

Critical Thinking

What It Is and Why It Matters



A Few Words about Critical Thinking

The word “critical” is often thought of as a word that connotes a negative, narrow-minded outlook. But, in the world of writing and argument, critical thinking allows us to unfold the breadth of an issue so that our argument will be thorough and our writing will be intelligently exhibited to the reader.

When one thinks critically, you are not thinking negatively, you are thinking deeply. As chapter 1 in your textbook explains it, when we think *critically*, we are “searching for hidden assumptions, noticing various facets, unraveling different strands, and evaluating what is most significant” (3).

More on Critical Thinking

As noted in our textbook on page 10, critical thinking often involves two modes of looking at an issue:

- Through *analysis*: finding the parts of the problem and then separating them, trying to see how things fit together
- Through *evaluation*: judging the merit of our claims and assumptions and the weight of the evidence in their favor

By Thinking Critically...

- ❖ You will be able to assess your take on an issue so that you have claims and support to back up your argument.
- ❖ You will be able to see all—or, at least, most—angles of an issue so that you can address—and refute—any counterarguments worth noting.
- ❖ You will develop and grow as a thoughtful participant in the academic and social world, which is full of opposing viewpoints.

An Example of Critical Thinking

- If I asked you to write about the topic of whether or not Seattle should work to bring an NBA team to the city, what different angles of this topic would you examine? Maybe some of the following:
 - → What this would cost taxpayers
 - → Scout locations of *where* the basketball team could build their arena
 - → Check other cities comparable to Seattle and see if they have a team and how it benefits/hurts the local economy
 - → Analyze current professional teams in Seattle and check attendance at games, cost to taxpayers, and, basically, if the existence of these teams in Seattle is beneficial to city and state
- **By asking all of these questions (and answering them) you are *thinking critically* about a topic**

Why Critical Thinking Matters

- In this course, we will spend the majority of time discussing complex and controversial issues through the Discussion Posts, and you expected to exercise and exhibit your critical thinking skills at this time.
- Moreover, for each and every essay in this course, you will showcase the depth of critical thinking you exerted to arrive at the particular thesis you are arguing. In other words, we will not write in generalities, for critical thinking involves details, examples, and evidence to back up claims made.

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