of being married forever, people would get married for a five-year period with an option to renew. What do you think of this idea?

The city is a very noisy place. What can be done to reduce the noise level?

More and more, robots are replacing human beings, especially those who do repetitive, tedious work in factories. Is this a good idea?

It seems that people are less polite to one another than they used to be. Is this a serious problem? What can be done about it?

CONCEPT COLLAGE

Language & Perception

Created by Dawn Graziani

This project is designed for students to synthesize and apply material and skills related to:

1. Chapter 4 “Perceiving”
2. Chapter 5 “Believing & Knowing”
3. Chapter 6 “Language and Thought”
4. Chapter 7 “Forming and Applying Concepts”
5. Unit #2 Class Notes, Discussions, Activities, Homework

The object of this project is for students to use mixed media (images, text, objects, etc) to express a comprehensive meaning of a concept. This is done by selecting explicit images from a variety of sources and organizing them in a deliberate way to represent a dynamic interpretation of the concept. As students explore a variety of linguistic and non-linguistic sources and create their own collages, they explicitly experience the way perception and language work together to form and apply concepts. Additionally, students concretely observe the relationship between beliefs, knowledge, and concepts as they compare and contrast their own understandings and examples of their concepts with the ways in which their concepts are represented in their environments and understood by others.

Part A: Create a Concept Collage

1. Choose a concept (a word that symbolizes an object, emotion, idea or experience).
 - a. The concept can be tangible such as a telephone, car, pen, etc. or intangible such as love, femininity, criminal, etc.
 - b. You may work with a partner if you choose “dueling concepts” such as love/hate, feminine/masculine, criminal/hero, etc. And if you choose this option, you must have a “double collage” (twice the size of the single collages).
2. Brainstorm all the following dimensions of meaning and style of your concept:
 - a. Semantic Meaning: look it up in 3 dictionaries, a thesaurus, and at least one other “meaning resource” to outline the essential properties & most common referents.
 - b. Perceptual Meaning: search the concept on the Internet to see what kinds of hits you get (this reveals how the concept is perceived and used), have 3 or more people (including yourself) describe the personal experiences, examples, and emotions they have related to the concept.
 - c. Syntactic Meaning: outline all parts of speech and grammatical uses the concept has.
 - d. Pragmatic Meaning: explore any applicable language styles (slang, dialect, jargon, euphemism, emotive language) related to your concept.
3. Show all the dimensions of meaning and style on a poster.
 - a. Collect visual artifacts and linguistic blurbs to symbolize, represent, illustrate, explain, or otherwise communicate each of the four areas listed above.
 - b. You may move to a three-dimensional design if you wish (such as a mobile). You may use mixed media such as sound and movement as well (such as a PowerPoint or performance).

CONTINUED

- c. The minimum size is half of a standard poster, and the maximum size is whatever will fit through the door to the classroom.

Part B: Concept Collage Exhibit

1. Create a title and brief abstract for your exhibit.
 - a. Write this, along with your name(s) on a 4 X 6 index card.
 - b. This card will be posted beside your exhibit.
 - c. It should give gallery guests an overview of your collage and a bit of insight into your design and theme.
 2. Bring your collage and abstract to class on the scheduled exhibit day.
 - a. Bring any necessary materials (tape? string?) for posting your collage in the gallery (the classroom).
 - b. Set up your collage and abstract so that it can be adequately “read” by classmates.
 3. On exhibit day, visit each collage.
 - a. “Read” each collage by asking
 - i. What are the selected images communicating about the concept’s meaning?
 - ii. What does the organization of the images communicate about the concept's meaning?
 - b. Develop knowledge about concepts by choosing three collages to examine and understand in-depth.
 - i. Write your interpretation of each collage by summarizing your responses to the above questions.
 - ii. Write a question to ask the author of each of the three collages.
 - iii. Go find your authors. With each, use your question to have a discussion about the concept.
 - iv. Write a summary of one “author interview.”
-

RESEARCH PROJECT: THE HOLOCAUST

Dr. John Chaffee
Creative and Critical Thinking Studies

Dr. Richard Lieberman
LaGuardia and Wagner Archives

The Holocaust exhibit entitled “French Children of the Holocaust” will be shown at LaGuardia from April 12 to May 11. One of the survivors, Ernest Nieves, will speak at the opening of the exhibit on April 13, at 10:30 a.m. in the Little Theater. Using this exhibit as a touchstone, I would like Critical Thinking faculty members to incorporate a unit on “Thinking Critically About Genocide,” which will be based on materials Dr. Lieberman and I are assembling. We will distribute and explain these materials at a meeting on Monday, March 29, at 3:00 p.m.

The aim is for students to think critically about the Holocaust, and genocide in general, by doing research with original and secondary sources housed in the LaGuardia and Wagner Archives. This model is based on a previous collaboration in which students in Critical Thinking sections explored historical events such as the Harlem Riots of 1943 and discrimination in public housing. Typically, students work in groups and produce research papers analyzing the event being explored. We are planning to select the best papers and recognize the authors in some appropriate way. In addition to a research paper, we are also planning a speech contest based on the project in conjunction with the Speech/Communication area (Will Koolsbergen is coordinator) and organized by Gary Richmond.

In addition to the exhibit and guest speaker, here are some of the resources that will be available for Critical Thinking faculty and students.

Personal accounts: Autobiographical accounts by survivors—these include photographs, letters, diaries, and drawings by the forty-four children who were taken from a house in Izieu, France, by Klaus Barbie and murdered in concentration camps. These materials are included in a book by Serge Klarsfeld entitled *The Children of Izieu: A Human Tragedy*. Serge Klarsfeld is the person who organized the exhibit that will be at LaGuardia.

Historical accounts: These include official documents related to these events and media accounts at the time.

Secondary sources and texts: These include a resource book *Facing History and Ourselves*, which focuses on the Holocaust and human behavior.

Videotapes: These include “Children Remember the Holocaust.”

CD-ROMs: These include “Survivors: Testimonies of the Holocaust,” produced by Steven Spielberg.

Museums: These include the Holocaust Museum in Battery Park.

CONCEPTUALIZING ACTIVITY

1. Ask students to take out paper and write their answers to the following questions:
 - What attributes or qualities do you think it is important for a man to have?
 - What attributes or qualities do you think it is important for a woman to have?
 - After listening, rank the attributes/qualities in order of importance.
 2. Split students into groups of three or four; each group should consist of all men or all women. Ask each group to reach a consensus of five to fifteen qualities for each gender and then prioritize them.
 3. Process the group outcomes according to the following categories, recording results on the board:
 - “Men” by men
 - “Men” by women
 - “Women” by men
 - “Women” by women
 4. Analyze the differences and similarities of the various lists, and have students discuss how these concepts developed. Are some concepts more “accurate” than others? What role do values play in constructing our concepts? Should we try to influence changes in these concepts?
-

CONSTRUCTIVE ANALYSIS OF AN INSTITUTION

Project Guidelines

Critical Thinking HUP 100

Your assignment is to analyze an institution. You are to evaluate how well this institution serves the needs of its constituents, and give recommendations about how their service or organization can be improved. You will communicate your recommendations to the appropriate department head via letter. Your letter should be typed and double-spaced, with one-inch margins on top, bottom, and sides. **This letter should be a minimum of two pages and a maximum of three. You should follow a traditional business letter format.** When you hand in your assignment, you should have the following items:

1. One typewritten letter to the head of a department at any institution of your choice. This letter should be enclosed in an envelope with proper postage and addresses. (Please do not seal the envelope.)
2. A photocopy of this letter enclosed in a clear plastic folder with binder and cover page.
3. A list of twenty questions you asked of this department to gain the information to write a well-informed letter.

It is extremely important that these three items be turned in simultaneously on the due date.

Due Date: _____.

Recommended Steps for Completion of Thinking Activity Two

1. Please make a schedule with all the minor goals that you will need to accomplish and how long they will take. (This is basically what was done in Thinking Exercise 3.) Try to include those activities that you may have forgotten on your previous Thinking Activity.
2. List twenty questions relevant to your topic. If, for example, you are analyzing the registration process at LaGuardia Community College, please come up with questions that you feel need to be answered before you can make an informed recommendation to the head of the registration department at LaGuardia. Remember this is not a letter of complaint; your goal is to make an informed recommendation to improve services at LaGuardia.
3. Through interviews with students, faculty, and administration as well as visits to the library, please answer as many of the questions that you possibly can. This information will serve as the raw materials for your letter; it will be the evidence for your arguments.
4. After obtaining this information please organize an outline for your material.
 - a. What is your issue? (Remember to state your position.)
 - b. What are your arguments? (List your arguments in your introduction, and detail your arguments in the body of your paper.)
 - c. What is your evidence to support your arguments? (Please make sure that for each argument you have at least one piece of evidence to prove your point.)
 - d. What is your conclusion? (How do all of your arguments work together to prove your position?)

CONTINUED

5. After outlining your information please use the Thinking Activity 1 Guideline to write your paper. I recommend that you write a rough draft and then rewrite this draft, to refine your points. Remember the goal is to refine your communication skills constantly.

Paragraph One: Briefly explain what is wrong with current department practices. List at least three activities or procedures that could be improved. The last sentence in this paragraph should state how your recommendations will solve these shortcomings.

Paragraph Two: Please describe and criticize one aspect of this department's procedures. After you have shown what is wrong, then describe how this situation can be fixed.

Paragraphs Three and Four: Same as above.

Paragraph Five: Please explain how your recommendations taken together will improve life at LaGuardia Community College.

CREATING A VIDEO FOR SOCIAL COMMENTARY

Project Guidelines

Your assignment is to participate in and organize the recording (on either video or audio tape) of a commentary on how perceptions are affected by the media.

Instructions

Class One

1. Please brainstorm at least two solid ideas for a video.
2. As a group, please storyboard the idea that you have decided on. Please assign each member of the group a specific part of the video to develop.

Class Two

3. Please synthesize each member's contribution, and storyboard the entire video piece. Please consider where you will be shooting, what props you will need, what roles everyone will play, etc. Please organize every aspect of your production.
4. Please have a dress rehearsal so that you are prepared to correct any problems that may arise.

Class Three

5. Please shoot on this day.
6. At our next class please turn in to me the following:
 - a. Explanation of what your video is about; this should be typewritten
 - b. Cover page including all members of the group
 - c. Each member's storyboard section (the section that was developed on day one)
 - d. The video or CD-ROM, with proper title and identification of each group member

Due Date: _____

CREATING A VIDEO FOR SOCIAL COMMENTARY

Thinking Activity Guidelines

Your assignment is to organize the recording (on either video or audio tape) of a perspective that you feel is missing from television or radio. In Thinking Exercise 12 we analyzed how the media affected viewers' perceptions and how in turn advertisers affected what could be shown or heard on the electronic media. Using this information, please offer an alternative perspective that you feel is missing from your television screens or radio waves. You will submit this video/audio to the Student Life and Affairs Office at room M-115; please include a letter describing your project and explaining why it should be shown over the LaGuardia Television or Radio system.

Instructions

Class One

1. Please use Thinking Exercise 13 to help you brainstorm and come up with at least two solid ideas for a video.
2. As a group, please storyboard the idea that you have decided on. Please assign each member of the group a specific part of the video to develop.

Class Two

3. Please synthesize each member's contribution and storyboard the entire video piece. Please consider where you will be shooting, what props you will need, what roles everyone will play, etc. Please organize every aspect of your production.
4. Please have a dress rehearsal so that you are prepared to correct any problems that may arise.

Class Three

5. Please shoot on this day.
6. At the end of class please turn in to me the following:
 - a. Explanation of what your video is about; this should be typewritten
 - b. Cover page including all members of the group
 - c. Each member's storyboard section (the section that was developed on day one)
 - d. The video or CD-ROM, in with proper title and identification of each group member

Due Date: _____

VIDEO ON HOMELESSNESS

Student Affairs Office
Fiorello H. LaGuardia College
31-10 Thomson Avenue
Long Island City, NY 11101

Dear Luis Merchant:

Hi, my name is Isidro Suriel, and I am a student at LaGuardia College. I am writing this letter because one of the courses I am taking this semester requires a group of my classmates and me to create a ten-minute video that will have a positive impact on the students and staff of LaGuardia College. The video that my group and I have produced is on the homeless, especially on the everyday struggle a homeless person goes through to find a bed and a meal. In the following letter, I will state some reasons why the Student Affairs Office should show our video to all students and staff throughout the school.

Not too long ago I was walking down 34th Street at about 11:00 p.m., and I noticed two children, probably both under ten years of age, with their mother sitting on the sidewalk holding a sign that said, “We are homeless and hungry and our government doesn’t care.” I actually kept on walking by, but I had to return to give them two dollars because I kept seeing images of myself in their situation. I told this story to my classmates, and they were moved, which is one reason we chose to make this video on the homeless. We know that if the public or, in this case, the students and staff at LaGuardia College, actually sees what homeless people go through every day, we can come together and help in many ways. I believe this video will help open the eyes of many close-minded people that don’t think they could end up homeless. This video will give people an awareness to budget their money so that they won’t end up homeless; also, this video will convince students to help by giving food, money, or clothing to the homeless at their nearest City Harvest or at the United Homeless Organization.

Another reason why the Student Affairs Office should air this video is that recently LaGuardia College participated in a homeless drive to help feed the homeless and is currently collecting canned foods for the City Harvest. Many students at LaGuardia, however, are not informed about the collection of donations, and this video will be a great way to inform them. If students and staff learn about how LaGuardia is helping the homeless, LaGuardia will be able to maintain a bigger support staff to face the homeless crisis.

I strongly believe the Student Affairs Office should allow every member of the LaGuardia Community College family to view this video on the homeless. The homeless situation is a very big problem the world is going through, and the only way to solve it is to start dealing with it. By allowing this video to be seen, the students and staff will get a better picture of how hard it is to be homeless, and what we can do to help. The video consists of various materials, from images of homeless people living on the streets to portrayals of places where people can go to help.

I would like to thank you for your time, and I hope this letter and our video will convince you that everyone must be aware of the homeless problem and that we need to be a part of the solution.

Sincerely,

Isidro Suriel
Lusenia Beato
Altaira Aragones
Enilda Vasquez
George Papagiannopoulos

NEWSPAPER JOURNAL

Critical Thinking
Professor Lorraine Kenny

WEEK 7
Monday, May 5

This is a week-long assignment to be done once a day from Monday, May 5 through Friday, May 9. Every day this week, you are to read at least one newspaper (in print or online) and find at least one story each day that you think relates to your life. This can be, for example, a story about college students, about your neighborhood, about riding the subways, about the country from which you immigrated or in which you have relatives living, about something going on in New York City that affects you directly, about the career you are pursuing, or about anything that you feel is relevant to your life. You should clip or print out the article and paste/staple it in your Critical Thinking notebook, noting the title and date of the newspaper from which you got it. Then, each day you are to write a brief essay about this article, answering the following questions: Why did you choose this article? How does it relate to your life? Is the article telling the whole story? Is your point of view represented? What information does the article emphasize and how does it do this? What information do you think the article is leaving out? By Friday you should have at least five entries in your notebooks. I will check on Wednesday that you have at least two done and on Thursday that you have at least three done.

Note: Assignment #16 will be the basis of Writing Assignment #2, which will be due Monday, May 19. This will be a three-page, typed, double-spaced with one-inch margins “Letter to the Editor.” We will be working on this letter next week in class. Do not fall behind. And start planning your time now. AS ALWAYS, NO LATE PAPERS WILL BE ACCEPTED.

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Project Guidelines

Your assignment is to analyze an article from a current newspaper or magazine. You will evaluate your response to this article and then write a letter to the editorial board of your chosen publication. It should be typed and double-spaced, with one-inch margins top, bottom, and sides. You should follow a traditional business letter format. When you hand in your assignment you should have the following items:

1. One typewritten letter to the editor enclosed in a stamped envelope
2. A photocopy of this letter enclosed in a clear plastic folder with binder and cover page
3. All outlines and preparation for this paper
4. The original article to which you are responding

Step One. Please skim your article carefully. After skimming the article write a one-paragraph summary of the article. Use this summary to focus your detailed reading.

Step Two. After skimming your article and writing a brief summary, please do a detailed reading of your article. While doing this reading, please map your article. In your mapping, please indicate the following: What is the issue? What are the arguments and what reasons and evidence are given to support these arguments? What is the conclusion of the article as supported by its arguments? Also, while doing a detailed reading of your article (this is very important), please write questions in the margins that you feel need answering. Please write personal responses in the margins (these will form the basis for organizing your response later on). I also recommend that you write the definitions of any words that you do not know in the margins.

Step Three. After mapping your article, please form an outline of the information you have outlined. It should consist of three columns: Column One—list issue, arguments, reasons, and evidence and conclusion of article; Column Two—list all questions that you could ask of this article; Column Three—list all of your comments and personal responses to this article.

Step Four. To form a response to this article, you must first analyze how you will respond on a point-by-point basis to the arguments given in the article. To do this, list your issue in response to the article's issue. How does it differ? Then file counterarguments to each argument given; do the same with reasons and evidence. Either take issue with the specific nature of the information given, or give alternative reasons and evidence to support your issue. Finally, organize your arguments cohesively to come to a conclusion.

Step Five. Answer any questions you may have had about the article, and use this information to form the basis for your response. Either use direct experiences or indirect experiences (books, articles) to answer these questions. Remember, "Knowledge is a belief that can function within a context." If the article you are reading is based on direct experience, you can respond with direct experiences, but if your article consists mainly of indirect experiences to form arguments, you must do so as well.

Step Six. Use the information from step five and the outline from step three to start writing your paper.

Paragraph one should consist of a detailed description of the article's issue and your response to it. The last sentence in this paragraph should EXPLICITLY state your position.

Paragraph two should state your first argument. Your argument should consist of reasons and evidence derived through direct or indirect experiences.

Paragraph three should state your second argument, again supported by reasons and evidence.

CONTINUED

Paragraph four should state your third argument, supported by reasons and evidence.

Paragraph five should state your conclusion. It should show how all your arguments work together to lead to this conclusion.

After doing this, your paper should be complete. To double-check your paper, you should ask yourself the following questions: Have you supported your arguments clearly with reasons and evidence? Can your arguments be verified by other sources? Are your arguments responding to points being made in the article?

Due Date: _____

CIVIL DISOBEDIENCE

Critical Thinking Unit

When Do You Take a Stand?

As a journal prompt, have students react to the following question:

When is it okay to break the law?

In class, students will gather in small groups. Each group will have a different set of reading assignments, which will each cover a time of civil disobedience. Some examples are the Revolutionary War; the Mexican Revolution; the Civil War; the Vietnam War; the civil rights movement; the struggle of environmental rights activists versus government or industry, or Green Peace versus industry.

In the groups, the students are to read the material, then work on the following:

- Definition of the conflict
- Evaluation of the components of the conflict
- Judgment of the validity of the conflict or disobedience
- Summary of the above elements for the class

Each group will report to the class its summary of the group work. The class will discuss the summaries.

Follow-up writing assignments for each student:

Write a scenario in which you envision the government attempting to impose a law or act in a way that goes against your constitutionally guaranteed rights or moral principles. After you have written the scenario, write how you would respond in such a situation.

TIANANMEN SQUARE

Lesson Plan for Critical Thinking Activity

Strategies for fostering critical thinking abilities:

- Identify the critical thinking abilities to be developed.
- Stimulate active learning.
- Encourage well-supported conclusions.
- Encourage perspective-taking.
- Stimulate thinking at all cognitive levels.
- Promote critical literacy.
- Build from students' experience.

Goal: To establish awareness of different perspectives

1. Locate and show video of events at Tiananmen Square *without* narrative or commentary! (An example is “TRAGEDY AT TIANANMEN”—*FRONTLINE*.)
2. Ask students to take notes and write their own versions of what they think happened. Share ideas and divide students with similar versions into groups.
3. Read “Accounts of Events at Tiananmen Square, 1989” in Chapter 5 of *Thinking Critically*.
4. Compare and contrast the accounts in terms of what actually took place; consider with each account the language, how the protestors are viewed and how the soldiers are viewed; that is, how writers and filmmakers select and organize details and interpret subjects.
5. Replay video *with* narrative.
6. Have student groups compare their individual versions and, as a group with a recorder, rewrite an account that reflects their flexibility to change or modify ideas, based on new information or better insight. These revised versions can then be shared with the entire class.

As an outgrowth of this subject explored in class, students can relate other violent events involving students, such as those that happened at Kent State, in Beirut, at the Berlin Wall, in Iraq, in Russia—and to bring the issue “closer to home”—violence involving students on local campuses. OR the discussion might result in consideration of the subject of *freedom*.

Assignment: Each student should locate at least *two* different accounts of the same event from some of the ideas suggested, preferably current events, which could be covered in newspapers or magazines such as *Time*, *Newsweek*, *U.S. News and World Report*. These could be compared and contrasted, or students may work in groups to find as much as possible on the event, to share the information in their group, and to prepare oral reports for the entire class. Debates may also be considered.

TIANANMEN SQUARE

Critical Thinking Activity

1. Research the historical background of China. Students will work in groups to find information about education, society, students, government, and media for the following periods:
 - a. 1900–1920
 - b. 1920–1940
 - c. 1940–1960
 - d. 1960–1980
 - e. 1980-present day
 2. Read and discuss the selections in the handout materials that relate perspectives on the incident at Tiananmen Square.
 3. Students will write the following journal entry: Your writing should be based on who you are and on the research you completed on the history of China. Adopt the persona of one of the following persons and write about how you feel about the incidents that have occurred:
 - a. student
 - b. government official
 - c. reporter
 - d. sympathetic bystander
 - e. arrested student
 - f. PLA officer
 - g. American teenager
 4. To bring this issue of student involvement home, show students a video about Kent State protesters. Discuss the issues involved in the Kent State episode. Students will write another journal entry, this time adopting the persona of someone involved in the Kent State issue:
 - a. student protestor
 - b. government official
 - c. college official
 - d. student bystander
 5. Read Frank O'Connor's "Guests of the Nation." Discuss the conflict in Ireland, the role of the government, and the feelings of the individuals involved. Discuss when it is okay to defy authority.
 6. Students will write an essay about a time when they stood up for something they believed in.
-

HOROSCOPE ACTIVITY

Critical Thinking Sample Lesson Plan: Critically Evaluating Beliefs

Aim: To review concepts from “Believing and Knowing,” Chapter 5, in John Chaffee’s *Thinking Critically*, Eighth Edition, through an examination of the previous day’s horoscope from a local newspaper or online astrology site. Lesson plan developed by Alice Rosenblitt (Libra), 11/94.

- Begin by writing the names and dates of the twelve Zodiac “Sun Signs” on the board, leaving a bit of empty space underneath each one. As students arrive, ask them to sign their names on the board beneath their astrological signs. Also, write on the board the following brief in-class writing exercises; allow approximately ten minutes for students to complete:
 - a. List three things you did yesterday.
 - b. List three things you wish you had done yesterday.
 - c. List five adjectives you might use to describe yourself.
 - Once the students have finished their lists, have them divide into small groups (usually of two–four students each) to meet with the others in their Zodiac sign. If a sign has only one student, pair that student with another who is in the same situation. These pairs may serve as “control groups” in the following “experiment” to “test” the accuracy of newspaper horoscopes.
 - Ask each group to read their lists to one another and to listen for similarities. A representative from each group should then come up to the board and write a few of the similar adjectives and one or two similar responses to (a) or (b) beneath their group’s Zodiac sign. If there are no observed similarities, then ask the group to write one or two of the differences they have noticed.
 - Distribute the horoscope for each sign from yesterday’s newspaper. Have each group read their horoscope and **CRITICALLY EVALUATE** it. Does it seem accurate? Why or why not? Ask each group to declare, as a whole, their position, pro or con, regarding the validity of astrology, and write this on the board as well. Tell them to prepare three reasons that support their evaluation of astrology. What do they believe, **AND WHY**? After all students have done so, this may be a good time for a break, as approximately one hour will have elapsed.
 - Begin a class discussion/information debate by examining what has been written on the board and by listening to the defense each group makes for its position. As facilitator, try to relate issues that students raise to the concepts of evaluating beliefs **CRITICALLY** and, especially, try to lead students to **ANALYZE** the arguments presented to them. For example, if a student says that she believes in astrology because her two cousins and her best friend are in the sign of Taurus and they’re all stubborn, perhaps ask the students, “What kind of ‘evidence’ is that?” Then discuss the strengths and weaknesses of the use of “personal experience” as “evidence” to support a belief. Another useful “tool” may be the terminology for evaluating the “degree of accuracy” of beliefs: “completely accurate,” “generally not accurate,” etc. (see *Thinking Critically*, Chapter 5).
-

USING HOROSCOPES TO EVALUATE SOURCES OF INFORMATION AND EVALUATE OUR OWN BELIEFS

Each person should read his or her horoscope in *two* daily papers from the day before.

This exercise asks you to **CRITICALLY EVALUATE** (judge) the two.

1. Which of your two horoscopes seems more accurate? Why? If you do not think either one is accurate, explain: why not. What are the differences between the two horoscopes? How do these differences lead you to evaluate these two different sources of information?
2. What is your final position, pro or con, regarding the validity of astrology? Give three reasons that support your evaluation (judgment) of astrology. What do you believe, AND WHY?
3. What are the strengths and weaknesses of the use of “personal experience” as “evidence” to support your belief for or against the validity of these horoscopes?
4. Use the terminology for evaluating the “degree of accuracy” of your beliefs about horoscopes: “completely accurate,” “generally not accurate,” etc. (see Chapter 5, *Thinking Critically*).

When you have completed this assignment, give it to the designated class representative, who will take all of the assignments to the Humanities Department Office, E202, at the end of today’s class, and leave them for me in my folder in the adjunct faculty mailbox (under the name Rosenblitt in the file cabinet on your right). I will be grading these as another homework assignment, so you may increase your total number of homework points through this exercise!

WRITING A SPEECH

Paper Assignment

Due date: _____

(Your grade will be lowered for each day it is late. If you need an extension, see me about it now.)

Length: two–three pages (if it is not two FULL pages, it is not long enough).

Other requirements:

Paper must be typed (if there is a problem with this, see me about it **now**).

Double spaced.

10–12 point type.

One-inch margins.

Excessive grammatical and/or spelling errors will count against you. Proofread.

This is a SHORT paper that doesn't really require research (although some background reading may be useful). I am going to be looking very closely at how you express your ideas. Be careful about how you say what you say. Use words persuasively and descriptively. BE SPECIFIC. Develop each idea fully. Organize your ideas.

Select **an issue of public concern** (like a debate topic, but it must be a DIFFERENT topic from the one you used in your debate). Talk about how this issue has affected you **personally**. Use the events of your own life as evidence in an argument you construct about this issue. Pick **ONE** of the following as a guideline for your essay. (Do **NOT** write the question at the top of the page.)

1. Imagine yourself writing a letter to a politician who has a view opposite from yours on an issue. Try to convince this person, using your own life experience, to change his or her opinion. The persuasiveness of your letter may influence public policy.
 2. Write a speech to be delivered to a panel of experts (you won't actually have to deliver it), justifying your stand on this issue. Use your personal experience persuasively to convince the panel that you are knowledgeable enough to be consulted on this subject. How can your personal experience help educate this panel of experts?
 3. Write a speech that you would give to a group of teenagers who don't have much experience or knowledge of your issue. How can you use your personal experience to influence the behavior of these young people? Can you describe specific events that influenced your behavior around this issue?
 4. Imagine that most people hold the opposite view to yours on this issue. Write a letter to a public personality whom you have never met but who has also been personally affected by this issue. How can your personal experience be used persuasively to influence this person's behavior (either to help this person continue on his or her course of action, or change his or her behavior)?
 5. Imagine that the stand that you take on this particular issue has just been declared a crime. Write a speech that you would deliver to defend yourself in a court of law against your accusers. Use your personal experience persuasively to convince the court that your beliefs (and behavior) are not criminal and should not be punished.
-

PRIORITIES, EVIDENCE, AND ARGUMENTS

Name: _____

Below is a list of contemporary problems. You may add to the list. **HOMEWORK:** What do you consider to be the five most significant problems facing us today? Prioritize your list, writing #1 next to what you consider to be the most important problem, #2 next to the second most important, etc., up to #5.

On a separate sheet, analyze each of the five prioritized problems, giving a complete argument (at least two reasons and supporting evidence) why you consider each to be a crucially important problem.

MY LIST

_____ educational standards	_____ environmental issues
_____ terrorism	_____ drug addiction
_____ government reforms	_____ unemployment
_____ racial tensions	_____ overpopulation
_____ AIDS and disease	_____ war
_____ healthcare reform	_____ family values
_____ crime	_____ homelessness

Group Task (second day): You will be assigned to a group of five people. You are asked to (1) discuss what each person in the group considers to be the two biggest problems facing us today, using your completed homework as a basis for discussion; (2) the group will prioritize what it considers to be the five most important problems (attempt to do this by consensus—or failing that, majority vote).

GROUP LIST

_____ educational standards	_____ environmental issues
_____ terrorism	_____ drug addiction
_____ government reforms	_____ unemployment
_____ racial tensions	_____ overpopulation
_____ AIDS and disease	_____ war
_____ healthcare reform	_____ family values
_____ crime	_____ homelessness

One (or two) member(s) of each group will present the conclusions of the group in a panel discussion during the next class meeting, including arguments and evidence to support its conclusions.

ANALYZING PERCEPTUAL LENSES

Prof. Alice Rosenblitt, Instructor
LaGuardia College
Humanities Department

Goal: Perception as an Active Process—Selecting, Organizing, and Interpreting.

Motivation: Ask the students to name the five senses; write them on the board.

Begin with in-class writing.

Write on board:

1. List three things you perceive about this room.
2. Give an explanation of how your lenses might have influenced you to perceive one of these three things.

Talk about some examples, such as

Perception: I smell the coffee José has on his desk.
My lenses: I didn't have time this morning to get a cup of coffee, and I'd really like one!
Perception: I see the windows are closed.
My lenses: I like fresh air.

Ask the students to come up to the board and enter their responses in the following chart:

<i>Name</i>	<i>Perceptions</i>	<i>Explanation</i> (What are your lenses like?)
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Go around the room and have each student read aloud his or her entry in the chart.

Discuss the entries in the chart as illustrations of the concept of lenses, to explain why different people notice different things in the same room.

Afterward: Ask the students to stand and move to the opposite side of the room.
Ask them to say what new things they now notice about the room.

Conclusion: Make the analogy between literally changing one's perspective (by moving to another place in the room) and *thinking critically*, which involves attempting to look at an issue from a different perspective and becoming more aware of one's lenses.

PEER EVALUATION OF GROUP PROJECT

Group Member's Name: _____

Please evaluate the group member on the following scale:

- 5 Outstanding
- 4 More than satisfactory
- 3 Satisfactory
- 2 Less than satisfactory
- 1 Minimal effort
- 0 No effort
- N/O Inadequate opportunity to observe

Work-Related Performance

Comprehension	5	4	3	2	1	0	N/O
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—seemed to understand the requirements for the assignment

Problem Identification and Solution	5	4	3	2	1	0	N/O
--	----------	----------	----------	----------	----------	----------	------------

—participated in identifying and defining the problem and worked toward a solution

Organization	5	4	3	2	1	0	N/O
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—approached tasks (like time management) in a systematic way

Acceptance of Responsibility	5	4	3	2	1	0	N/O
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—shared responsibility for tasks to be accomplished

Initiative and Motivation	5	4	3	2	1	0	N/O
----------------------------------	----------	----------	----------	----------	----------	----------	------------

—made suggestions, sought feedback, showed interest in decision making and planning

Creativity	5	4	3	2	1	0	N/O
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—looked at ideas from different perspectives

Task Completion	5	4	3	2	1	0	N/O
------------------------	----------	----------	----------	----------	----------	----------	------------

—followed through in completing own contributions to group project

Attendance	5	4	3	2	1	0	N/O
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—attended planning sessions, was prompt, and participated in decision-making process

Work-Related Interactions with Others

Collaboration	5	4	3	2	1	0	N/O
----------------------	----------	----------	----------	----------	----------	----------	------------

—worked cooperatively with the group

Participation	5	4	3	2	1	0	N/O
----------------------	----------	----------	----------	----------	----------	----------	------------

—contributed fair share to group project

Attitude	5	4	3	2	1	0	N/O
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CONTINUED

—displayed positive approach and made constructive comments in working toward goal

Independence	5	4	3	2	1	0	N/O
---------------------	---	---	---	---	---	---	-----

—carried out tasks without overly depending on group members

Communication	5	4	3	2	1	0	N/O
----------------------	---	---	---	---	---	---	-----

—expressed thoughts clearly

Responsiveness	5	4	3	2	1	0	N/O
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—reacted sensitively to verbal and nonverbal cues of other group members

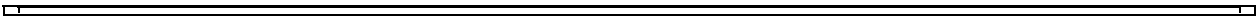
Add total score _____

Average (divide by number of items) _____

Multiply by 2 for final score _____

Comments

Name of Evaluator: _____



EVALUATING STUDENT PROGRESS

The values and goals of a course are embodied in its evaluation criteria. In a critical thinking course, the evaluation criteria should assess the extent to which students are developing the critical thinking abilities that form the structure of the course. In other words, students should be given the opportunity to use and apply the knowledge they have gained, not merely re-present information they have been taught.

In my opinion, student grades should be based on a variety of assignments throughout the course, including homework assignments, quizzes, debates and other projects, examinations, and class participation. In the course at LaGuardia Community College, students are awarded points in each of these areas, with the end-of-term total determining their final grade. Students are encouraged to revise and improve their work on homework assignments to receive a higher grade. This approach is based on the belief that evaluation activities are primarily learning experiences and students should be given every opportunity to use them in this way.

Many students are concerned about how faculty can objectively evaluate students' thinking. They are worried that they will be penalized if their beliefs do not coincide with their teachers'. To address this concern, students must understand from the beginning that we are not evaluating *what* they think, in terms of their specific beliefs; instead, we are concerned with *the way* they think, in terms of how informed their beliefs are, how cogently they are presented, how well they are supported, and so on.

The nature of a critical thinking course renders even more imperative the need to make explicit the evaluation criteria for each assignment. In addition to delineating the criteria, it is useful to present students with models of exemplary work that embody these criteria and make them concrete. After each assignment, I select some of the best student work and have the students share their pieces with the class, followed by a class analysis of their salutary qualities. It also is useful to give students the opportunity to critique and evaluate each other's work, an activity that helps them understand and internalize the evaluation criteria of the course.

Teaching Critical Thinking Abilities

For students to develop their critical (and creative) thinking abilities, they must be taught by faculty who are themselves critical thinkers, who embody and stimulate these qualities in every phase of their teaching. Teaching for critical thinking influences our *entire* approach to teaching.

- What are the *critical thinking abilities* that I want my students to develop?
- What is the most effective *organization* for the topics and material in this section that will achieve these objectives?
- What *teaching approaches and strategies* can I employ to meet these goals best?
- What *evaluation activities* (homework, quizzes, papers, examinations, projects, oral presentations) will stimulate students to think about the important issues in the course and give them an opportunity to display their evolving critical thinking abilities?

Evaluating Critical Thinking Abilities

- **Emphasize the quality of students' thinking:** Make clear to students that you will be evaluating the quality of their thinking and reasoning processes rather than looking for the "correct answers." Instead of simply evaluating students on their ability to re-present information covered in the course, you will be assessing their ability to apply, analyze, relate, synthesize, and evaluate information.
- **Use multiple modes of evaluation:** Use multiple modes of evaluation, not just quizzes and examinations: regular homework assignments, application projects, oral presentations and debates, research papers, and class participation.

- **Evaluate early and throughout the course:** Schedule evaluation activities on an early and ongoing basis. Evaluations should be used as vehicles for promoting and guiding learning, as well as keeping students in touch with how well they are performing in the course. Research at LaGuardia Community College indicates that students often have unrealistically optimistic appraisals of how well they are doing.
- **Make evaluation criteria explicit:** Questions and expectations should be specific and focused, helping students develop the intellectual structures that form the core of knowledge. Use previous student projects as models that embody and illustrate the goals you are aiming for. After students complete the activity, select several exemplary student assignments to be shared and analyzed by the class.
- **Provide adequate preparation for evaluations:** Be sure that students have sufficient practice developing the abilities required by the evaluation activity. Remember Arturo Toscanini’s insight: “You do in a performance only what you have done 1000 times in practice.”
- **Permit students to revise their work:** Whenever possible, students should have the opportunity to revise and resubmit their work, based on your comments and suggestions. Evaluation activities should be vehicles for learning. Developing the ability to respond to feedback and revise our work is a crucial part of learning.

EXAMINATION QUESTIONS

Following are some sample examination questions from critical thinking faculty. They are grouped according to the thinking ability being evaluated. (Note: Occasionally, an exam question will refer to material from another source such as the *New York Times*. For these questions, you may substitute any similar material.)

Analyzing Issues

1. Select *one* of the following issues for analysis.
 - a. Children in public schools should be taught creationism as well as evolution so that they can make up their own minds about the origin of life.
 - b. The United States government should closely monitor all students, visitors, and tourists from the Middle East.
 - c. Bilingual education should be abolished, and all American schoolchildren should be required to speak English at all times.
2. For the issue selected, create a dialogue between two people that systematically examines both sides of the issue. Keep in mind the qualities of an effective dialogue:

Listening carefully to the other viewpoint

Raising important questions

Responding directly to the points being made

Supporting points of view with reasons and arguments

-
1. Read the article “Our Violent Kids” by Anastasia Toufexis, published in *Time* on June 12, 1989.
 2. Identify the main idea of the article.
 3. Identify three reasons that support the main idea.
 4. Think of an opposing opinion and give at least three reasons supporting it.

5. What else can influence the formation of values in children? Give reasons to support this other view.

“The boredom and negative attitude of American workers is causing the breakdown of the American economic system.”

1. Analyze this complex claim, breaking it into two simple claims.
2. Give reasons supporting each of the two simple claims.
3. Identify the two simple claims that *oppose* the original claims; offer reasons supporting each of them.

Recognizing Different Perspectives

To the Editor: It makes me sick to my stomach to see what’s going on today. As fast as our police catch juvenile delinquents, our bleeding-heart judges let these young punks out on probation, free to roam the streets in search of new prey. Don’t give me that rot about “It’s not their fault. They weren’t given a decent childhood.” Every human being is responsible for his own actions starting at the age of seven. If these hoodlums don’t want to obey the laws of the society around them, then they should be taken out of that society, not set free to break the laws again and again and cause the rest of us to live in fear, each wondering if he’ll be the next victim of one of these teen-aged monsters.

Critically evaluate this passage by completing the following steps:

1. Describe different perspectives on this issue and the arguments or reasons that support these different views.
2. Based on your analysis, describe a specific proposal for addressing this issue.

You and your friend both think we should again have a military draft. Your friend, however, insists that women are as capable of modern combat as men and says that any draft should include them. You do not think women should be sent into combat or even drafted.

Write a dialogue between you and your friend on this topic.

Problem Solving

1. Describe in clear and specific terms what you think is an important problem facing your city.
2. Analyze this problem in a systematic and detailed fashion.
3. Conclude with one or more specific recommendations to solve this problem. Include specific strategies for implementing your recommendation.

The following is a problem-solving question (contributed by Evelyn Burg):

The town of Redman, population 8573, is nestled by the side of the Alba River. Practically all of Redman’s water, potable and non-potable, comes from the Alba. During the summer, the local children swim, raft, and canoe on it. Many of the town’s sportsmen fish in it.

There is one major industry in Redman; that is the REX chemical plant. REX is a major producer of chemicals used in room deodorizer. On certain windy days visitors to Redman will wonder at the overwhelming scent of pine, given that there are no firs of any kind in sight. REX came to Redman thirty years ago and has employed over two generations of its citizens. Redman does have thriving support industries like supermarkets, shops, and a brand-new mall sporting a triplex movie theater, but without the

income from the plant Redman would most likely become a ghost town. REX almost pulled up stakes sixteen years ago when plant workers unionized, but this was finally resolved and REX stayed.

“Redman needs REX and REX loves Redman,” Mayor Horace Foyce is fond of repeating. Recently, though, there has been some grumbling about the mayor and some infighting among members of the town council. REX uses the river in its processing. It seems that REX has been dumping certain chemicals into it. These chemicals are thought to be not extremely hazardous (REX doesn’t generate super-toxins), but every day more is being discovered about the dangers of the chemicals it produces.

Dead bass began washing up on shore last year, and there were many more this spring. People who frequently swim in the river have been coming down with rashes and unexplained low-grade fevers, which do pass quickly. Some people are beginning to blame the plant.

REX maintains that it follows government standards on waste management responsibly and produces no life-threatening by-products. Large ads have appeared in the local papers defending REX against “hysteria.” They remind the public that EPA standards get stricter all the time and that six years ago REX underwent expensive air-pollution control modifications. To do more at this time, it is argued, would be so costly they would have to shut down and move to another state. This ad is endorsed by Redman’s Chamber of Commerce and REX’s board of directors.

But some people in the town are very concerned because there have been four cases in Redman of a rare liver disease among infants. Some speculation has tied it to the water supply. The EPA has not been able to determine for certain whether this is the case, but the examiner told one council member that it was a “strong possibility.” “We don’t have the resources or the sophistication to test every possibility. The public health and the environment is not the only priority of this administration.”

At a town council meeting scheduled for next Monday the members must decide what action to take.

Following the model in Chapter 3, find a problem in the passage and suggest a solution.

-
1. Select *one* of the following problems for analysis.
 - a. My fourteen-year-old son has become very difficult to deal with. After school he goes out with his friends, often not returning home until ten or eleven o’clock in the evening. I’m worried that he’ll get into trouble; in addition, he is doing poorly in school. Since I am a single parent, working to support my son and younger daughter, I don’t get home until six o’clock. How can I make him stay at home? I’m afraid his friends have more influence on him than I do.
 - b. I’m so confused about my major. I selected computer science because I know there are many good jobs in this field. However, the courses don’t interest me; as a result, I find myself bored and doing badly in them. My mathematical abilities are not terrific either, and I’m failing that subject this term. I need training for a good career in which I can surely find a job when I graduate, so I can support my child. I’m confused. Maybe I should just forget college.
 2. Analyze the problem in a systematic and detailed way. Come up with at least two alternatives in your analysis.
 3. Conclude with one or more specific recommendations to solve the problem and outline the steps that the person should consider taking to implement your ideas.

Suppose you are in the following situation: You are the oldest child in your Mexican-American family, and you have been a very successful student. Your younger sister seems to be following in your footsteps. She studies and reads a lot, but she is also outgoing and confident, an all-around student as you were. But now in

the eighth grade, she is having a problem. She seems bored by school, says the teachers rarely call on her, has begun to skip doing her homework, hangs out late, and is even smoking, you think. Your mother comes to you for advice.

1. Treat this as a *problem to be solved*.
2. Offer a *social practice analysis* of this situation.

Perceiving

A friend told of an experience she had at a flea market in southern California. She was upset by it. She overheard a man with a bicycle talking to two women who were working at one of the tables. They were speaking about the military; one woman had been in the army and so had the man. Another large man, seemingly older than the first, came striding over and said, “Get out of here and don’t bother these girls!” The women said nothing. The first man got on his bicycle, shouting, “You only treat me like this because I am black!”

Choose two characters and give a plausible description of their possible perceptions of each other and what evidence there is that they are stereotyping someone.

Since the time you woke up this morning, you have already perceived many, many things by using your senses as a “bridge to the world.” Of course you cannot take in everything around you, or you would be bombarded with stimuli. *Select* three sensations/events you paid attention to this morning and *discuss why* your personal “lenses” noticed them.

Believing and Knowing

1. Read carefully the following letter.
2. Critically evaluate the claims made in the letter. Do you think they make sense? Why or why not?
3. Describe strategies for investigating the claims made in the letter.

Kiss someone you love when you get this letter, and make magic. This paper has been sent to you for good luck. The original copy is in New England. It has been around the world nine times. The luck has now been sent to you.

You will receive good luck within four days of receiving this letter, provided you send it to others. This is no joke! You will receive it in the mail. Send copies to people you think need good luck. Do not send money, as fate has no price. *Do not keep this letter*—it must leave your hands within ninety-six hours or you will face the consequences.

A British Army officer, Joe Elliot, received \$4 million and lost it—because he broke the chain.

While in the Philippines, Gene Welch lost his wife six days after receiving this letter. He failed to circulate this letter. However, before her death she won \$5 million in a lottery. The money was transferred to him four days after he decided to mail this letter.

Please send out twenty copies of this letter and see what happens in four days. The chain comes from Venezuela and was written by Paul Anthony Decnoff, a missionary from South America. Since this letter must make a tour of the world, you must make twenty copies and send them to your friends and associates. After a few days you will receive a surprise. *This letter is true, even if you are not superstitious.* Do note the following:

Constantine Daise received the letter and asked his secretary to make twenty copies and send them out. A few days later he won a lottery of \$2 million.

Aria Daddit, an office employee, received the letter and forgot it had to leave his hands within ninety-six hours. He lost his job. After finding the letter again he mailed out twenty copies. A few days later he got a better job.

Dolin Fairchild received the letter and, not believing, threw it away. Nine days later he died.

Please send no money . . . Please do not ignore this . . . It works . . .

Write two statements, one using the verb *believe* and one using the verb *know*. Explain why you chose each particular word for your sentences, thus exploring the *difference* between the ideas of knowing and believing.

Recognizing Inferences and Judgments

Analyze the following inference: “I work very hard. Therefore, I will eventually achieve great success in the world.”

1. Show the *conclusion*, the *fact claim*, and the *inferential gap*.
2. Offer further fact claims to narrow the gap.
3. Show an alternative *inferred conclusion*, and list further fact claims that would lead to this conclusion.

Take the following value judgment: “My father/mother (your choice) has been a very good/bad (your choice) parent.”

1. Offer three criteria of parenting to support this judgment, as well as facts to illustrate your points.
2. Explain how a person with different criteria could look at the same facts and come to an opposite value judgment.

Evaluating and Constructing Arguments

Choose one of the following topics and give *three* distinct arguments both for and against it.

1. Should someone have the right to refuse painful medical treatment if his or her life is at stake?
2. Should there be a compulsory draft for women as well as men?
3. Should welfare payments increase each time a woman has a child?
4. Should creation science be taught in public schools along with evolution?

Select one of the following issues. Decide whether you are for or against it. Construct an argument supporting your side of the issue, organizing it into reasons and conclusions. Evaluate the strengths and/or weaknesses of your argument. Write a well-developed essay that includes valid reasons and conclusions for the arguments presented.

Drug testing in the workplace

Couples living together before marriage

Condom vending machines in high schools

_____ for President

Random weapon searches of New York City high-school students

Look at the following deductive arguments. First, write them out in correct symbolic form. Second, identify their form by name. Third, tell whether they are valid or invalid and briefly explain why.

1. The children will be very happy if Santa Claus and his reindeer land on our rooftop. Santa Claus and his reindeer did not land on our rooftop. The children will not be happy.
2. If you love Christmas trees, then you really like this holiday season. I know you really like this holiday season. You must love Christmas trees.

Scientific Method

Select an issue that you would like to poll LaGuardia students about. Describe in *specific* terms how you would go about constructing a sample both large and representative enough for you to generalize the results to the target population accurately.

Identifying Conclusions

An editorial from the *New York Times* (“It’s Baby-Selling, and It’s Wrong,” June 4, 1988) supports legislation to “bar surrogate parenting for pay.” The writer has come to three conclusions that uphold this argument. *Identify* the conclusions and the reasons the author explores. Second, discuss your own views in response to this article. Do you agree or disagree? Why?

CRITICAL THINKING EXAMINATIONS

The following section includes sample examinations that faculty members teaching the Critical Thinking course at LaGuardia Community College have used in their classes.

Final Exam: Critical Thinking

Choose from the list below the three abilities that you feel you developed in Critical Thought Skills. Think about this carefully before selecting the three you will write about. In your essay you should describe how each of the three abilities was taught and reinforced.

Use examples from classes and homework assignments. You can also illustrate how you applied these abilities in other classes or in your life outside school.

- Looking beneath the surface of things
 - Taking ideas apart
 - Seeing relationships between ideas
 - Learning how to organize ideas
 - Understanding different points of view
 - Understanding how definitions work and why they are important
 - Supporting your point of view with reasons
 - Asking questions
 - Getting in touch with your past and your memories
 - Getting in touch with and expressing your feelings
 - Thinking carefully about what you read
 - Expressing ideas carefully and specifically
 - Solving problems
 - Exploring ideas with others in an organized way
-

Critical Thinking Final Examination

Professor Lorraine Kenny

Your final in this class will be to compose a *Letter to Self*. I will send this letter to you at the beginning of the fall semester. The letter has two parts. In the first half, you are to evaluate your work in this class. In the second, you are to identify future goals you have for yourself and devise strategies that will help you accomplish these goals. Remember to be specific and use evidence to illustrate and support all your statements.

Instructions:

You will have one hour to compose a letter to yourself that will identify the following:

1. Your first task is to evaluate your performance this semester in this class (*hint*: I would write a separate paragraph for a, b, c, and d below).
 - a. In looking over your work, identify the assignment you think you did best, and describe why you think this. This assignment can be one you worked on alone or in a group.
 - b. Now identify the assignment you think you had the most difficulty with, and explain why you think this. Describe something you could have done to improve your performance on this assignment. Again, this can be something you worked on alone or in a group.
 - c. Do you think your study habits, your writing, your analytical skills, and/or your ability to express your ideas verbally improved over the course of this semester? If yes, how so; if not, why not?
 - d. Describe at least one way you will use or already have used something you learned in this class to help you either in another class, on your job, or in your life in general.
2. Now that you've critically evaluated the work that you completed this semester, I want you to look ahead. Identify **a goal** you would like to accomplish by September _____. This goal can be related to school, work, or your personal life.
 - a. Identify your goal, and explain why it is important to you and how it relates to your long-term goals.
 - b. Consider and describe in detail any circumstances that may get in the way of your accomplishing this goal. Remember to use your brainstorming skills here. Think of all possible obstacles.
 - c. Now describe things that you can do between now and _____ to overcome the obstacles you have identified in step 2b. Remember that some problems have boundaries that you cannot control. Look at each obstacle and figure out what you can actually do given any existing limitations. Remember to be concrete and specific.
3. Now write a conclusion that will give you something to think about when you receive this letter next _____.

Bonus question: Explain what the difference is between a goal and a problem. Use an example from your own life to illustrate your explanation.

Critical Thinking Final Examination

Due Date: _____

Please type your answers, or write as neatly as possible. If what you write is illegible, you will not receive credit for it. Organize your thoughts. Since this is a take-home exam, I expect your answers to be well thought out. **Follow directions.** Make sure you answer **all** parts of **each** question. Take some time to look over the test before you begin answering the questions. Absolutely **no** late exams will be accepted.

- [15 points] Choose a stereotype that you do not believe to be true. List the characteristics that compose that stereotype. Write a paragraph explaining why you don't believe the stereotype is true.
- [5 points] The following passage is taken from *The Second Sex* (first published in 1952), written by the French feminist writer Simone de Beauvoir. (a) Identify the main idea of the following passage. (b) List the reasons that support the main idea.

According to French law, obedience is no longer included among the duties of a wife, and each woman citizen has the right to vote; but these civil liberties remain theoretical as long as they are unaccompanied by economic freedom. A woman supported by a man—wife or courtesan—is not emancipated from the male because she has a ballot in her hand; if custom imposes less constraint upon her than formerly, the negative freedom implied has not profoundly modified her situation; she remains bound in her condition of vassalage. It is through gainful employment that woman has traversed most of the distance that separated her from the male; and nothing else can guarantee her liberty in practice. Once she ceases to be a parasite, the system based on her dependence crumbles; between her and the universe there is no longer any need for a masculine mediator.

- [10 points] Do you agree or disagree with the passage in number 2? (Hint: there are several ways to disagree with it.) (a) Develop an alternative way of viewing the main issue being discussed. (b) List some reasons that support the alternative view.
- [20 points] Choose **one** of the following topics and give three distinct arguments for and three against it.
 - Should people be required by law to vote?
 - Should there be a compulsory draft for women as well as men?
 - Should welfare payments increase each time a woman has a child?
 - Should the United States take steps to guarantee national health coverage?
- [10 points] The following passage is taken from an article in a CUNY student newspaper. In your own words: (a) What problem is the writer of the passage identifying? (b) What is the underlying cause of this problem, according to this writer?

The American press is free in the sense that news reports are not routinely subject to government censorship. However, its freedom might be compromised by the private ownership of media outlets with revenue derived from advertising. Audience members represent nothing more than potential customers for advertisers. The information the audience receives is thus determined not by their own needs or interest, but by the advertisers.

CONTINUED

6. [10 points] Do you agree with the assessment in the passage from number 5? Can you give an example from television, a newspaper, or a magazine that would support your point of view?
7. [15 points] The following passage appeared in the *New York Times* a little more than a year after the Oklahoma City bombing (one of the most devastating terrorist attacks in U.S. history prior to the World Trade Center attack). (a) What did this article imply about the public perception of Timothy McVeigh? (b) Talk specifically about this lawyer's strategies for influencing public perception of Timothy McVeigh. Do you think these strategies are effective? Why or why not? (c) What do you think this lawyer's final goal was for Mr. McVeigh? (What is the lawyer trying to accomplish?)

All-American Defendant? Lawyer Works to Soften Image of Bombing Suspect

By James Brooke DENVER, June 1—Two days after the Oklahoma City bombing Americans got their first, and perhaps most enduring, image of Timothy J. McVeigh: a crew-cut man in an orange prison jump suit, his hands and feet shackled, his face a taut mask.

In recent weeks, television viewers have seen a new, softer image of Mr. McVeigh: relaxed, his hair longer, his clothing casual and his mood amiable as he exchanges pleasantries with his lead lawyer.

With defense lawyers controlling access to a man charged with carrying out the nation's worst terrorist attack, CBS, NBC, Time and Newsweek have followed defense ground rules in exchange for first-person reports on the defendant. The organizations agreed not to photograph Mr. McVeigh in handcuffs or ask him questions about the bombing itself. The network also agreed that no questions would be asked on camera.

"If the Government is going to have a media strategy, then we are going to have one, too," Stephen Jones, Mr. McVeigh's chief lawyer, said in a recent telephone interview. Objecting to the jump-suit videotape from the jail in Perry, Oklahoma last year, he added: "I felt the Perry walkout had been overused."

This fall, shortly before jury selection is expected to start, Mr. Jones plans to increase Mr. McVeigh's public exposure by granting on-the-record interviews with the anchors at network news shows.

To defense lawyers, Mr. Jones is following an old strategy. . . .

8. [5 points] In your own words, define **perception**.
9. [10 points] Write a substantive essay on the following topic: *The Three Most Important Abilities I Developed in Critical Thinking*.
-

Final Exam

Professor Rosenblitt

LaGuardia College

HUP100.04: Critical Thinking Skills

Fall I Session

Please answer any **TWO** of the following essay questions.

Remember to both demonstrate and discuss **CRITICAL THINKING** in your answers.

This exam ends at 9 a.m. You have 1 hour.

1. **Use the five-step problem solving method** to show how you might solve **one** of the following **two** problems (remember to consider **several** alternatives and the advantages and disadvantages of **each** alternative):
 - a. On your way to school one morning, you see a person being robbed. What should you do? OR
 - b. You return to your house after being away on vacation and you find that everything from your apartment is gone. What should you do?
2. Think critically about either situation described in question 1—part (a) or part (b)—by writing three “critical questions” about this problem. Tell which of the six categories of critical questions your questions belong in, and **why**.

EXAMPLE: For part (a)—Did the robber have a gun?

Category: Fact-based—since it asks us to supply a specific piece of information
3. Choose **ONE** of the following issues (a) through (d). Discuss by considering the issue from **TWO DIFFERENT PERSPECTIVES**; then tell which side you agree with, and **WHY**. Support both sides with reasons and evidence. You may choose to answer in the form of a dialogue between “Person A” and “Person B”:
 - a. Should we raise the age at which it is legal to buy cigarettes?
 - b. Should gay couples be allowed to adopt children?
 - c. Should women work at jobs traditionally held by men?
 - d. Should young children who have been adopted ever be “returned” to their natural parents afterward?
4. Answer **EITHER** (a) **OR** (b).
 - a. Do you believe that your environment influences your perception of the world? Describe your lenses of perception to support your answer to this question.
 - b. How did your lenses of perception make you notice certain people on the way to school today? How would you describe your lenses?

CONTINUED

5. Answer **BOTH** (a) **AND** (b).
- a. What did your voice of judgment (VOJ) tell you about how well you would perform in this course, and how well you would perform on this test?
 - b. What are three things you might do to overcome your Voj to perform better on exams and in your class work and change the negative way(s) in which you judge yourself?

GOOD LUCK!!

Final Exam

Professor Bea Gross

CHECK the meaning of any words that may be unclear in the index of the textbook. Be especially careful with the words in **bold type**.

- Credit for each question is indicated in parentheses.
- 1. ATTACH two articles on the **same subject** from two different newspapers or magazines from those you have been collecting and use them to:
 - a. Find and list the **emotive words** in each story or commentary (3).
 - b. List two **facts** in each story (3).
 - c. List two **inferences** in each story (3).
 - d. List any **judgments** made by the author or those he/she interviewed (3).

Indicate the “handle” of the story (how does the author “pick up” or begin the piece) and the SPIN on the story (the attitude the author wants you to come away with). Attach these articles to your final exam (3).

- a. Specifically state the **subliminal message** of each ad and list the elements in the copy (the words) and the picture that were chosen to produce that effect. Can you link it with one of the “cold-reading” statements (4)?
 - b. Write one “truth-ad” as it might have been done by the “crazy people” in the film of the same name based on one of the “cold-reading” statements (4).
 - c. Write two ads for a political candidate—one that **appeals to fear**, another that **appeals to pity** (5). (Be sure you check the definitions of these appeals in Chapter 11.)
 - d. Michael Jordan appears in a Nike ad. What, **according to the book**, is the appeal of this ad (2)?
3. **HOW GOOD IS THE EVIDENCE?**

Discuss the problems, if any, with the **arguments** given below. If questions must be asked to ascertain the validity of the statements, what are those questions? If something is wrong with the arguments, what is it? If you think the statements are valid, explain why.

- a. “The *New York Times* reported that the Secretary of the Army says we need more nuclear warheads, and who better to know than the Secretary of the Army?” (2)
- b. “My boyfriend never shows any real concern for my feelings. Men are selfish, insensitive and emotionally immature.” (2)
- c. “Boxing is less dangerous than other sports. A survey of sports-related deaths in New York City over thirty years revealed that baseball, with 43 deaths, led both football (22 deaths) and boxing (21 deaths) in terms of mortality.” (This is a bogus argument—explain why; 6 points.)

CONTINUED

4. What is *fallacious* about the following statements? **Explain** your answer **by using the language of the book** to indicate what fallacy or fallacies are being employed. **Read Chapter 11** for help.
- “America—love it or leave it!” (3)
 - “Every time I take an umbrella, it rains. I forgot my umbrella so it will rain tonight.” (3)
 - Make up one example of “**slippery-slope**” thinking (4).
5. Discuss the problems, if any, with the **evidence** given below in the following statements. If questions must be asked to ascertain the validity of the statements, what are those questions? If something is wrong with the arguments, what is it (4 points each)?
- “Take a course with Professor Milkin. He was great.”
 - “The Association of Plastic Surgery has declared that breast implants do not trigger autoimmune disorders, despite the claims of some hysterical women.”
 - “It’s important to get a good night’s sleep. I read that people who can’t sleep well at night die earlier than people who get a good night’s sleep.”
 - “We interviewed sixty typical volunteers and found that most people have had sex outside their marriages.”
 - “My mother gets upset over insignificant things. Older women are so emotional.”

6. **On Inferences.** Write **two inferences** for each sentence:

“I see someone limping and I infer that _____”(2) (2).

“I see him driving a brand-new expensive car and I infer that _____”(2) (2).

Circle either the inference, the fact, or the judgment in the following sentences:

“My new car has broken down three times this week” (fact, inference, judgment?) (2).

“My new car will probably continue to give me trouble” (fact, inference, judgment?) (2).

“My new car is a lemon” (fact, inference, judgment?) (2).

“My friend goes to a bar every night (fact, inference, judgment?) (2).

“That man is fat” (fact, inference, judgment?) (2).

“That movie is boring” (fact, inference, judgment?) (2).

Write a **fact** about your neighborhood. Based on this fact, write an **inference** and a **judgment**. Using the **same fact**, write a **different** inference, and a **different** judgment (six sentences in all—the fourth duplicates the first) (5).

Do the same as above with a fact about yourself or another person (5).

IF YOU HAVE BEEN ABSENT MORE THAN TWO TIMES, TURN IN THE ASSIGNMENTS ON THE FOLLOWING PAGE.

CONTINUED

MAKEUP CREDIT FOR THOSE WHO HAVE MISSED TWO CLASSES:

1. Situation: The school in your neighborhood, which is mainly made up of children of color, has academic test scores considerably below the national average.
 - a. List at least **six** (more if you can) **possible reasons** for this. (LIST ALL you can think of, **including those you disagree** with.)
 - b. What questions might you ask to verify your **hypothesis**? What facts do you need to challenge a racist interpretation of the data?
 - c. How would you **“test”** two of the explanations you listed to prove the argument is either good or bad? BE EXPLICIT—IF YOU ARE DEVELOPING A QUESTIONNAIRE, INDICATE THE QUESTIONS ON IT. IF YOU ARE TESTING OR COMPARING, INDICATE EXACTLY WHAT YOU WOULD LOOK AT.
2. **READ** “Critical Thinking and Obedience to Authority” in Chapter 11.
Answer the Questions for Analysis.

MAKEUP WORK IF YOU HAVE MISSED THREE CLASSES and you have my special permission to make up the work.

3. **READ** “Discovering Your Personal Myth” by Sam Keen.
Answer the three questions.
 4. **READ** “The Rivet Poppers.” Answer the three questions. If you missed the mind-map demonstration, find it described in the textbook in Chapter 7, and use it as needed.
-

SECTION 4

Using the Video “Thinking Towards Decisions”

- Overview
- Key Concepts and Relationships
- Video Analysis
- Review
- Thinking Activity
- Thinking Activity

The power and pervasive influence of the visual medium makes using videos in the class extremely effective. Here are some videos that are used regularly in the LaGuardia critical thinking course:

- *The Life of Malcolm X*
- *The Thin Blue Line* (the award-winning documentary used in conjunction with Chapter 4)
- *Rashomon* (the classic from Akira Kurosawa used in conjunction with Chapter 4)
- *God, Darwin and Dinosaurs* (The PBS “NOVA” episode on evolution used in conjunction with Stephen Jay Gould’s essay in Chapter 9)
- *Milgram’s Experiment and Moral Development* (a video on Stanley Milgram’s famous experiment used in conjunction with the essay, “Critical Thinking and Obedience to Authority,” in Chapter 11)
- *Why Man Creates* (a video that explores the creative thinking process)
- *Tragedy at Tiananmen* (PBS Frontline)
- *The Klan: A Legacy of Hate in America*
- *The Golden Cage*
- *The Mind* (a nine-part PBS series)

You will probably find many other videos that can be integrated into your course. To ensure critical viewing on the part of students, give them a clear idea of what sorts of things they should be looking for and thinking about as they view each tape. They also should have a writing assignment based on their analysis. A useful resource on critical viewing is *Critical Viewing: Stimulant to Critical Thinking* by Kevin O’Reilly and John Splain (Chicago: Midwest Publications, 1989).

A one-hour video titled “Thinking Towards Decisions” has been developed especially for use with the book *Thinking Critically*. This video is designed specifically to be used with Chapter 2, “Thinking Critically.” The video introduces the concept of critical thinking (using the same structure as in Chapter 2) and explores the way critical thinking abilities are used in complex decision-making situations. The video uses a mix of dramatization, expert interviews and debate, and a student seminar group to examine the way critical thinking abilities function in real-life situations. It culminates in an analysis of the euthanasia, or right to die, issue.

An outline and narrative of the video follow. You can experiment with the most effective ways to use the video in your course, but one useful strategy is to stop the video at various points and give students the opportunity to analyze the issues that are being addressed. A Thinking Activity based on the video is located at the end of the narrative. (Note: Questions in italics form the structure of the seminar discussion group.)

OVERVIEW

This video introduces the concepts of critical thinking and creative thinking and explores the way these thinking abilities are used in complex decision-making situations. The video uses a mix of dramatization, expert interviews and debate, and a student seminar group to examine the way critical and creative thinking abilities function in real-life situations. It culminates in an analysis of the euthanasia, or right to die, issue.

KEY CONCEPTS AND RELATIONSHIPS

The following are key critical thinking concepts.

- *Thinking critically*: Carefully analyzing and evaluating the process of thinking
- *Thinking creatively*: Conceiving original ideas and developing unique solutions

The following are qualities of thinking critically and creatively:

- *Thinking actively*: Actively using our intelligence, knowledge, and skills to deal effectively with academic and life situations instead of reacting passively to experience (see Thinking Actively in Chapter 2)
- *Carefully exploring issues*: Penetrating beneath the surface of issues to understand their depth and complexity instead of adopting superficial explanations (see Carefully Exploring Situations with Questions in Chapter 2)
- *Thinking autonomously*: Developing our own ideas through thoughtful analysis rather than borrowing ideas from others (see Thinking Independently in Chapter 2)
- *Taking different perspectives*: Striving to see situations from multiple viewpoints and being flexible enough to change or modify our ideas based on new information or improved insight (see Viewing Situations from Different Perspectives in Chapter 2)
- *Supporting viewpoints with reasons*: Evaluating the evidence and reasons that support beliefs (see Supporting Diverse Perspectives with Reasons and Evidence in Chapter 2)
- *Engaging in dialogue*: Systematically exchanging and exploring ideas with others in an organized way (see Discussing Ideas in an Organized Way in Chapter 2)

VIDEO ANALYSIS

In the opening, Dr. John Chaffee introduces this video, "Thinking Towards Decisions." He defines critical thinking as carefully analyzing and evaluating the process of thinking and explains why it is important in making effective decisions. If critical thinking involves the careful examination and evaluation of the process and products of human thinking, then creative thinking involves the processes we use to generate the ideas to be evaluated. In other words, creative thinking is thinking that results in the discovery of original ideas or improved solutions to problems, while critical thinking is the examination and testing of suggested solutions to see whether they will work. For example, developing ideas for a new commercial product involves creative thinking; assessing the cost, feasibility, and marketability of the various new ideas produced involves critical thinking abilities. Creative thinking and critical thinking are thus woven together in an ongoing interactive relationship.

Take a few minutes and think about your thinking. How would you describe the processes that are going on in your mind?

Education at its best encourages students to think critically and creatively. In the next segment, Sue Nissman, a seminar student, describes an educational experience that encouraged her to think critically. Traditional education has often emphasized transferring information from teacher to student rather than challenging students to question and think about what they are learning. The primary teaching approach of this information-transfer model is expository lecture, presenting subject matter in detail apart from criticism or argument. The role of students in this model is that of passive receptacles whose main job is to absorb this knowledge and then give it back on exams and papers. Unfortunately, this knowledge-transfer model does not promote effective learning, nor does it stimulate students to develop the critical and creative thinking abilities needed for success in most careers.

In contrast, the critical thinking model of education is based on the belief that students should develop a progressive understanding of the process each discipline uses to generate and think about information. For example, instead of focusing solely on the presentation of the facts and theories of history, a critical thinking approach also will emphasize the intellectual skills used to evaluate the reliability and accuracy of eyewitnesses, observation, and source of information in constructing accounts of historical events. Such an approach will encourage students to “think historically.”

Can you describe an educational experience that stimulated you to think critically and creatively? How was this accomplished?

Critical and creative thinking has emerged in recent years as a distinct field of study—a multidisciplinary initiative focused on understanding how the thinking process operates and designing strategies for improving the effectiveness of people’s thinking abilities. It has its own theoretical framework, vocabulary, and analytical tools, and it can be applied to any discipline as well as to life experience.

This video focuses on the way thinking abilities are used in complex decision-making situations and is designed to provoke, stimulate, and guide you to think through challenging issues and reflect on your own thinking process while you are doing so. To this end, the video uses a variety of interwoven elements, including drama, professional viewpoints, and a seminar group that will endeavor to think critically and creatively about the problems and issues being addressed.

We expect that the intellectual abilities you will be developing and refining are the kinds of abilities you will need to analyze complex issues, solve problems, and make informed decisions in every area of your lives. These are the very abilities we must have to function as responsible citizens in a healthy, democratic society.

ACT I

Scene 1: (father’s office) Paul Ridgefield and his father, Dave, discuss the family building supply business.

Scene 2: (dorm room) Paul’s mother, Eleanor, calls Paul with news of his father’s heart attack.

Scene 3: (hospital room) Paul and Eleanor discuss Dad’s medical condition.

Discussion Module 1

The seminar is a group of seven diverse students, representing different ages, nationalities, and backgrounds, led by Dr. John Chaffee. The students are Dolores Colon-Montalvo, Annette Hayde, Xiomara Laureano, Derrick McQueen, Sue Nissman, Joseph Reyes, and Daniel Studney. The group gives its initial reactions to Paul’s predicament, addressing questions such as the following:

This family has suffered an unexpected tragedy in the form of the father's heart attack and subsequent coma. *What do you think are the possible implications of this event for the family?*

To deal effectively with challenging decision-making situations like this, we need to think creatively and critically. Thinking creatively involves developing possible solutions to our problem; thinking critically involves evaluating the usefulness of these proposed solutions. A number of key qualities are involved in thinking creatively and critically.

Thinking Actively

Thinking actively is using our intelligence, knowledge, and skills to make sense of experience instead of reacting passively to events.

If you found yourself in a situation like this, what decisions would you make? Why?

Do Paul and his mother have the same perceptions of the seriousness of the father's illness? Why or why not?

Both Paul and Eleanor view this situation through their own "lenses." These lenses reflect their past experiences, values, interests, and biases. Thinking effectively involves becoming aware of our lenses—and those of others—so that we can view situations more objectively and appreciate other viewpoints.

Carefully Exploring Situations and Issues

When we carefully explore situations and issues, we ask relevant questions and then try to locate information needed to answer those questions.

What additional information do Paul and Eleanor need to make informed decisions in this situation?

One area in which Paul and Eleanor need additional information is in terms of Dad's medical condition and prognosis. In the following segments, two doctors give their somewhat contrasting expert opinions on Dave Ridgefield's medical condition and prognosis. Dr. Michael Friedman is Chief of Geriatrics, Bellevue Hospital, and Dr. Julius Korein is a neurologist at Bellevue Hospital.

Discussion Module 2

The seminar group considers this new medical information and evaluates its impact on the evolving scenario. Included is an analysis of the same perceptual and epistemological (knowledge-related) issues considered in the first discussion module but on a more sophisticated level. Questions to be addressed include the following:

What have we learned about Dad's medical condition and prognosis for the future? How does this information affect the possible decisions of Paul and Eleanor?

In what ways are the perspectives of Dr. Friedman and Dr. Korein similar, and in what ways are they different? Are their perceiving lenses related to their areas of specialization—geriatrics and neurology?

What do we do when experts disagree? Whom do we believe?

By discussing these and other issues, we can develop a more sophisticated concept of knowledge in which all of us are viewed as active participants constructing our understanding through exploration and discovery. The expert opinions of authorities must be critically evaluated, and it is ultimately our responsibility to develop informed conclusions based on our investigations.

Supporting Views with Evidence and Reasons

Everyone has beliefs. What distinguishes critical thinkers from uncritical thinkers is the quality of the evidence and reasons that support their beliefs. We also must seek to understand the reasons and evidence that support other viewpoints.

What evidence and reasons do the doctors provide to support their opinions?

Thinking Autonomously

When we think autonomously, or for ourselves, we develop our own conclusions based on careful analysis rather than uncritically accepting the opinions of others.

What conclusions should we draw regarding Dad's medical condition and prognosis?

What actions should Paul and Eleanor take based on the information they have?

ACT II

Scene 1: Montage of Paul trying to do it all.

Scene 2: (hospital room) Paul discusses blowing his MCAT (medical school exam) with Eleanor and resolves to work harder to keep things going.

Discussion Module 3

The seminar group reacts to and analyzes these further dramatic developments. Questions to be addressed include the following:

Paul has decided to try to balance his academic studies and running his father's business. *What is your evaluation of this decision? Does it reflect critical and creative thinking? Why or why not?*

Is Eleanor responding critically and creatively to these events? Why or why not?

What decisions do you think Paul and Eleanor should be making? What decisions would you make if you were in their situation?

Have you ever been in a comparable situation? Were you able to develop a creative solution to the dilemma?

When we think critically about difficult situations, we try to develop an analytical approach that we can use to make sense of new information and systematically evaluate our options. Let's explore the further complexities of Paul and Eleanor's situation.

ACT III

Scene 1: (kitchen) Paul and Eleanor discuss family finances.

Discussion Module 4

The seminar group considers and critically evaluates these new developments in this evolving scenario, consciously applying the critical thinking strategies that have been the focus of this program. In addition to evaluating the thinking processes of the characters in the drama, participants are stimulated to reflect on their own thinking processes as they try to make sense of this complex and difficult situation. Their evolving analytical abilities are applied to several other examples as well. Questions to be examined include the following:

Dad's medical condition has remained unchanged for more than four weeks. *What does this information suggest regarding his chances for recovery? What implications does this information have for Paul and Eleanor in terms of their decisions?*

What are the initial reactions of Paul and Eleanor in dealing with their mounting financial crisis? Why are they in such strong disagreement? What are their perceiving lenses?

Striving to View Situations and Issues from Multiple Perspectives

Viewing situations from only our own viewpoints is not sufficient to achieve a deep, multi-dimensional understanding of issues. We also must be flexible enough to change or modify our ideas based on new information or better insight.

Are Paul and Eleanor trying to view their situation from each other's standpoint? Are they aware of their own perceiving lenses?

What reasons would you give to support Paul's suggestion to take a second mortgage on the house? What reasons would you give to support Eleanor's suggestion to sell the business?

Paul has decided to commit himself to the family business, postponing his plans to enter medical school. *Does this decision reflect critical and creative thinking? Why or why not?*

What other alternatives could he pursue? How would you evaluate these alternatives in relation to the ones he has chosen?

It is becoming clear that informed, critical thinking decisions do not occur in vacuums; they also involve knowing the concrete facts of a situation—in this case, the medical and financial realities. Paul and Eleanor have begun exploring some possibilities for dealing with their financial problems, but they need the kind of analysis and guidance provided by financial experts. In the following segment, two financial experts discuss the family's financial situation and possible alternatives for resolving the situation. Mr. Jeffrey Aronson and Mr. Howard Kerker are partners in the financial consulting firm of Aronson & Kerker.

Discussion Module 5

The seminar group reviews the information presented by the financial experts and discusses the family's financial situation. Questions to be addressed include the following:

How can we summarize the family's financial situation? What are some of the financial options for the family? How do the various options reflect different values?

Based on what you know of their financial situation, what actions do you think Paul and Eleanor should take?

In what ways are the opinions of the financial experts similar, and in what ways are they different? What are their perceiving lenses? How should we go about evaluating their financial analyses?

Engaging in a Dialogue with Others

Systematically exchanging and exploring ideas clarifies our understanding. This interactive process involves *listening* to the other person and then responding to the ideas he or she is expressing.

Are the financial advisers engaging in an effective dialogue? Why or why not?

Have Paul and Eleanor been engaging in effective dialogues? Why or why not?

What direction is Paul's life taking? Is this direction the result of critical and creative thinking? Why or why not?

Paul has decided to commit himself to the family business and postpone his plans for medical school. Very often living the consequences of our decisions either supports or casts doubts on those decisions. The video next examines the results of Paul's decisions.

ACT IV

Scene 1: (father's office) Working at the computer, Paul confronts lost career aspirations.

Scene 2: (hospital room) Paul reflects on his situation.

Discussion Module 6

The seminar group responds immediately to this final scene, reflecting on the following questions:

What is Paul thinking? What would you be thinking in this situation?

Why did viewing files of his schoolwork on the computer screen have such a disturbing effect on him? What complex and sometimes contradictory influences led up to this moment for him?

What critical point or milestone do you think Paul has reached in his decision-making process? Has his perspective shifted? Has his thinking been reorganized?

Have you ever been in an analogous situation in which you felt torn between conflicting currents, perhaps involving the needs or desires of others as well as your own? How did you go about resolving these situations?

Suppose Dad's condition doesn't improve or even deteriorates. What implications does this have for the family's future decisions?

As this dramatic scenario has unfolded, we have discovered that Paul and Eleanor must address some profound moral issues, and it is time for the video to do so. In the following segment, two experts in the field of medical ethics discuss and debate some of these issues. Ms. Rose Gasner is a lawyer with the Society for the Right to Die; Father Anthony Mastroeni is a lawyer, professor of theology at St. Joseph's Seminary, and professor of medical ethics at New York Medical College.

Discussion Module 7

In a commentary/discussion, the seminar group considers the moral questions raised by the previous debate. The point is made that when people grapple with the issue of the right to die in a specific situation, it ceases to become an abstract issue and takes on new, often troubling dimensions. Questions to be considered include the following:

What were the most persuasive reasons and arguments presented by Father Mastroeni and Ms. Gasner? How would you evaluate the strength of these reasons and arguments?

Compare and contrast the perceiving lenses of each person. How do you think they arrived at their contrasting perspectives and different theoretical frameworks?

What is your perspective on the right-to-die issue? What reasons and arguments support your position? What experiences contributed to shaping your perceiving lenses regarding this issue?

How do we develop our moral values? How do we reach moral conclusions? How do we resolve conflicts between people with differing moral perspectives?

How is thinking critically about moral issues similar to thinking critically in other kinds of situations, and how is it different?

The introduction of moral questions has placed our dramatic story in an entirely different light. The final scene of the drama examines Paul's and Eleanor's response to this new challenge to their thinking processes.

ACT V

Scene 1: (hospital grounds) Paul and Eleanor have a final discussion examining their situation and exploring future possibilities.

Discussion Module 8

The seminar participants give their final analyses of the situation faced by Paul and Eleanor and the issue of the right to die, addressing the following questions:

Why does Eleanor say, "Nothing makes sense anymore. Everything's different."

What point has she come to in her thinking, and how has she arrived there? Is she undergoing a shift in perspective and a reorganization of her thinking? How does this moment compare with Paul's experience in front of the computer screen and at his father's side in the previous scene?

What do their experiences tell us about the decision-making process and the thinking activities that are part of it?

Given what we know of their circumstances, what decisions should Paul and Eleanor be making at this stage? What thinking processes did you use to reach these conclusions? Do they reflect critical and creative thinking?

What have we learned about the role of critical and creative thinking in everyday life?

Has your own thinking evolved during the course of this video? In what ways?

Summation

Dr. John Chaffee reviews the video and analyzes its structure. The gradually unfolding dramatic scenario was presented as a complex, challenging situation that compels thoughtful decision-making on the part of the principals. As new information is introduced to the characters, they are stimulated to review their ongoing analysis of the situation and explore possibilities based on this new information. In the same way that peeling an onion reveals deeper layers, the systematic exploration of the medical, financial, emotional, and moral dimensions of the scenario gradually involves the characters and audience in an increasingly deeper and more complex consideration of the many interacting levels of this dramatic situation.

In this way, the video is attempting to reveal and engage us in a mode of analysis for thinking through challenging issues. The drama and seminar are vehicles for introducing us to the strategies for thinking critically and creatively about real-life situations, which are typically complex and open-ended and lack one obvious "correct" answer.

REVIEW

Thinking critically and creatively is not just one way of thinking; it is a total approach to the way we make sense of the world, and it involves an integrated set of thinking abilities and attitudes that include the following:

- *Thinking actively:* Actively using our intelligence, knowledge, and skills to deal effectively with academic and life situations instead of reacting passively to experience

- *Carefully exploring issues*: Penetrating beneath the surface of issues to understand their depth and complexity instead of adopting superficial explanations
- *Supporting viewpoints with reasons*: Evaluating the evidence and reasons that support beliefs
- *Thinking autonomously*: Developing our own ideas through thoughtful analysis rather than borrowing ideas from others
- *Taking different perspectives*: Striving to see situations from multiple viewpoints and being flexible enough to change or modify our ideas based on new information or better insight
- *Engaging in dialogue*: Systematically exchanging and exploring ideas with others in an organized way

THINKING ACTIVITY

In this activity, students are asked to apply the abilities they have been exploring and developing by thinking critically about readings on the theme of liberty versus security in Chapter 3. You may assign this activity or distribute it for students to complete on their own. Assign these readings, and then distribute the handout for the Thinking Activity.

THINKING ACTIVITY

This activity may be assigned by your professor, or you may choose to complete it on your own to synthesize and apply what you have learned in this unit. Apply the abilities we have been exploring and developing by thinking critically and creatively about the ideas in the reading selections on the theme of liberty versus security in Chapter 3 of *Thinking Critically*, Eighth Edition. Then answer the following questions:

1. Explain the distinction “Liberty v. Security” makes between “an attack on freedom” and “an attack through freedom.”
2. Consider the following claim made in “Liberty v. Security”: “Even fundamental freedoms . . . are not absolute.” What do you think is meant by “absolute”? How would you define “freedom” as opposed to “absolute freedom”?
3. Explain why the controversy over civil liberties is becoming more complex.
4. Describe the reasons for supporting security measures such as the use of biometric cameras, the surveillance of email and cellular phone calls, and enforcement of laws requiring that citizens carry national I.D. cards. Describe the reasons for opposing these security measures.
5. Explain your views on national security versus civil liberties. Be sure to support your conclusions with reasons.
6. Explain whether these articles have contributed to your understanding of decision-making and your ability to think critically and creatively.
7. Discuss your views with others in the class via peer discussion groups in or outside class.

SECTION 5

Tom Randall's Halloween Party (The Test of Critical Thinking Abilities)

Introduction

- A. Gathering and Weighing the Evidence
- B. Asking Important Questions
- C. Constructing Knowledge
- D. Evaluating Expert Testimony
- E. Evaluating Summation Arguments
- F. Deliberating the Issues
- G. Reaching a Verdict
- H. Solving Problems

The Test of Critical Thinking Abilities: Footnotes for Expert Testimony

The Test of Critical Thinking Abilities: Evaluation/Performance Criteria

The Test of Critical Thinking Abilities, developed by John Chaffee, is designed to provide a comprehensive evaluation of student thinking and language abilities. Using a court case format arising from a fatal student drinking incident, students are challenged to gather and weigh evidence, ask relevant questions, construct informed beliefs, evaluate expert testimony and summation arguments, reach a reasoned verdict, and then view the entire case from a problem-solving perspective. Since the test provides all relevant information needed to think through and respond to the questions, it can be used at any point in the course to assess the quality of students' thinking and language. The test is modular in design, enabling teachers to select various sections to administer in combinations appropriate to their instructional needs. Effective scoring of the test should take into account both the quantity and the quality of student responses. An articulation of the evaluation/performance criteria for the various sections of the test is included in the section following the test.

INTRODUCTION

We live in a complex world filled with challenging and often perplexing issues that we are expected to make sense of. Many social issues are analyzed and evaluated through our judicial system. This test is designed to give you the opportunity to think seriously and express your ideas about a complex social issue. Imagine that you have been selected to serve on a jury that is asked to render a verdict on the following situation.

The defendant, Tom Randall, is a twenty-one-year-old college senior in a state where the legal drinking age is twenty-one. On October 21, he hosted a Halloween party in his apartment. Twenty-eight men and women attended the party. Alcohol was served, in the form of beer, wine, and hard liquor. One of the partygoers was Kelly Greene, an eighteen-year-old freshman at the same college. During the course of the evening, Ms. Greene allegedly consumed an undetermined amount of alcohol. While she was driving back to her dormitory after the party, at approximately

12:15 a.m., Ms. Greene struck two students who were crossing the street at an intersection. One student, Melissa Anderson, was killed instantly. A second student, Edward Montgomery, was hospitalized with multiple fractures. The police officer at the scene gave the following report regarding the driver of the car, Kelly Greene: “I noticed that her speech was slurred, that she was not entirely coherent, and that her breath smelled of alcohol. I asked her to take a Breathalyzer test to determine the amount of alcohol in her bloodstream. She refused. I placed her under arrest.” Ms. Greene has been charged with Driving While Intoxicated and Vehicular Manslaughter. Her case is currently pending. Mr. Randall, the defendant in this case, is being charged with Involuntary Manslaughter. If convicted, he faces up to seven years in jail.

A. GATHERING AND WEIGHING THE EVIDENCE

The evidence at judicial trials is presented through the testimony of witnesses called by the prosecution and the defense. To be effective critical thinkers, we should not simply accept information as it is presented. We need to try to determine the accuracy of the information and evaluate the credibility of the people providing the information. The testimony from the prosecution witnesses and the defense witnesses is described below. Evaluate the testimony by answering the questions that follow each witness.

Prosecution Witnesses:

Helen Brooks (neighbor of defendant)

William Doyle (acquaintance of defendant)

Defense Witnesses:

Wendy Duvall (friend of defendant)

Tom Randall (defendant)

Helen Brooks (Prosecution Witness)

I am the downstairs neighbor of the defendant, Thomas Randall, and have lived in the building for twenty years. These college kids tend to be noisy and keep late hours, especially the boys. I really don't see how they're able to learn anything at the college. Wild parties every weekend and sometimes even during the week. This Halloween party was one of the wildest. Music loud enough to make your head burst; kids jumping around—I guess they call it dancing—so that the ceiling was shaking. Finally, at midnight I went up to ask them to please keep it down—after all, it was Thursday night and some of us have to work. What a scene! A young woman was leaving just as I arrived. I later found out she was Kelly Greene, the woman who ran over those two college students. Mr. Randall had his arm around her and was saying goodbye. The way she was acting—giggling, stumbling around—it was obvious she was drunk. She was an accident waiting to happen, and it did!

A1. Helen Brooks

1. Summarize and evaluate the information provided by the witness (Helen Brooks). Is the information *relevant* to the guilt or innocence of the defendant (Tom Randall)? Is the information *accurate*? Give reasons to support your answer.

2. Evaluate the credibility of the witness (Helen Brooks). Is the witness believable? Is the testimony fair or unfair, objective or biased? Are there factors that raise doubts about the accuracy of the testimony? Give reasons to support your answer.

William Doyle (Prosecution Witness)

I attended the party at Tom Randall's apartment on Halloween. I didn't actually receive an invitation—I came along with someone who did. I don't really know him that well. This was a pretty wild party. The place was jammed, and people were out of control! Dancing, drinking, laughing, singing—you know. Mr. Randall was making the rounds, making sure that everyone was having a good time, encouraging them to drink. I saw him talking to Kelly Greene on several occasions. He kept forcing her to drink, even though she didn't seem that willing. He said things like: "Have another drink, it's the only way to have fun at parties like this," and "Don't worry, another drink won't kill you." I didn't think he should have been doing that, pressuring her to drink and all. I really like Kelly. This is her first year here at school, and she's really sweet. I don't think she would have gotten in this trouble if she hadn't been encouraged to drink too much. She's only eighteen, a fact I'm sure Tom was aware of. As the host, it is his responsibility to make sure that illegal drinking isn't permitted and that when people leave they are capable of driving safely.

A2. William Doyle

1. Summarize and evaluate the information provided by the witness (William Doyle). Is the information *relevant* to the guilt or innocence of the defendant (Tom Randall)? Is the information *accurate*? Give reasons to support your answer.
2. Evaluate the credibility of the witness (William Doyle). Is the witness believable? Is the testimony fair or unfair, objective or biased? Are there factors that raise doubts about the accuracy of the testimony? Give reasons to support your answer.

Wendy Duvall (Defense Witness)

I've known Tom Randall for three years, and he's one of the finest and most responsible people I know. Tom is a serious student, and he is also a very caring person. He plans to be a teacher and works as a volunteer with special education students in a local school. He would never do anything to intentionally hurt anyone. His only purpose in having the Halloween party was for people to enjoy themselves. He paid for the whole thing himself! As far as people drinking is concerned, the fact is that drinking is one of the major social activities on campus. Virtually everyone drinks, from their first semester until their last. It's just the way things are here. People just don't pay attention to the drinking age on campus. It's as if the college is its own little world, with its own rules. The people at the party weren't drinking because Tom was pressuring or encouraging them to. They were drinking because that's what they do

when they go to parties. If Tom *hadn't* had alcohol there, people would have gone out and brought some back—or gone to a party that *did* have alcohol. I didn't see Tom talk to Kelly, but he was circulating, trying to be a good host, seeing if people needed anything. He certainly wouldn't try to “pressure” someone into having a drink they didn't want to have. What happened with Kelly was a terrible, unfortunate accident—it certainly is something Tom should not be held responsible for.

A3. Wendy Duvall

1. Summarize and evaluate the information provided by the witness (Wendy Duvall). Is the information *relevant* to the guilt or innocence of the defendant (Tom Randall)? Is the information *accurate*? Give reasons to support your answer.
2. Evaluate the credibility of the witness (Wendy Duvall). Is the witness believable? Is the testimony fair or unfair, objective or biased? Are there factors that raise doubts about the accuracy of the testimony? Give reasons to support your answer.

Tom Randall (Witness in His Own Defense)

I had been planning this Halloween party since school started in September. I thought that it would be fun and give me a chance to pay back students who had invited me to their parties. I had plenty of food and beverages on hand—soda and juice, as well as alcohol. Of course I'm aware that the drinking age is twenty-one and that many students haven't reached that age yet; but nobody really takes the law very seriously. After all, if you're old enough to vote, get married, work, and be drafted, you should be old enough to drink. As far as my party was concerned, I felt that everyone had a right to make up their own minds—I just made the beverages available. Once people decided what they wanted to drink, I did try to keep them refilled. After all, that's the job of a good host. I remember Kelly was drinking beer, and I probably did bring her one or two over the course of the evening. I don't have any idea about the total amount of beer she had—I had no way of keeping track. I do remember saying goodbye to her, and she seemed in reasonably good shape. She was able to walk and seemed to know what she was doing. I know that she has a car, but I didn't know she was planning to drive. Looking back, I guess I should have paid more attention to her condition, but there were so many people there and so much was happening, I just didn't think about it. This party was not unusual—it's exactly like most of the parties that happen on campus. It's just that they don't usually end with someone dying.

A4. Tom Randall

1. Summarize and evaluate the information provided by the witness (Tom Randall). Is the information *relevant* to his guilt or innocence? Is the information *accurate*? Give reasons to support your answer.

2. Evaluate the credibility of the witness (Tom Randall). Is the witness believable? Is the testimony fair or unfair, objective or biased? Are there factors that raise doubts about the accuracy of the testimony? Give reasons to support your answer.

B. ASKING IMPORTANT QUESTIONS

Defense lawyers and prosecutors cross-examine the witnesses to help determine the credibility of the witnesses and the accuracy of their testimony.

B1. Imagine that you are the **defense lawyer**. List below important questions that you would want to ask the prosecution witnesses.

Helen Brooks:

William Doyle:

B2. Imagine that you are the **prosecutor**. List below important questions that you would want to ask the defense witnesses.

Wendy Duvall:

Tom Randall:

C. CONSTRUCTING KNOWLEDGE

One of the important goals of critical thinking is developing beliefs about the world that are well founded. Often this process involves *analyzing* and *synthesizing* a variety of accounts in an effort to determine “what really happened.” To analyze and synthesize the testimony presented by the witnesses, answer the following questions:

C1. Do you believe that Tom Randall knew that Kelly Greene was a minor and that she was breaking the law by drinking alcohol? Explain the reasons for your conclusion.

C2. Do you believe that Mr. Randall personally served Ms. Greene alcohol? Do you believe that he encouraged or forced her to drink alcohol? Explain the reasons for your conclusion.

C3. Do you believe that Mr. Randall was aware that Ms. Greene was intoxicated when she left his party? Do you believe he knew—or should have known—she would be driving home? Explain the reasons for your conclusions.

D. EVALUATING EXPERT TESTIMONY

In addition to average sources such as the witnesses above, “experts”—people who have specialized knowledge in a particular area—often testify at trials. Included below is the testimony of two psychologists, Dr. Elizabeth Gonzalez and Dr. Richard Cutler, who provide contrasting analyses of the social drinking behavior of young people.

Dr. Elizabeth Gonzalez (Prosecution Witness)

I am a staff psychologist at a substance abuse center in town. Why do people drink to excess? Typically through the influence of the people around them, as happened to Kelly Greene. When most eighteen-year-old students enter college, they do not have a drinking problem. However, although few realize it, these unwary young people are entering a culture in which alcohol is the drug of choice. It is a drug that can easily destroy their lives. According to some estimates, between 80 percent and 90 percent of the students on many campuses drink alcohol (1). Many of these students are heavy drinkers (2). One study found that nearly 30 percent of university students are heavy drinkers, consuming more than fifteen alcoholic drinks a week (3). Another study found that among those students who drink at least once a week, 92 percent of the men and 82 percent of the women consume at least five drinks in a row, and half said they wanted to get drunk (4). The results of all this drinking are predictably deadly. Virtually all college administrators agree that alcohol is the most widely used drug among college students and that its abuse is directly related to emotional problems and violent behavior, ranging from date rape to death (5) (6). For example, at one university, a twenty-year-old woman became drunk at a fraternity party and fell to her death from the third floor (7). At another university, two students were killed in a drunk-driving accident after drinking alcohol at an off-campus fraternity house. The families of both students have filed lawsuits against the fraternity (8). When students like Kelly Greene enter a college or university, they soon become socialized into the alcohol-sodden culture of “higher education,” typically at parties just like the one hosted by Mr. Randall. The influence of peer pressure is enormous. When your friends and fellow students are encouraging you to drink, it is extremely difficult to resist giving in to these pressures. In my judgment, students like Kelly Greene are corrupted by people like Tom Randall. He must share in the responsibility for her personal tragedy and for the harm that resulted from it.

D1. Elizabeth Gonzalez

1. Summarize Dr. Gonzalez’s analysis of why Mr. Randall and Ms. Greene behaved the way they did. Identify the main reasons that support her conclusion.
2. Evaluate the information provided by the witness (Dr. Gonzalez). Is the information *relevant* to the guilt or innocence of the defendant (Tom Randall)? Give reasons to support your answer.

Dr. Richard Cutler (Defense Witness)

I am a psychologist in private practice, and I am also employed by the university to be available for students who need professional assistance. The misuse of alcohol is a problem for all youth in our society, not just college students. For example, a recent study by the surgeon general's office shows that one in three teenagers consumes alcohol every week. This is an abuse that leads to traffic deaths, academic difficulties, and acts of violence (9). Another study based on a large, nationally representative sample indicates that although college students are more likely to use alcohol, they tend to drink less quantity per drinking day than non-students of the same age (10). In other words, college students are more social drinkers than problem drinkers. Another sample of undergraduate students found that college drinking is not as widespread as many people think (11). The clear conclusion is that while drinking certainly takes place on college campuses, it is no greater a problem than in the population at large. What causes the misuse of alcohol? Well, certainly the influence of friends, whether in college or out, plays a role. But it is not the only factor. To begin with, there is evidence that family history is related to alcohol abuse. For example, one survey of college students found greater problem drinking among students whose parent or grandparent had been diagnosed (or treated) for alcoholism (12). Another study found that college students who come from families with high degrees of conflict display a greater potential for alcoholism (13). Another important factor in the misuse of alcohol by young people is advertising. A recent article entitled "It isn't Miller time yet, and this Bud's not for you" underscores the influence advertisers exert on the behavior of our youth (14). By portraying beer drinkers as healthy, fun-loving, attractive young people, they create role models that many youths imitate. In the same way that cigarette advertisers used to encourage smoking among our youth—without regard to the health hazards—so alcohol advertisers try to sell as much booze as they can to whoever will buy it—no matter what the consequences. A final factor in the abuse of alcohol is the people themselves. Although young people are subject to a huge number of influences, in the final analysis, they are free to choose what they want to do. They don't have to drink, no matter what the social pressures. In fact, many students resist these pressures and choose not to drink. And if they do drink, they don't have to get behind the wheel of a car.

D2. Dr. Richard Cutler

1. Summarize Dr. Cutler's analysis of why Mr. Randall and Ms. Greene behaved the way they did. Identify the main reasons that support his conclusion.
2. Evaluate the information provided by the witness (Dr. Cutler). Is the information *relevant* to the guilt or innocence of the defendant (Tom Randall)? Give reasons to support your answer.

E. EVALUATING SUMMATION ARGUMENTS

After the various witnesses present their testimony through examination and cross-examination questioning, the prosecution and defense then present their final arguments and summation. The purpose of this phase of the trial is to summarize the evidence that has been presented and thus persuade the jury that the defendant is guilty or innocent. Included below are excerpts from these final arguments.

Prosecution Summation

We are in this courtroom today because Melissa Anderson's young life was tragically ended as a direct result of irresponsible behavior on the part of the defendant, Thomas Randall, who served Kelly Greene alcohol and encouraged her to drink, knowing that she was three years underage. Too often in criminal trials the victim is forgotten, while attention becomes focused on the lives of the living. Certainly this event is a tragedy for Mr. Randall and Ms. Greene, but it is a far greater tragedy for Melissa and her loved ones. She will never have the opportunity to live the rest of her life, and if people like Mr. Randall are permitted to act illegally without punishment, there will be many more tragedies like Melissa's in the future.

When Mr. Randall provided alcohol and encouraged drinking for underage minors at his party, he was violating the law. And when Ms. Greene, one of the underage minors, left his party drunk, got behind a wheel, and killed an innocent human being, Tom Randall became an accessory to this senseless murder. Similarly, the university must assume its share of the blame. As the investigator into the death of the woman who fell to her death at a fraternity party noted: "If universities and colleges want to teach responsibility, there might be something to be said for teaching observance of the law—simply because it is the law" (15). If Mr. Randall had displayed respect for the law, then none of these events would have occurred, and Melissa would be alive today.

We have heard experts describe the destructive role that alcohol plays on college campuses and the devastating results of alcohol abuse. Students, in flagrant violation of the law, have made drinking a more common college activity than attending class or studying. When young, impressionable people like Kelly Greene enter these "hangover universities," they are immediately drawn into a destructive alcoholic web—seduced, cajoled, and pressured to enter this culture of underage drinkers. And who creates this culture and its pressure? People like Thomas Randall, who "innocently" give booze parties for underage students and actively encourage them to drink. If students like Mr. Randall acted in a responsible and law-abiding fashion, then new students would not be seduced and pressured into these destructive behaviors. Violent tragedies associated with alcohol abuse would not occur, and students could focus on productive activities—like learning.

We have heard testimony that Mr. Randall was not an innocent participant in these events—he knew Ms. Greene was underage, he actively cajoled and encouraged her to get drunk, and he let her go home alone knowing she was in no condition to drive safely. Mr. Randall is not an evil person, but he is guilty of criminally irresponsible behavior, and he must be held accountable for his actions. Society must protect our young people from themselves and put an end to the destructive abuse of this dangerous drug.

E1. Prosecution Arguments

1. Identify the key arguments used in the prosecution's summation. Then summarize the reasons and conclusion for each argument.

Argument 1:

Reason:

Reason:

Conclusion:

Argument 2:

Reason:

Reason:

Conclusion:

2. Evaluate the *strength* of the arguments you identified by assessing the *truth* of the reasons and the extent to which the conclusions *follow logically* from the reasons.

Argument 1:

Argument 2:

Defense Summation

The death of Melissa Anderson is, of course, a tragedy. It was the direct result of Kelly Greene's error of judgment; and although she certainly didn't intend for anything like this to occur, she must be judged for her responsibility. However, it makes no sense to rectify this tragedy by ruining Thomas Randall's life. He is in no way responsible for the death of Melissa Anderson. All he did was host a party for his friends, the kind of party that takes place all the time on virtually every college campus. He is a victim of an unreasonable law—that you must be twenty-one years of age to drink alcohol. I'll bet every person in this courtroom had at least one drink of alcohol before they were twenty-one years old. If people are mature enough to vote, drive cars, hold jobs, pay taxes, and be drafted, then they are mature enough to drink alcohol. And it's unreasonable to expect a party host to run around playing policeman, telling guests who can drink and who can't. As one college president noted: "It's awfully hard to control a mixed-age group where some can drink and some can't, but all are students. Since the consumption of alcohol is not in general an illegal activity—unlike marijuana or crack—you have this bizarre situation where at the mystic age of twenty-one, suddenly people can drink legally when they couldn't the day before" (16).

In addition, we have heard experts describe how there are many factors that contribute to alcohol abuse—besides the influence of other people. The power of advertisers, family history, and the personal choices by individuals all play a role in whether someone is going to drink excessively. It is unfair to single out one person, like Tom Randall, and blame him for Ms. Greene's behavior. Her decision to

drink that night was the result of a variety of factors, most of which we will never fully understand. However, in the final analysis, Ms. Greene must be held responsible for her own free choices. When Kelly Greene attended Tom Randall's party, nobody forced her to drink—there were plenty of nonalcoholic beverages available. And after she chose to drink, nobody forced her to attempt to drive her car home—she had other alternatives. Ultimately, there was only one person responsible for the tragic events of that evening, and that person is Kelly Greene.

We live in a society in which people are constantly trying to blame everyone but themselves for their mistakes or misfortunes. This is not a healthy or productive approach. If this society is going to foster the development of independent, mature citizens, then people must be willing to accept responsibility for their own freely made choices and not look for scapegoats like Mr. Randall to blame for their failings.

E2. Defense Arguments

1. Identify the key arguments used in the defense's summation. Then summarize the reasons and conclusion for each argument.

Argument 1:

Reason:

Reason:

Conclusion:

Argument 2:

Reason:

Reason:

Conclusion:

2. Evaluate the *strength* of the arguments you identified by assessing the *truth* of the reasons and the extent to which the conclusions *follow logically* from the reasons.

Argument 1:

Argument 2:

F. DELIBERATING THE ISSUES

Following the final summations, the judge will sometimes give specific instructions to clarify the issues to be considered. For the defendant, Thomas Randall, to be found guilty of involuntary manslaughter, the prosecution must prove that although he did not intend destructive results, he was guilty of irresponsible behavior that was likely to result in harm. Following the judge's "charge," the jury then retires to deliberate the case and render a verdict.

In the same way that words are the vocabulary of language, concepts are the vocabulary of thought. Concepts are general ideas that we use to bring order and intelligibility to our experience. They give us the means to understand our world and make informed decisions, to think critically and act intelligently. The process of arriving at an informed conclusion regarding this case involves understanding the concepts of "freedom" and "responsibility." To conclude that the defendant was *guilty* of "irresponsible behavior that was likely to result in harm," it is necessary that we believe that he was *responsible* for his actions and their likely consequences: he knew what he was doing, chose to do it freely, and so must be held accountable. On the other hand, if we are to conclude that the defendant is *not guilty* of the charge, we must believe that he was *not responsible* for his actions. We must believe either that circumstances interfered with his ability to make a free choice or that it is unreasonable to expect that he would have been able to anticipate the destructive consequences of his actions.

G. REACHING A VERDICT

Reaching a verdict in a situation like this involves complex processes of reasoning and decision-making. In your discussion with the other jurors, you must decide if the evidence indicates, *beyond a reasonable doubt*, that the defendant should have anticipated the destructive consequences of his behavior. In other words, did the defendant (Thomas Randall) knowingly encourage an underage woman (Kelly Green) to drink excessively? When she left the party, should he have recognized her inebriated condition and made sure that she was not intending to drive home? Should he have been able to anticipate that terrible consequences might result if she tried to drive in her inebriated state? The principle of "beyond a reasonable doubt" is difficult to define in specific terms, but in general the principle means that it would not make good sense for thoughtful men and women to conclude otherwise.

G1. Based on your analysis of the evidence and arguments presented in this case, write your verdict and explain your reasons for reaching this conclusion.

H. SOLVING PROBLEMS

As illustrated by this case, the abuse of alcohol by young people at colleges and universities is a national problem. The following passages present a variety of perspectives on the causes and possible solutions to this problem. Read the passages and answer the questions that follow.

1. Advertising and promotion of alcoholic beverages on college campuses and in college publications should be banned. Restrictions should be imposed on liquor distributors that sponsor

campus events. In addition, alcohol beverage companies should be petitioned not to target young people in their ads.

2. Students should be able to live in “substance free” housing, offering them a voluntary haven from drugs, alcohol, and peer pressure.
3. Colleges should ban or tightly restrict alcohol use on campus, and include stiffer penalties for students who violate the rules.
4. Colleges should create alcohol-free clubs to combat alcohol abuse and find alternatives to bars for students who are under twenty-one.
5. The drinking age should be reduced to eighteen, so that students won't be forced to move their parties off-campus. At off-campus parties there is no college control, and as a result students tend to drink greater quantities and more dangerous concoctions like spiked punches.
6. Colleges should ban the use of beer kegs, the symbol of cheap and readily available alcohol.
7. Colleges should create education programs aimed at preventing alcohol abuse, and colleges should give campaigns against underage drinking top priority.
8. Fraternities should eliminate pledging in order to stop alcohol abuse and hazing.

H1. Explain, clearly and specifically, the reasons why you think that alcohol abuse among college students is a problem and what you believe is the essence or heart of the problem.

H2. Identify three realistic alternatives for solving this problem. Evaluate each alternative in terms of its advantages and disadvantages. Explain what further information would be required to determine each alternative's effectiveness.

Alternative 1:

Advantages:

Disadvantages:

Further information needed:

Alternative 2:

Advantages:

Disadvantages:

Further information needed:

Alternative 3:

Advantages:

Disadvantages:

Further information needed:

H3. Select your most promising alternative. Explain the steps you would take to implement it.

THE TEST OF CRITICAL THINKING ABILITIES: FOOTNOTES FOR EXPERT TESTIMONY

Dr. Elizabeth Gonzalez

1. *Chronicle of Higher Education*; Jan 31/90; pp. A33–35.
2. *Journal of Studies on Alcohol*; Nov/90.
3. *Chronicle of Higher Education*; April 12/89; p. A43.
4. *Newsweek*; Nov 19/90; p. 81.
5. *Chronicle of Higher Education*; Jan 17/90; pp. A33, 35.
6. *Chronicle of Higher Education*; Jan 31/90; pp. A33–35.
7. *Chronicle of Higher Education*; Jan 31/90; p. 3.
8. *Chronicle of Higher Education*; June 12/91; pp. A29–30.

Dr. Richard Cutler

9. *Time*; Dec 16/91; p. 64.
10. *Journal of Studies on Alcohol*; Vol: 52 Iss: 1 Jan/91.
11. *Journal of Studies on Alcohol*; Vol: 51 Iss: 6 Nov/90.
12. *Journal of Counseling and Development*; Vol: 69 Jan/91; pp. 237–40.
13. *Adolescence*; Vol: 26 Iss: 102 Summer/91; pp. 341–47.
14. *Business Week*; June 24/91; p. 52.

THE TEST OF CRITICAL THINKING ABILITIES— EVALUATION/PERFORMANCE CRITERIA

A. Gathering and Weighing the Evidence

1. What factors support the accuracy of the testimony of *each* witness?
2. What factors raise questions regarding the accuracy of the testimony of *each* witness?

To what extent does the student display an *understanding* of the testimony of each witness in terms of

- the main ideas being expressed
- the reasons and evidence that support the main ideas

To what extent is the student able to *identify* in the testimony of each witness

- the differences among facts, inferences, and judgments
- the interests, purposes, background, or professional expertise of the witnesses relevant to the information they are providing

To what extent does the student display the ability to *evaluate* and *compare/contrast* the testimony of each witness in terms of

- accuracy
- consistency
- completeness
- subjective bias/slanting reflecting the influence of personal interests, purposes, background, or professional expertise

B. Asking Important Questions

1. What questions should be asked to elicit additional relevant information?

To what extent is the student able to identify appropriate questions at various cognitive levels to explore the issues posed by the testimony? (fact, interpretation, analysis, synthesis, evaluation, application)

C. Constructing Knowledge

1. Do you believe that Thomas Randall was aware that Kelly Greene was a minor and that she was drinking alcohol in violation of the law? Explain the reasons for your conclusion.
2. Do you believe that Mr. Randall personally served Ms. Greene alcohol? Do you believe that he encouraged or cajoled her to drink alcohol? Explain the reasons for your conclusion.
3. Do you believe that Mr. Randall was aware that Ms. Greene was intoxicated when she left his party? Did he know that she would be driving home?

To what extent is the student able to

- identify the key issues and the relevant evidence provided by the witnesses
- evaluate contrasting and conflicting testimony
- synthesize the testimony into well-informed conclusions supported by sound reasons

D. Evaluating Expert Testimony

1. Summarize the first psychologist's analysis of Mr. Randall's and Ms. Greene's behavior and the reasons that support her interpretation.
2. Summarize the second psychologist's analysis of Mr. Randall's and Ms. Greene's behavior and the reasons that support his interpretation.
3. Based on your analysis of this testimony, explain your analysis of Mr. Randall's and Ms. Greene's behavior and explain the reasons that led you to your conclusion.

Same evaluation/performance criteria as **A1** and **A2**

To what extent does the student understand the forms of inductive reasoning illustrated by the expert testimony?

To what extent is the student able to analyze the reasoning presented and evaluate its relevance and plausibility?

Empirical generalizations: Is the sample known? Sufficient? Representative? Causal reasoning: scientific method, controlled experiments

E. Evaluating Summation Arguments

1. Identify the key arguments used in each summation and describe the reasons and conclusions for each.
2. Evaluate the *truth* of the reasons presented in the arguments and assess the extent to which the conclusions *follow logically* from the reasons.
3. Identify any irrelevant, invalid, or illogical arguments presented and explain why you think they are weak, invalid, or illogical.

To what extent is the student able to

- recognize arguments and understand their function and structure (reasons, conclusion)?
- evaluate arguments in terms of truth, validity, and soundness?
- recognize forms of common fallacies?

F. Deliberating the Issues

1. Explain how the prosecution summation defines the concept of freedom (in terms of its general properties/characteristics) and illustrate the concept with an example *not* included in the summation.
2. Explain how the defense summation defines the concept of freedom and illustrate this definition with an example *not* included in the summation.

To what extent does the student understand the concepts presented by others, defining their general properties and illustrating them with examples?

3. Describe your own concept of freedom and illustrate it with an example from your own experience.

To what extent is the student able to form his or her own concepts and illustrate them with examples from his or her own experience?

4. Explain how your concept of freedom relates to your conclusion regarding whether the defendant in the previous court case should be found innocent or guilty of the charges.

To what extent is the student able to apply concepts he or she has developed to a complex issue and thus clarify his or her understanding?

G. Reaching a Verdict

1. Based on your analysis of the evidence and arguments presented in this case, indicate what you think the verdict ought to be and explain your reasons for reaching this conclusion.

To what extent is the student able to analyze complex issues by

- identifying the issue clearly?
- describing multiple interpretations of the issue?
- identifying and evaluating evidence and arguments to support various interpretations?
- articulating an informed, well-reasoned conclusion that draws on the views of others but that represents the student's own independent analysis/synthesis?

H. Solving Problems

1. Explain, clearly and specifically, the reasons why you think this problem exists and what you believe is the essence or heart of the problem.
2. Identify three realistic alternatives for solving this problem. Evaluate each alternative in terms of its advantages and disadvantages, and explain what further information would be required to determine each alternative's effectiveness.
3. Select what you believe to be your most promising alternative and explain the steps you would take to implement it.

To what extent is the student able to analyze a complex, open-ended problem in an organized way, addressing the following questions:

- What is the problem? (knowledge; results; definition)
- What are the alternatives? (boundaries; alternatives)
- What are the advantages/disadvantages of each alternative? (information)
- What is the solution? (alternatives; plan of action)

SECTION 6

Source Material for the Mary Barnett Case

In response to many requests from faculty and students at many colleges regarding the “Mary Barnett” court case in Chapter 2, I have included an article by Aimee Lee Ball (*Mademoiselle*, November 1990, 184–206) on the original case from which it is derived. “Mary Barnett” was actually Peggy Barsness of Minneapolis, Minnesota. The article provides many details about the case, which you may or may not want to introduce to the class, as well as the ultimate verdict (she was found guilty). The jury’s verdict was substantially influenced by a piece of evidence that may not be directly relevant to her guilt or innocence: a tape recording of a phone call of Peggy with her fiancé in which she comes across as profane and vindictive.

THE CRADLE WILL FALL: THE TRAGEDY OF PEGGY ANN BARSNESS

by Aimee Lee Ball¹

One cold January morning in suburban Minneapolis, twenty-two-year-old Peggy Ann Barsness bundled up her infant daughter, Kirsten, for a regular “well-baby” checkup at a local clinic specializing in family medicine. The same doctor who had delivered Kirsten exactly six months earlier pronounced her healthy and growing right on schedule, and a medical assistant gave her a DPT shot, for immunization against diphtheria, pertussis, and tetanus. Around 1 p.m. that day, Barsness returned home, fed the baby, rocked her to sleep for an afternoon nap, placed her in a crib with a yellow blanket and several teddy bears, and then drove to the airport, where she purchased a one-way ticket to San Francisco, not to return for a week, leaving her daughter alone, unattended, to die.

Tales of such gravity and depravity shape the editorial pages of newspapers across the country, but the typical scenario involves poverty, drugs, broken homes or teenage pregnancy. The case of Peggy Ann Barsness, in contrast, is a middle-American nightmare, played out within a family that seems, on the surface, thoroughly “white bread”—a Grant Wood painting come to life. Her parents have been married for twenty-six years. Her father is an accountant. She went to John F. Kennedy High School and grew up on a pretty cul-de-sac in a beige and brown ranch house with flowering shrubs and a basketball hoop over the garage door.

What’s wrong with this picture? It’s a David Lynch movie, that’s what. With pentimento effect, the patina of Midwestern civility and stability gives way to a portrait of a willful and intractable teenager whose rebellious behavior first confused and then alienated her parents. Gradually, the picture emerges of a young woman who had little motivation or intention in life, who came to define herself by success with men—and who finally became desperate to be with one particular man, regardless of the cost or consequences. Step back, and the larger view shows a time and place where single pregnant women may be encouraged to keep their babies rather than choose abortion or adoption, even though they do not have the financial or emotional resources to rear a child.

And a baby girl named Kirsten will never see her first birthday.

¹Aimee Lee Ball, “The Cradle Will Fall: The Tragedy of Peggy Ann Barsness,” *Mademoiselle*, November 1990, pp. 184–206. Copyright © 1990 by Aimee Lee Ball. Reprinted by permission of William Morris Agency, Inc. on behalf of the Author.

The suburbs of Minneapolis all seem to have euphonious, optimistic-sounding names—Golden Valley, Eden Prairie, Roseville—and it was in a 'burb called Bloomington that Barsness grew up, the middle child between two brothers. She was an outgoing and athletic little girl who ate everything put in front of her and romped with her family at a lake near their home—“a normal child, like the rest of them,” according to her father. But by the time she finished grade school, Barsness had developed the body of the young woman she is today—5 feet 2, 100 pounds—and she began to retreat. She spent an entire summer hiding out in the basement, then ran away from home and was placed in a group facility for truant teens. She required a special reading program called Title One, dropped out of school in the tenth grade, got pregnant, and miscarried at sixteen. She signed up for an equivalency diploma program called Project Reentry but didn't keep up with classes; she went for vocational training at the Hubert H. Humphrey Job Corps Center but could find only minimum-wage jobs, working the counter at a fast-food restaurant and the second shift at a dry cleaner.

In December 1987, Barsness's pelvis was fractured in an automobile accident. While recuperating at her parents' home, she became reacquainted with a young man who used to sing with her older brother in a local group—a Navy jet-engine mechanic named Timothy Brewer, home on leave from the U.S.S. *Enterprise*, stationed in northern California. Brewer and Barsness promised to correspond once he returned to the base, but Brewer got no answers to his letters until the end of February. “You probably won't want anything to do with me,” Barsness finally wrote, according to the court record, confessing that she was five months pregnant by another man, who was moving to St. Louis, Missouri. “I probably won't keep the baby,” she wrote. “I want to have a baby with someone who loves me, and I would like to be married.”

Unexpectedly, Brewer was not put off by this news. He wrote back that same night, and the two began a courtship by mail: He confessed his unhappiness and boredom at sea; she poured out her fear and confusion about the pregnancy. “I can't keep the baby,” she wrote in May. “I am just not ready to have a baby. There's too much I want to do. . . . I really don't think I could give the baby everything it will need.” In June, Brewer called Barsness while on a drunken shore leave in Hong Kong, proposing marriage and promising he'd take on the responsibilities of being a father.

Brewer returned to Minnesota for the baby's birth on July 23—he'd signed up for recruiting duty to qualify for extended leave. Barsness didn't want him in the delivery room because she'd gone through Lamaze training with a friend as coach, but Brewer passed out cigars, suggested the name Kirsten and drove the new mother and child home from the hospital. “I thought it was the greatest thing that ever happened to me,” he said. “I figured that five years down the road, I'd adopt her.” Shortly before he returned to California in August, he bought Barsness an engagement ring, and they planned to marry that Christmas. Brewer wrote to Barsness almost every day he was at sea, sometimes addressing her as Peggy Ann Brewer. “I thought it would be kind of neat to play the charade,” he said. “We weren't married, but we wanted to be, so we were playing like we were.”

Barsness moved into her own apartment in September 1988. It was a pleasant two-story town house that was rent subsidized under Minnesota's generous family-aid program, and her parents agreed to pay the first two months rent of \$238 so she could buy some furnishings. Some of Barsness's letters from this time on her own revealed a growing maturity and stability. “I am getting a lot of pleasure from people back home,” Barsness wrote. “I listen to what they have to say. I don't always agree, but some of it makes sense.”

But she also wrote rambling letters of isolation, insecurity and anxiety; “I want my own place but I don't want to be alone. I really wish you could be here. . . . Mr. Brewer, I love you a lot, and I can't stand not being able to show you how much. . . . My, or should I say our, daughter doesn't stop crying. She's spoiled. I have to go pick her up before she dies. . . .”

In October 1988, the U.S.S. *Enterprise* was in port for refitting and repainting. Barsness left Kirsten with her parents and went to visit Brewer in San Francisco for the long Columbus Day weekend. She

suggested eloping to Reno, but he wanted to wait until his tour of duty was over—“I thought I’d be able to provide better for Peggy and Kirsten,” he said. Barsness was miserable when she returned home. “All I do is think about being there with you,” she wrote Brewer.

Barsness seemed to vacillate between calm and despair about taking care of Kirsten. “I think I’ll be okay,” one of her letters said. “I really think we can give [her] everything she could ever dream of and the most love possible. Sometimes I just need to be reminded that I am doing okay as a mom.” A few days later, her letter took a more ominous tone: “Peggy is not ready to be a mom. Peggy wants to be there and anywhere with you and only you. I want to be myself again. I want to work. I want a family when I am ready. I want a life with you first. We haven’t even had that yet, and now we have to share it with Kirsten. . . . I love her terrible, but I can’t right now.”

Barsness had virtually no contact with Brewer for the entire month of November. According to the court record, her phone was disconnected after she ran up a bill of nearly \$2,000, and he stopped writing. “I needed some time to get my thoughts together,” he said. “I was scared to get married, and she was putting pressure on me.” When he returned to Minneapolis for Christmas leave, he told Barsness he was preparing for a long world cruise, and it didn’t make sense to get married when he wasn’t going to be there. Barsness said, “I can wait.”

The next month, Barsness went to visit Brewer over the Martin Luther King holiday, using a substantial settlement from her automobile accident to finance the trip and pay a friend to care for Kirsten. Much of the weekend was spent dancing and drinking—12, 18, 24 beers every day. “It was great to have her out there,” Brewer said, “until we had a fight Sunday night in the Taco Bell parking lot. She didn’t want to leave, and I told her she had to. It was a battle—she hit me a couple of times, and she wanted me to hit her, but I wouldn’t.” They reconciled at the airport. “She was sorry, I was sorry, we hugged and kissed, and I watched her get on the plane.”

On Sunday, January 22, while her family was watching the Super Bowl, Barsness called Brewer, saying she had “messed up” and claiming she had lost custody of Kirsten to her parents. Brewer said to let him know if there was anything he could do. “I felt we were starting to drift apart,” he said. “I told her someday we’d probably get married, but there wasn’t any definite plan.”

When Brewer reported to work shortly before seven the next morning, he was given the surprising message to pick up Barsness at the San Francisco airport that afternoon. Barsness got off the plane crying and mumbling that she had to get away. Over the next week, they established a daily routine: After work, Brewer would stop at a package store for a six-pack, then have more beer at a bar called Wally’s Corner, or beer with a bottle of whiskey snuck in for shots at a sailors’ hangout known as the Grub Pub, then dancing and, for a change of pace, more beer at a club called Johnny B. Goode. They slept in a room at the Sixpence Inn, chosen because it was cheap, and then at the Easy Eight Motel, because it was cheaper. Barsness paid for everything until she ran out of money and borrowed \$100 from a sailor known as the Bank of Hank because he always had cash.

When Barsness called home on Sunday, January 29, her father promised to charge her \$415 return ticket on his Visa card. But instead of leaving that night, Barsness stood in the middle of the road crying and said, “Kirsten is dead. If I go home, I’ll go to jail.” Brewer was outraged. “There are two things I hate: liars and cheaters,” he said. He drove her to the airport and didn’t wait for her plane to take off.

On Monday, January 30, Barsness arrived in Minneapolis at about 6:30 a.m., without enough money to retrieve her car from the airport parking lot. At 7:30 she took a limousine to her father’s office to get some cash, then continued to her own apartment. Her front door was unlocked and, as she later told the police, “There was a really bad smell. I dropped my bag at the door and went upstairs.” She then walked to the Holiday Store down the road, called a Yellow Cab, went to her parents’ house and told her mother that Kirsten was dead.

Sunday, May 13, 1990, was Mother's Day. Monday, May 14, marked the beginning of testimony in Peggy Ann Barsness's trial for the murder of her daughter. Her plea was not guilty. She was a diminutive figure in the courtroom: caramel-colored hair, white cotton sweater, beige skirt, white anklets and brown kid shoes—a study in bland. To her left sat a prison matron. To her right sat a public defender named Rick Mattox, who placed in front of her a small package of Kleenex and a glass of water poured from a black plastic carafe on the table. Mattox had instructed Barsness not to get tanned and to look straight down during the proceedings. If he had intended to create the impression of a cipher, he succeeded. But what Mattox could not have orchestrated was Barsness's shaking, her hands clasped together so tightly and jerking so violently that her entire upper body was in perpetual rhythmic convulsion.

The prosecutor began by calling a parade of witnesses: the police lieutenant who had taken Barsness's statement when she reported Kirsten's death, first insisting that she had left the baby with a sitter named Tina; Tina Hilden herself, a young woman with pretty brown hair and pale skin, who said she had watched and waited in vain for Barsness to arrive with Kirsten on the day the baby was abandoned; Mark Rynda, a young man whom Barsness had called from San Francisco, asking if he could check on the front door of her apartment, which she said might have been left open. Rynda was recuperating from surgery and told Barsness he probably wouldn't get there, also declining her offer to stay in the apartment while she was gone.

Barsness's mother testified—about feeling frustrated during the years of Barsness's teenage truancy. “We would have conferences with counselors, but the school didn't really cooperate,” she testified. “When she didn't show up, they wouldn't notify us until halfway through the marking period.” But Mrs. Barsness couldn't remember what kinds of grades her daughter had received, and when asked about the baby's natural father, she said, “The name slips my mind.” She knew her daughter had a drinking problem, yet she asked Barsness to move to her own place two months after Kirsten's birth. “We thought she was better off if she took care of the baby herself,” said Mrs. Barsness.

Barsness's father testified in connection with her absences from school. But when asked about his daughter's drinking, Mr. Barsness inhaled deeply and blew wind out of his cheeks as he answered, “I never discussed it with her.” And both parents admitted that, in the preceding sixteen months, when their daughter was in jail fighting a murder indictment, neither of them had ever met or spoken with her attorney.

I saw a woman sitting in the back of the courtroom every day of the trial—too consistently to be a casual curiosity seeker—so I asked who she was. The woman said that her son had dated Barsness a few years before, and she made a gesture of wiping imaginary sweat off her brow—a grateful acknowledgement that she was, in this case, a near miss to a tragedy. She described a Barsness who seemed a distant cousin to the pathetic figure in court—personable, sexy and spunky, and almost brazenly independent. Often, instead of going home, she slept on their family sofa or in the car.

Barsness's lawyer made a big point of her excellent parenting during Kirsten's short life—how she boiled the baby's milk on the stove top because she distrusted the microwave, how neat and clean she kept her apartment. As explanation for this tragedy, he said that Barsness was like “a little girl in an adult's body,” that she had insomnia and drank as her way of self-medication, that she found herself falling apart. “She snapped,” he said. “Peggy lost it. Do you think that a normal, healthy Peggy would have wanted this to happen?”

Well, of course not. But several of her friends mentioned hanging out at a bar called R-Berry's, and I went to check it out. It was a windowless, smoky place, with perhaps a dozen pool tables and a wall of video games. It made me depressed that a young man like Brewer would haul back a brain-muddling quantity of beer here, then get in a car to drive home on Minnesota's icy winter roads. It made me depressed that a young mother like Barsness would spend her evenings here, seeking some warmth and

comfort—not yet grownup herself, and singularly ill-equipped to manage the growing up of anyone else.

“You are going to see pictures of Kirsten that will haunt you,” Barsness’s lawyer told the jury, “but they are not important.” He was wrong. It was stunning to see the police videotape of Kirsten’s body—eyes open, dressed in pink, looking unreal and doll-like among the stuffed animals in her crib. It was even more numbing to hear from the county coroner (who had also testified at the trial of Joel Steinberg and Hedda Nussbaum) just how Kirsten had died: slowly, from dehydration, losing nearly a quarter of her weight, her skin developing a doughlike texture and her body sinking gradually into coma. At the mention of the baby’s suffering, Barsness—up to then impassive—turned toward the wall, covered her mouth with her hand and cried softly until the judge called a brief recess.

It got worse: Over vehement objections from the defense, the prosecution played a cassette that Barsness had recorded for Brewer, reproving him from not staying in touch—a shocking, private and profane monologue, with two-month-old Kirsten crying in the background; “You did not call me, and it pissed me off. . . . I need to know what’s going to happen. I have morals, and I need goals. I’m drinking just as much as you are, and it’s not right. I have a daughter. I can’t be doing that. I treat her like shit when something’s going on with us. We have to go forward with our relationship, or we have to stop it. You can give this ring to some other bitch. . . . I’ll switch places with you. You come here and take care of Kirsten. My daughter’s screaming bloody murder, and I don’t fucking care. [A few moments later, the baby’s gurgling can be heard.] . . . Oops, she sneezed for you. Aren’t you proud? Your daughter sneezed for you. I hope she is your daughter. I hope you love her. We’ll get married. Big, small, nobody there but us, everybody there—I don’t care. You just keep your point in your pants. You’d best call me or your ass is grass.”

The day after this tape was played in open court, Barsness was not in her usual seat. She was taken to the hospital in a wheelchair—unresponsive, eyes unblinking, unable to eat or walk. Three psychiatrists examined her. One said she’d had an acute anxiety attack and recommended that she be hospitalized for at least ten days. Another said that she was competent to stand trial, although she had gone into a stupor from depression. The third characterized her as “passively suicidal,” meaning that she had lost her desire to live, but said she was fit to continue with the trial.

The tape, like the whole tragedy of Peggy Ann Barsness, is almost impossible to explain or absorb. It’s tempting to say, “She’s crazy,” or “It’s terrible, but it’s unique—a worst-case scenario.” But to do that is to ignore the deafness of a community that did not know how to reach a young woman unready for motherhood, a community in which everyone was there at the wrong time and no one was there at the right time. It is to dismiss a family who could deny a daughter’s alarming or off-putting behavior, so strong was their need for things to appear okay. It is to let off the hook those people who are always in favor of keeping the unborn baby, acting as if they have some corner on morality. This young woman could have had an abortion. This baby died. Which is more humane?

On June 5, 1990, Peggy Ann Barsness was found guilty of second-degree murder and manslaughter, and was subsequently sentenced to fifteen years out of a possible eighteen years in prison. Even with her time served and assuming time off for good behavior, she will be in prison at least eight and a half years. The jury did not consider the issue of postpartum depression, which is not a legal defense in Minnesota (although even the judge commented on the need to change archaic nineteenth-century state laws on mental illness), and they seemed to reject the idea that Barsness’s actions stemmed from low intelligence and alcoholism, that she wasn’t capable of forming the intent to commit a crime. The police asked her why she hadn’t purchased a round-trip ticket to California, and she answered, “I never planned on returning.”

“In the state of Minnesota,” said one of the prosecutors, “we have another name for that: murder.”

And a baby girl named Kirsten will never see her first birthday.

SECTION 7

Thinking Critically About Visual Images

The eighth edition of *Thinking Critically* includes two eight-page, four-color inserts of photographs and web sites: “Truth and Reality in Popular Culture” and “Truth and Reality in the Media.” Because our culture is so media-saturated and visually-oriented – and because advertisers, politicians, entertainment companies, and global corporations manipulate images so deftly – it is more important than ever that students learn to apply critical thinking skills to visual media.

The first insert, “Truth and Reality in Popular Culture,” examines images familiar from American consumer and entertainment culture. You might be interested to know that some images we had hoped to include – stills from the Fox plastic-surgery “beauty pageant” show *The Swan*, a particularly erotic ad for Dentyne Ice chewing gum – did not make it into the book because permission to use the images was denied by their corporate owners because of the context in which these images would appear. The manufacturers of popular culture know perfectly well that they use visual imagery to seduce and lull consumers; it’s precisely *because* they don’t want consumers thinking critically about that manipulation that they so closely guard the use of their products.

In any event, the images that appear in “Truth and Reality in Popular Culture” ask students to apply their critical thinking skills to “reality” television, standards of beauty, the production of fashion and the commingling of sex and public service. Each photograph includes an explanatory caption, providing additional context; the questions that follow each photograph can be used for class discussion as well as writing assignments.

The second insert, “Truth and Reality in the Media,” builds on work that students do throughout the text on comparing multiple perspectives and acknowledging multiple points of view. “Media,” here, is broadly understood as the use of visual images to report an event, construct an argument, or convey a point of view. Here, again, images that were widely distributed and carefully controlled (such as the photo-op shot of President George W. Bush landing on an aircraft carrier) are set against images that were suppressed (such as the coffins of American servicemen at Dover Air Force Base). Additional exercises in this book, such as the comparisons of accounts of the 9/11 terrorist attacks and the violence at Tiananmen Square, will have prepared students to think more critically about the kinds of images used in the mass media to report the “news.”

Finally, the Internet has further complicated the issue of what is “true,” what is “real.” Although this can prove beneficial – certainly the availability and free expression of a plurality of opinions has been greatly enhanced by this technology – student consumers of all this information need to be even more critical and skeptical in determining the validity of these competing opinions. This insert includes two web sites, both from equally “legitimate” organizations, which nevertheless present very different viewpoints about the same environmental issue. Understanding how to “read between the lines” of a web site, however, helps students better determine the purpose of a web site’s particular argument. In this case, a pro-industry web site is likely to publish a very different argument about global warming than the web site of a “green” environmental advocacy group. Neither site is “wrong” or deliberately manipulative or inaccurate; but a student researcher who drops “global warming” into a search engine and bases her argument on one site but not the other clearly isn’t getting the whole picture.

For more information about reading, thinking about, and understanding the production of visual images and media, see the following sources:

EVALUATING INTERNET SOURCES

http://owl.english.purdue.edu/handouts/research/r_evalsource4.html: From the Online Writing Lab at Purdue University, this brief and cogent discussion of how to determine the authorship and reliability of a web site is very useful for student researchers. The site even provides a “printer-friendly” version of the page, so you can create a handout for students.

Additional Resources for Evaluating Online Information

http://owl.english.purdue.edu/handouts/research/r_evalsource5.html: This page, again at the indispensable Online Writing Lab at Purdue University, includes links to articles about teaching critical literacy about online media as well as additional guides created by university librarians to help students think critically about online information.

The Newseum Cybernewseum

<http://www.newseum.org/cybernewseum/> The Newseum, which is moving to new headquarters in Washington, D.C., is the first museum devoted to the history of journalism and the news media and especially the upholding of the First Amendment. Its online gallery of photojournalism includes many provocative, wrenching, and sometimes contradictory accounts of news and events around the world, as well as discussions by photojournalists and editors about how images are created, chosen, and occasionally manipulated to tell a story or make an argument.

The Poynter Institute

<http://poynter.org/> is an invaluable resource for working journalists, aspiring journalists, media critics, and anyone interested in the promotion of a free press. A nonprofit educational institute for working journalists as well as journalism students, the Poynter Institute’s web site offers information, advocacy, and support for members of the news media. Its archived discussions of media ethics, its ongoing inquiries into the coverage of major and breaking stories, and its interviews with journalists and editors are invaluable. There are many articles that specifically discuss the creation (and ethical implications of) photojournalism, as well as interviews with photojournalists about the psychological and emotional impacts of maintaining an “objective” distance while covering catastrophic events. Click on the “photojournalism” tab for a complete listing of articles and resources.

From Now On: The Educational Technology Journal

<http://www.fno.org/> is a terrific, creative resource for teaching visual literacy in the age of “edutainment.” See especially this article from 1999: <http://www.fno.org/jun99/media.html>.

MediaChannel.org

<http://www.mediachannel.org/classroom/> is a nonprofit educational organization providing resources for teachers (primarily K-12, but useful for college classrooms, too) on media literacy. Its lesson plans and teaching units are especially interesting.

The Center for Media Literacy

http://www.medialit.org/reading_room/rr4.php offers, at this page, a very generous list of links and resources for thinking critically about the media and visual texts.