

# Teaching for Critical Thinking



John C. Ricketts  
University of Georgia

# Objectives

- Describe the CT dispositions we would like our students to possess.
- Discuss the conditions for learning critical thinking.
- Develop a plan to teach CT to our students.

# Basic Critical Thinking Dispositions (Facione, 1990)

- Analyticity
- Self-confidence
- Inquisitiveness
- Maturity
- Open-mindedness
- Systematicity
- Truth-seeking

# How can we teach our students to think critically?

- Must “formally” teach critical thinking
- Must integrate critical thinking examples and techniques in our teaching
- Must push students to think critically within the content we teach

# Conditions for critical thinking

- Something to think about – action, event, object, issue, problem, process, system, theory...
- Something to think with – notes, handouts, demonstration, diagrams, experiences, models...
- Thinking models – elements of reasoning, reasoning traits and standards, problem solving method, evaluation, observation, interpretation, justification, imagination...
- Something to think for – solving a problem, improve existing circumstances, clarification of values / beliefs, reduce errors, personal growth, make better decisions...

# How can we teach CT?

- Analyticity –
  - Using facts to draw conclusions
  - Providing your facts to help students see how you drew conclusions
  - Question student conclusions and have them present facts to support
  - Require students to provide facts and references to support conclusions

# How can we teach CT?

- Self-confidence
  - Use teaching tools such as the intellectual standards and the elements of reasoning (handout)
  - Require students to use the thinking tools to address questions
  - Reinforce the use of intellectual tools through encouragement, refinement, and even grades

# How can we teach CT?

- Inquisitiveness
  - Discuss the unknowns in your field of study
  - Encourage students to explore new and challenging areas
  - Reward students for searching out new and innovative approaches
  - Practice creativity yourself



# How can we teach CT?

- **Maturity**
  - Discuss the complexity of problems in your field
  - Have students read about and explore difficult problems
  - Discuss shortcomings of the science (and perhaps yourself) in your profession

# How can we teach CT?

- Open-mindedness
  - Share how people with different perspectives have added to your profession
  - Encourage diverse points of view in the class
  - Encourage students to seek divergent points of view in their assignments

# How can we teach CT?

- Systematicity
  - Practice organized, diligent methodologies yourself
  - Encourage and reward systematic approaches to solving problems in the class
  - Provide structure at times, encourage students to provide structure at other times

# How can we teach CT?

- Truth-seeking
  - Discuss the benefit of inquiry, whether your point of view is right or wrong
  - Discuss mistakes made in your discipline (even your own)
  - Encourage inquiry that rewards truth
  - Plan activities that force students to find data and information in conflict with accepted truths

# Summary

- Review critical thinking dispositions students should know and be able to apply
- Discuss the conditions for learning critical thinking
- Develop a plan to teach these concepts to your students