**What is critical thinking?**

Learning Objectives:

At the end of this lecture, students will be able to:

* Develop a definition of what critical thinking is and understand its dimensions.
* Know what skills you need to be a critical thinker
* The difference between good thinking and poor thinking.
* Understand the power of their mind.

Critical Thinking

* **There are many ways to articulate critical thinking** just as there are many ways to articulate the meaning of any rich and substantive concept.
  + We are essentially describing only the essence of what critical thinking could be.
* In this course, we will begin to **unfold the complexities that is the essence of critical thinking**.

Start-Up Definition

* “Critical thinking is the art of thinking about thinking while thinking in order to make thinking better. It involves three interwoven phases: It analyzes thinking; it evaluates thinking; it improves thinking.”- (Paul, Elder, 2006)

Defining Critical Thinking

* **Derived from roots in ancient Greek**
  + ***Critical****:*
    - *Kriticos* (meaning “discerning judgment”)
    - *Kriterion* (meaning “standards”)
* *Webster’s New World Dictionary:*
  + *Critical:*
    - “characterized by careful analysis and judgment”
    - Followed by: “Critical, in its strictest sense, implies an attempt at objective judgment so as to determine both merits and faults.”

Concepts of Critical Thinking

* Critical thinking may be appropriately defined as:

“thinking explicitly aimed at well-founded judgment, utilizing appropriate evaluative standards in an attempt to determine the true worth, merit, or value of something.”

Dimensions

* **Three Components of CT:**

1. **Analytical**
2. **Evaluative**
3. **Creative**

* **We analyze thinking in order to evaluate. We evaluate it in order to improve it.**
  + *Clarity, accuracy, relevance, depth, breadth, and logic.*

Reconstruction

* You must be willing to examine your thinking and put it to the test.
  + Identify weaknesses in your thinking
  + Reconstruct your thinking creatively
  + Develop high standards of thinking
  + Learn to step back and find a way to meet those standards.

Good vs. Poor Thinking

* Nothing can outweigh sound thinking.
* You are better off being in control of your thinking.
* No matter where you are, what problems your facing, what your goals or circumstances.
* Poor thinking can cause problems, waste time and energy, and creates frustration and pain.

Skills of a Critical Thinker

“Critical thinking is the disciplined art of ensuring that you use the best thinking you are capable of in any set of circumstances.”

* We must make sense of the world in which we live.
* We have multiple choices.
* We need the best information to make these choices.
* We need to figure it out through questioning.
* Questions to ask ourselves:
  + What is really going on in this or that situation?
  + Am I deceiving myself when I believe that…
  + What are the likely consequences of failing to…?
  + Is this my biggest problem, or do I need to focus my attention on that?
* Successfully responding to questions such as these is the daily work of thinking.

Effective Thinking

* **To maximize the quality of your thinking:**
  + **Become an effective critic of your thinking**
  + **Make learning about thinking a priority**
    - What do you really know about how to analyze, evaluate, or reconstruct your thinking?
    - Where does your thinking come from?
    - Is this high quality or poor quality thinking?
* Everything we do, want, or feel is influenced by your thinking.
* **Results of critical thinking**
  + **Begin to notice what few others notice**
  + Engaged in what human thinking is about
  + **Rare person who knows how and why he or she is thinking**
  + Skilled in assessing and improving how he or she thinks
  + **Conscious of bad habits, generalizations, stereotypes, and false beliefs that influence our thinking.**

Hard Work= Good Thinking

* Requires:
  + Practicing special “acts” of thinking
  + “Moves” with your mind
  + **Internal motivation to become a better thinker**
  + **Practice/feedback/practice**
  + Redirect back to the fundamentals, again, and again.

Become a Critic of Your Thinking

* Not to negate or put yourself down
  + Improve yourself
    - Practice the art of skilled thinking and lifelong learning
* Make foundational changes in your thinking
  + Recognizing thinking, commitment, and daily practice.
  + Learn about bad habits of thought
  + Keep goals of good habits of thought in mind.

Establishing New Habits of Thought

* We develop some good habits of thought and many poor habits of thought.
  + Become intermixed and hard to disentangle.
* We learn without a clear sense of the ideal in thinking
  + Not clear about our goals as thinkers.

“To learn at a deeper level, you need a clearer perspective on what you should be striving to achieve, and you need powerful tools for upgrading your thinking and learning.”

Power of Your Mind

“No matter how well or poorly you have performed in school or in college, **it is important to realize that the power of the human mind,** *the power of your mind*, is virtually unlimited. **But, if any of us are to reach our potential, we must take command of the working of our minds**.”

[**Fixed Mindset vs. Growth Mindset**](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Xv2ar6AKvGc)

Identify 4 differences between Fixed vs. Growth Mindset

**Fixed Mindset:**  **Growth Mindset:**

1. less likely to seek help 1. more likely to seek help
2. trying hard = not being smart 2. effort = learning
3. give up when facing a setback 3. try again when facing a setback
4. believe you can’t change intelligence 4. believe you can get smarter with effort