

Teaching Critical Thinking

Abstract

This interactive session will involve participants in a discussion of ways of teaching critical thinking. We'll provide examples and ask participants for theirs. Different definitions of critical thinking (a common occurrence) may necessitate different approaches to teaching and, so, facilitators and participants will take steps toward a taxonomy of critical thinking definitions and critical thinking teaching and learning.

Keywords: Critical thinking; Taxonomy

Introduction

Ask any college educator and you would get little argument that we should be challenging students to think critically (cf., Rickles, et al, 2013). However, stakeholders who call for us to teach critical thinking rarely tell us what they mean by that term. The purpose of this session is to generate and share ideas for teaching critical thinking. We will interactively produce definitions of critical thinking and then, similarly interactively, discuss ways of teaching critical thinking. Finally, facilitators and participants will work toward a taxonomy connecting the teaching critical thinking to definitions of critical thinking. Participants will walk away with a critical understanding of their role in promoting critical thinking in the classroom.

Theoretical Foundation/Teaching Implications

Stakeholders, including the AACSB and other accrediting bodies, call for training our students in critical thinking. These calls have grown since Arum & Roska's (2011) publication of "Academically Adrift: Limited Learning on College campuses" showing that students generally do not improve in this skill during their college years.

One challenging in teaching critical thinking lies in defining critical thinking (cf., Grauerholz & Bouma-Holtrop, 2003). For example, some authors (e.g., Mollborn and Hoekstra 2010) insist critical thinking is vitally bound to specific academic content while others (e.g., Massengill, 2011) believe that critical thinking is a set of skills that transcends academic disciplines. We'll make efforts to find common elements of these definitions but we recognize that teachers ultimately teach best following their own definitions. To that end, (as discussed later in this proposal) we'll work toward a taxonomy tying critical thinking definitions to approaches to teaching critical thinking.

Once session participants have formulated definitions of critical thinking, we'll examine methods of teaching it. As facilitators, we are eager to hear other participants' approaches, and we will share ideas such as the role of textbooks (Errington & Bubna-Litic, 2015), the role of research methods (Tremblay, K. R., Jr., & Downey, E. P., 2004), and the role of debate (Donovan & Townsend, 2016) in teaching critical thinking.

Finally, this session will make steps toward tying definitions of critical thinking to methods of teaching critical thinking. As suggested by Sternberg (1985), methods of teaching critical thinking may badly miss the goal. We'll draw from cognitive science (cf., Van Gelder, 2005), from Bloom's taxonomy of learning objectives (Athanassiou, McNett, & Harvey, 2003), and, of course, participants' ideas to help spur this important discussion with a goal of having participants think critically about how they teach critical thinking.

Session Description/Timeline

Note that all sections of this session noted below will be done interactively

:00-:05	Introduction of facilitators Address impetus for this session
:05-:20	Definitions/examples of critical thinking Synthesis of definitions
:20-:45	Methods for teaching critical thinking
:45-:55	Taxonomy of teaching critical thinking
:55-:60	Wrap-up; Slack time

References

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