TEACHING FOR CRITICAL & CREATIVE THINKING

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Someone Who Thinks Critically Can ...  

- Identify Assumptions Behind Thinking & Actions  
- Check Assumptions for Accuracy & Validity  
- Take Informed Action
Someone Who Thinks Creatively Can ...

- View Ideas & Actions from Multiple Alternative Viewpoints
- Generate Interpretations & Actions that Differ from the Usual Mode of Thought or Practice
- Communicate Learning Through a Variety of Modalities & Forms – Visual, Kinetic, Auditory, Symbolic
A CRITICALLY & CREATIVELY INFORMED ACTION IS ...

• One Based on Evidence / Experience that Can be Justified
• One That Has Its Assumptions Known & Checked
• One That Stands a Chance of Achieving Its Intended Consequence
• One That Has Been Viewed from Multiple Perspectives
• One That is Enacted Via Multiple Modalities
KINDS OF ASSUMPTIONS

• CAUSAL - purport to explain a sequence of events
• PRESCRIPTIVE - assumptions about how things should happen, we should behave
• PARADIGMATIC - framing, structuring assumptions viewed as obvious, common sense, taken for granted
4 Key Intellectual Traditions

• ANALYTIC PHILOSOPHY – logical fallacies, argument analysis – inductive, deductive, analogical, inferential reasoning

• NATURAL SCIENCE – hypothetical-deductive method, principle of falsifiability

• CRITICAL THEORY – uncovering power dynamics & ideological manipulation

• PRAGMATISM – experimental & creative pursuit of beautiful consequences (E.g. democracy, inclusion, connection)
An Example

• Clinical Depression is Caused by External Circumstances
• The Way to Deal With It Is To Reason Through It & Tell Yourself To Snap Out of It
• Medications Are For Those Too Weak To Deal With The World

Rooted in Ideology: PATRIARCHY
(Men are to be entrusted with making decisions by virtue of their superior rationality & logic)

Counter: A Flaw in Chemistry, not Personality
Creativity: Medication, Meditation, Music
## An Example

| • I Am Free of Racism |
| • I Don’t See Color or Race |
| • I Treat Everybody the Same |

**Rooted in Ideology: WHITE SUPREMACY**

(The norm for leadership is White & Whites are not racial beings. They can escape racism by moral determination)

Counter View: Whites as Raced, Engaging in Racial Micro-Aggressions, H.E. as Racialized

Creativity: What Would Classrooms, Teaching, Content Look Like Racialized in Favor of Other Racial Groups?)
Question ...

• What most helps your students to think critically &/or creatively?
Circle of Voices (5 people)

- Individuals reflect on the discussion topic (1 min)
- Participants go round the circle in order - each person has up to 1 minute of uninterrupted air time to give their viewpoint on the topic. No interruptions are allowed
- Move into free discussion with the ground rule that every comment offered must somehow refer back to a comment made by someone else in the opening circle of voices. This need NOT be agreement - it can be a disagreement, a question, an elaboration or extension, an illustration, etc.
How Is CRITICAL THINKING Learned? What Students Say ...

- By Instructors MODELING, MODELING & MODELING via:
  - Critical Incident Questionnaire
  - Assumption Inventories
  - Ending Presentations, Discussions & Exercises with Questions
  - Chalk Talk – Visual Discussion
An Example: Chalk Talk

- Instructor writes a question in the middle of the board
- 5-10 minutes of silence is declared
- Students write responses to the question on the board whenever they feel ready
- Students & instructor draw lines linking comments & add questions & reactions
Critical Incident Questionnaire (CIQ)

• MOMENT MOST ENGAGED AS LEARNER
• MOMENT MOST DISTANCED
• ACTION MOST HELPFUL
• ACTION MOST CONFUSING
• WHAT SURPRISED YOU MOST
HOW ADMINISTERED?

- Last 5 minutes of Class
- Anonymous
- Frequency Analysis of Main Themes
- Reported Out at Start of Next Class
- Negotiation NOT Capitulation
How Is It Learned?
What Students’ say

• Consistently Providing Real World Illustrations / Examples
• Instructor Point – Counterpoint
• Structured Devil’s Advocacy (Solo Point-Counterpoint)
• Speaking in Tongues
How Is It Learned?  
What Students’ Say

- What do YOU think Professor?
- Drawing Discussion
- Musicalizing Discussion
- Incremental - Begin With Basic Mental Protocol /Inquiry Applied to Topics Well Away From Students’ Experiences then Gradually Move Closer to Home (c.f. Vigorous Exercise)
How Is It Learned?
What Students Say

• When Students Have to Face & Respond to a ‘Disorienting Dilemma’ (Mezirow) - a situation engineered to take them by surprise / reverse / upset their expectations
• Dangerous (Appropriate) Disclosure
• Classroom Geography – Teach from Siberia
• Clashing Contradictions: Defining Democracy
• No Speech: Visual, Musical, Graphic, Symbolic, Kinetic  SILENCE as NORMAL
• HOW DO YOU MODEL CRITICAL &/OR CREATIVE THINKING FOR YOUR STUDENTS?
CIRCULAR RESPONSE
(10-12 members)

• Go round the circle: each person has up to a minute to talk - NO INTERRUPTIONS

• What you say must respond to the previous speaker’s comments (can be a disagreement or expression of confusion)

• Once all have spoken move into open conversation with no ground rules
Follow Up …

- [www.stephenbrookfield.com](http://www.stephenbrookfield.com)
- TEACHING FOR CRITICAL THINKING (2012)
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