

UGRC 150: CRITICAL THINKING AND PRACTICAL REASONING

Main Campus, 2023

LECTURE 1: THOUGHTS AS OBJECTS OF SCRUTINY

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What is it??



A working definition

- Critical Thinking is the careful, deliberate **determination of whether we should accept, reject, or suspend judgment about a claim and a determination of the degree of confidence** with which to accept or reject it.
- The critical thinker is concerned about *how well* a belief or claim is ***supported by reasons***(***premises***).
- Critical thinking helps to expose **fallacies** or errors in our reasoning.

Critical Thinking **cont'd**

- The critical thinker **analyses** (breaks-down into constituent parts) statements and arguments and then **evaluates** (judges) them to distinguish good (correct) from bad (incorrect) reasoning.

Critical Thinking **cont'd**



- The critical thinker does not ask questions, analyze or evaluate *just for the sake of it*.

The aim is to **respond to (solve) practical problems of existence**. If not, then the whole act of thinking critically would be worthless. Thus, the course is Critical Thinking and ***Practical Reasoning***.

Critical Thinking **cont'd**

- The course will equip you with concepts, methods, tools, principles and techniques for establishing and distinguishing ***logical*** truth (linguistic certainties) from ***empirical*** truth (observation-based contingencies).

Pause to think!

Critically assess the following:

1. Witness at the law court: “Jail that bachelor because with my own eyes I saw him beat his wife mercilessly. I have video evidence....”
2. Question to the rain-maker: “So will it rain tomorrow?”
Rain-maker: “it will either rain tomorrow or it will not rain tomorrow.”
3. Security officer to the boss: “She is the last person who left the office yesterday so she stole the laptop.”
4. “She is moral because she leads a morally upright life”.
5. As soon as she entered the room the lights went off. So, she caused the light-off.
6. My bachelor friend gave up his bachelors to fix bachelors.
7. The traffic was intense yesterday and the day before on that stretch, so I am not going by that route today because it will certainly be the same today.

Critical Thinking as topic-neutral

❖ Notice therefore that Critical Thinking is **topic-neutral**.

That is, it **transcends disciplines**; cuts across disciplines; applies to all academic disciplines; every aspect of everyday life e.g. medicine, law, politics, religion, culture, military, ... etc.

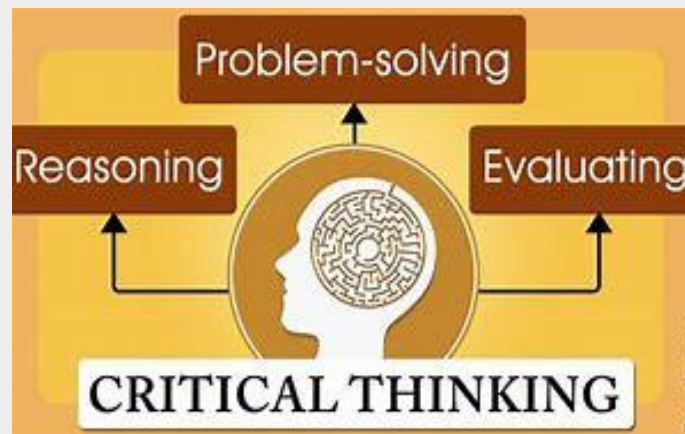
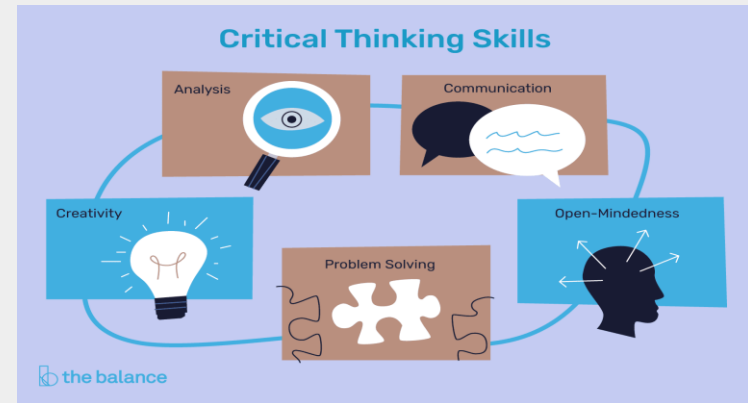
Why should we be critical thinkers?

A critical thinker...

1. makes better decisions because s/he is less gullible
2. is clear about why s/he believes what s/he believes (not merely following the crowd)
3. is an effective communicator because s/he is trained to present a point of view in a clear, structured, reasoned way that convinces others; s/he can anticipate queries
4. is an invaluable problem-solver because s/he accommodates other views; examines, assesses and evaluates issues on merit.

Critical Thinking Skills

- Open mindedness
- Inquiring mind
 - (question-asking)
- Analytic skills
- Evaluative skills
- Communicative skills



Course objectives

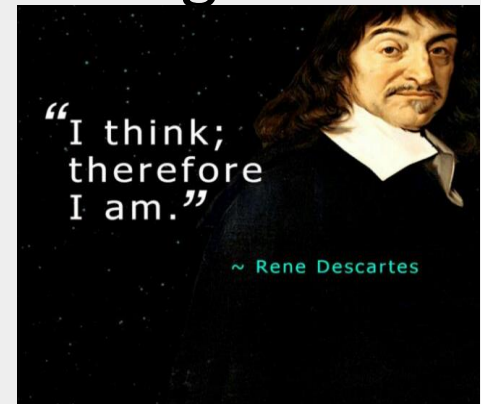
- The course aims at equipping you with concepts/tools/skills for:
 - ✓ Effective speaking;
 - ✓ Sound reasoning/analysis;
 - ✓ Conceptual clarity;
 - ✓ Recognizing, diagnosing and solving problems for the work environment and everyday life



UNIT 1: SENTENCE-SHAPED THOUGHT

Introduction

- Humans are beings that think. Our thoughts are often captured or expressed in language. Since we may never know a person's thought exactly, we depend on what a person says to determine what s/he had in mind. So “sentence shaped thought” means our thought shaped into sentence.
- **UNIT 1** seeks to get students to understand the need and how to subject our thoughts (and that of others) to scrutiny(study).



Pause and note!

- As a critical thinker, ***say what you mean and mean what you say***. For “out of the abundance of the heart (mind), the mouth speaks”. Notice the infinite regress associated with saying that you did not mean what you said.
- Why should I trust what you are saying now if you did not mean what you said earlier? You will only end up telling me you did not mean what you just said.

Unit 1: objectives

- At the end of Unit 1, the student will be able to
 - ✓ distinguish a **declarative** from an **imperative** and an **interrogative**
 - ✓ recognize **sentence fragments** and **emotive expressions**
 - ✓ understand why declaratives alone have '**truth-value**'
 - ✓ identify the **three (3)** types of declaratives (statements): **factual** statements, **value judgments** and **definitions**
 - ✓ distinction between **sentences** and **statements**
 - ✓ **implicit**(covert) and **explicit** (overt) meanings of expressions
(why some interrogatives are actually imperatives)

Unit 1 : Topics

1. Types of sentence-shaped thought
 - Interrogative; imperative; declarative
2. Recognizing sentence fragment and emotive expression
3. Types of declaratives
 - Factual statement; value judgment; definition
4. Distinguishing a sentence from a statement

Unit 1:

Reading list and activity

- Read Unit 1 of *Recommended Text* – pages 4-12
- Study the slides posted in *resources* and announcements
- Note open date for assessment one (week three)

UNIT 1 (topic one):

Interrogatives

- Types of sentences that express our thoughts:

1. Interrogatives-(questions) are sentences expressed **to seek information.**

- Examples:
1. Is she your mother?
 2. Did Kojo travel?
 3. Which group are you in?
 4. Is it raining at Legon?
 5. Where is the Teaching Assistant?

Note: Interrogatives are neither true nor false. So, they **do not have a truth-value**; they are not truth bearers.

Imperatives

2. Imperatives-(command, request, directive, instruction): Refer to sentences expressed to get someone to **perform an action**.

- Examples:
1. Take off your cap.
 2. Raise your hand
 3. Pass me the cheque book
 4. Could you direct me to the library?

NB: notice that E.g. 4 is explicitly interrogative but implicitly imperative. The speaker politely requests someone to perform an action. Imperatives **have no truth-value**; are not truth bearers!!

Declaratives

- **Declarative**-(statement, proposition, assertion): A sentence that **conveys information** which can be **either true or false –(i.e. has a truth-value or is a truth bearer)**. Examples: 1.The exam has been cancelled.
2. Ghana has a new Speaker of Parliament.
3. A bachelor is sitting under the tree.
4. A bachelor is an unmarried adult male.
5. The bachelor has a good conscience.
6. She is a good friend.

NB: Only declaratives can be either true or false **(have a truth-value)**

Unit 1, topic 2: recognizing **sentence fragments** and **emotive expression**

- **Sentence fragment:** These are incomplete sentences; they do not express complete thought.

Examples:

1. If only I got to Ajo earlier (what then?)
2. Rice and stew (what has it done?)
3. The dean of students in the university of Ghana (what has s/he done?)
4. Morning dew (what about it?)

NB. Sentence fragments have **no truth value**; are not truth bearers.

Emotive expression

- **Emotive expressions** are sentences that express feelings or exclamations.

Examples:

1. Oh. What a day!
2. Wow!, Brilliant!, Awesome!, Bravo! Etc
3. Hey! Who do you think you are?!

NB: Emotive expressions have no basis for rational evaluation. They have **no truth-value** and they are not truth bearers.

Unit 1, topic 3:

Types of declaratives: 1. **factual statement**

- There are three (3) different types of declarative sentences: ***factual*** statements, ***value judgments*** and ***definitions***.
- **Factual statement**: informs by *objectively describing* what *is* there through sense observation.

E.g.s. 1. *That bachelor sitting under the tree is sleeping.* 2. *The president is taller than his opponent.* 3. *The car knocked down the boy* 4. *Ama is a girl.* 5. *Water boils at 100 degrees Celsius.*

NB: A statement may be factually true or factually false. *Being factual does not mean it is true.* It means the truth or falsity of the statement ***does not depend on the subject's view-point*** but on the object itself.

Types of declaratives:

2. value judgment

- **Value judgment:** informs by *subjectively prescribing* or evaluating how something or someone ***should or ought to be***. They do not state facts about the object but rather express the *view-point of the subject*.

E.g.s. 1. That bachelor has a *good* conscience. 2. This knife has a *good* edge. 3. It is *wrong* to talk back at your supervisor. 4. Ama is a *beautiful* girl. 5. The *wicked* driver knocked down the *innocent* boy. 6. The president is more *corrupt* than his opponent. 7. He is a *good* boxer.

Value judgment cont'd:

moral and non-moral

- Value judgments come in two (2) forms:
 1. **Moral value Judgments:** (a) Abortion is evil. (b) You should not talk back at your supervisor.
 2. **Non-moral value Judgments** (c) He is a good boxer. (d) My phone has a good screen

NB: Metaphors are also another way of expressing a value judgment. E.g.s. 1. Ataa is a flower (Ataa is weak; Ataa is beautiful) 2. My M.P is Mugabe (My M.P has stayed in power for so long...)

Types of declaratives:

3. definitions

- **Definition**: a definition is a sentence that informs by giving *meaning* (**defining**) to the word.

E.gs. 1. A bachelor is an unmarried man.

2. Pollination is the transfer of pollen grains from the anther to the stigma. 3. “Even number is any number that is divisible by two without a remainder”.

- **NB** a definition can be either true or false. If the meaning is correct then it is true. If not, then it is false.

Definitions cont'd:

parts

The parts of a definition are the ***definiendum*** and the ***definiens***.

E.g.: A bachelor is an unmarried adult male.

In the definition above, *a bachelor* is the word being defined (i.e. the **definiendum**).

- A bachelor is an unmarried adult male.

The part of the definition which gives the meaning is *an unmarried adult male* (i.e. the **definiens**).

UNIT 1, topic 4: distinguishing sentence from statement

- A sentence is a collection of words with a complete thought or meaning but a **statement is a type of sentence that can be either true or false**. That means there are some other sentences which do not have a truth-value. **All statements are sentences but not all sentences are statements**. A sentence can be a statement, a question or a command.

E.g.s. of ***sentences that are statements***:

1. Nana is a graduate.
2. That is the Vice Chancellor.

E.g.s. of ***sentences that are not statements***:

1. “Sit up!”
2. Why are you crying?

Recall and practice!

Contrasting **facts** and **values**

- Refer to the recommended text references and exercises!!

End of lecture 1



Blessed week!
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Dr. Myles

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