

Faculty Learning Community on Critical Thinking Worksheet:

Spring 2010

Name: _____

Employee I.D. _____

Course focus for the FLC: Course Name and Course

Course Name _____

Course Number _____

One sentence course description: _____

Introduction

The University of Louisville Ideas to Action (i2a) initiative aims to build consistency across the curriculum by exposing students to the same critical thinking vocabulary in every course and scaffolding students' skills throughout their progress toward a degree. This common language is important because it shows students that *they are being asked to use and improve the same thinking skills in every class*. We cannot assume that students understand why certain assignments or activities are billed as "critical thinking," or that students easily connect the dots from class to class. It is our job to make these connections transparent and our expectations explicit, so that students can begin to transfer these critical skills across assignments, courses and life experiences.

In order to be successful critical thinkers for life, students must be able to transfer these skills to other venues: to future coursework, to their careers, and to their personal lives. A common language used regularly campus-wide, and specifically in course assignments, is necessary to facilitate this transfer.

Teaching critical thinking effectively requires that we-as instructors-are intentional about how we talk about, model, coach and assess the thinking skills we want our students to practice and master.

This worksheet guides you in thinking through your course design plans to help you promote, support, and measure your students' critical thinking skills. You will be guided in thinking about your course and assignments in new ways and in integrating the Paul Elder framework into your course artifacts and discussions.

Using the Paul-Elder framework should not be a meaningless add-on. The Paul Elder frameworks give us and our students a precise, consistent way of describing and assessing critical thinking in any discipline.

The worksheet is divided into 3 main sections with a total of 10 “planning steps” for you to complete.

Section I: Current Course Design-Where are you now?

Section II: Proposed Course Revisions-Where do you want to be?

Section III: Assessment-How will you know when you and your students arrive?

Section I-Current Course Design-Where are you now?

To help you formulate your thoughts, please read pages 105-128 of *Learning to Think Things Through* by Gerald Nosich and the “little blue book”, *The Miniature Guide to Critical Thinking*, by Richard Paul & Linda Elder.

1. Which undergraduate course of yours in Spring 2010 would you like to target for critical thinking infusion? Why?

2. Please try to describe the core set of *thinking skills* (Elements of Thought) you want students to learn and/or develop in your course.

3. What are the overarching framework and underlying concepts that structure the course? They are often the core concepts and strategies that you use to connect course content but are not visible to students. Review Nosich p. 105-119 to help you begin to describe: the central course questions, fundamental and powerful concepts, & disciplinary point of view.
 - a. Central Course Question:

 - b. Fundamental and Powerful Concepts:

 - c. Disciplinary Point of View:

4. In what ways are you currently incorporating critical thinking skill development in your course (e.g., assignments, homework, activities)?
 - a. What is working well?

 - b. What are the “speed bumps”, where students often don’t “get it?”

5. After reading *The Miniature Guide to Critical Thinking*, what are your initial thoughts on integration of the Paul-Elder framework and/or changes for your course?

7. Elements of Thought

The Elements of Thought (*Miniature Guide to Critical Thinking* pages 3-6) are the parts of thinking or, stated another way, fundamental building blocks of thought. The 8 Elements of Thought are Purpose, Questions, Information, Interpretation and Inferences, Concepts, Assumptions, Implications and Consequences, and Point of View. For more support and information on this prompt, read Nosich *Chapter 2: The Elements of Reasoning* (pages 49-88).

How do you plan to incorporate some or all of The Elements of Thought in your course(s)? Be specific. Will you revise your course goals, objective, syllabus, or assignments and exams, for example?

Example: Communication final paper assignment-Students will be asked to identify the **purpose** of a particular task/situation that they encounter during their internship. This task/situation will serve as the focal point of analysis for a **problem-solving** experience. The students will also be asked how communication **theory and concepts** helped them to draw **inferences and interpret** the situation to assist in their problem solving efforts.

a. Your response:

b. *List below or attach some text that shows the integration of the Paul Elder framework's Elements of Thought into a teaching assignment, syllabus or other document.*

c. *List any support you would like to help you integrate The Elements of Thought.*

Section III- Assessment-How will you know when you and your students arrive?

8. Formative Feedback (see book titled *Classroom Assessment Techniques*)

Good teaching practice suggests that students need opportunities to provide informal feedback to the instructor about the aspects of the course or assignment that are supporting their learning and also report on any issues that are hindering their learning.

Feedback solicited as formative assessment asks learners to report back in their own words about any gaps that exist between their current knowledge, understanding, or skill and what is required to complete the course or assignment. It is important to solicit this feedback from students in the “thick” of the course or while they are preparing to complete an assignment so that you can provide any “course corrections” to guide your teaching.

Describe the specific technique you will use to solicit formative feedback from your students during the semester. Be specific.

9. Universal Intellectual Standards

The Universal Intellectual Standards (*Miniature Guide to Critical Thinking* pages 8-10) allow you to articulate the standards by which you will measure your students’ engagement with the elements of thought and assess the quality of their critical thinking. The 6 core standards central to the quality of reasoning are clarity, accuracy, precision, relevance, depth, and breadth. Additional standards include logic, fairness, significance, and completeness. For more support and information on this prompt, read Nosich *Chapter 4: Standards of Critical Thinking* (pages 139-174).

How do you plan to incorporate some or all of Universal Intellectual Standards in your course(s)? Be specific. Will you revise your course goals, objective, syllabus, or assignments and exams, for example?

Example: English essay assignment-

Accuracy: does your thesis hold if you consider the whole range of texts? Does it hold if you consider the internal contradictions within texts?

Precision: Does your thesis require qualification in order to be completely accurate? (For example, does what you say about the sonneteers hold for all the sonneteers or only for some of them?)

Depth: Is your thesis complex enough to deal with the complexity of the texts?

Breadth: Is your thesis complex enough to deal with the range of evidence?

Logic: Look at the transitions between paragraphs: do these “signpost” the way your argument is put together? If you are comparing, have you used the same criteria on both sides of the comparison? If you are classifying, are the categories distinct and not overlapping?

a. Your response:

b. List below or attach some text that shows your integration of the Paul Elder framework’s Universal Intellectual Standards.

c. List any support would you like to help you integrate the Universal Intellectual Standards.

10. Essential Intellectual Traits

- A. Essential Intellectual Traits (*Miniature Guide to Critical Thinking* pages 13-15) reflect the habits of mind of a well-cultivated critical thinker. The 8 Essential Intellectual Traits are Intellectual Humility, Intellectual Courage, Intellectual Empathy, Intellectual Autonomy, Intellectual Integrity, Intellectual Perseverance, Confidence in Reason, and Fairmindedness.

Name the Essential Intellectual Traits you hope to cultivate in students through the course. Be specific.

Example: Communication semester-long project-The first goal is that the students will develop **intellectual autonomy** as they work on the semester-long project. Periodically, I will check on the student's progress but I will expect them to conduct the research and build the demonstration website on their own. This will also build **intellectual perseverance** as the students learn to plan the project and work consistently on it for the semester. The third goal is to build **confidence in reason** as students learn how their critical thinking skills can be applied in their career success.

a. Your response

b. How will you be intentional about fostering these traits in your course and your work with students?

B-Metacognition

Thinking about one's own thinking is an important aspect of critical thinking. Reflecting purposely on one's reasoning process leads to important realizations about how to improve one's thinking. Asking students to reflect on and report out about what they have learned *about themselves as a learner* or what they have *learned about learning* in the process of trying a new skill or tackling a new problem is an aspect of the critical thinking process.

It is ideal to ask students to answer one or two questions and to "lower the stakes" by making the writing prompts a non-graded, but important, aspect of completing a course or an assignment. To further their critical thinking skills, you might ask students how they might apply their learning to life outside of the course.

Describe what kind of "writing prompt" you will develop for students to have them reflect on:

a. What they have learned about themselves as learners.

b. What they have learned about learning.