Miniature Guide Tips and Strategies from UofL Faculty

The Miniature Guide to Critical Thinking Concepts and Tools (aka the 'blue book') supports and informs the university's shared approach to critical thinking and contains practical resources for faculty who wish to explicitly integrate critical thinking into teaching and learning practices.

Our university's common approach is centered on the Paul-Elder framework, which consists of the Elements of Thought, Intellectual Standards and Intellectual Traits.

Many faculty approach critical thinking integration by using one or more of the Paul-Elder components to redesign or tweak existing assignments, to help students think through research projects, or to shape class discussions and give focused feedback to students.

Below we've collected some strategies and tips from UofL faculty who have adopted the *Miniature Guide* and its concepts within the context of their respective course and discipline in order to foster the critical thinking they want their students to practice and demonstrate.

For shaping and deepening class discussions

"We use these in class for all discussions. I introduce the booklets with an activity where the students make a statement about 'teaching' and then their group members 'challenge' their statement by asking questions from **page 10** in the *Miniature Guide*. They keep the *Guide* with them to use and refer to during discussions throughout the semester."

-Betty Doyle, Department of Early Childhood and Elementary Education

For helping students analyze texts

"For their first assessment in the CIS100 course, we give students a more current technology-related article (such as social networking or computer security) from a Web-based I.T. resource to review and then use the nine questions on **page 11** of the *Miniature Guide* to explore their thoughts. In a follow-up assessment about two weeks later, we ask them a variety of multiple choice, true/false, and even matching format questions centered around key terms on **page 10** of the same document. This approach is applied consistently across all sections of CIS100 as well as all sections of CIS150."

-Steve Kendra, Department of Computer Information Services

For fostering critical thinking in clinical settings

"In our clinical teaching, we try to emphasize the Elements of Thought through our questioning of our dental hygiene students regarding their patient. We do this so that the dental hygiene student can become comfortable synthesizing all of the assessments that were completed during the appointment and subsequently create an individualized treatment plan for our patients. In the didactic courses, students get practice using the Paul-Elder framework and the Elements through case studies in order to prepare them for the clinical portion of their education. As such, **page 6** in the *Guide* is very helpful for the students to achieve familiarity of these terms and serves as a guide for the instructors so that we can ask appropriate, open ended questions."

-Jennifer Rudy, Department of Oral Health and Rehabilitation

For helping students think through the focus and design of research papers and presentations

"We are using the *Guide* to develop students' analytical thinking skills, especially when it comes to the in-class presentations and research papers. How do you make a good argument? What are good intellectual skills, including gathering good evidence, being sensitive and accurate about other points of view, and stating a thesis clearly and precisely?"

-Ben Hufbauer, Department of Fine Arts

For helping students to reflect upon, and make meaning of, practicum and internship experiences

"In our BSW and foundation year MSW program we hit hard on teaching the Elements on **pages 3-6 and 12**, including assignments in which students are to write reflections on their experiences in practicum incorporating the Elements. They are also formally evaluated by their practicum supervisors and practicum faculty on their demonstration of utilization of the Elements in that experiential learning each semester."

-Martha Fuller, Kent School of Social Work

For helping students to read critically and to create and revise their own texts

"Students use the Elements **(page 3)** to read and analyze texts: what are the author's underlying assumptions in this article? What concepts does the author use in this text? Students can also use the Elements and the Standards **(pages 8-10)** to draft and revise papers and in peer review: How will my purpose shape my text? What additional information do I need? What is my point of view, and what other points of view can I identify? Do you think this analogy is fair? Can you make your thesis more precise? How is this example relevant?"

-Rose Mills, Department of English

For helping students understand the use of Intellectual Standards in evaluating student assignments

"In both PHUN-101 *Introduction to Public Health* and PHUN-110 *Tools for Learning and Public Health,* we use selected Intellectual Standards for evaluating most student assignments. How the Standards are interpreted and applied for assessment requires the student to learn what they mean in general and to practice their use. The presentation of the Standards on **pages 8-10** supports students in learning about the Standards while also helping them to improve performance and complete self-scoring as part of their assignments. Many of these assignments also use the Elements of Thought **(pages 3-6)** or adapted versions of the Template for Analyzing the Logic of an Article **(pages 11-12)** and the Template for Problem Solving **(page 17)** for the assignment's structure and the student's methodology."

-Pete Walton, School of Public Health and Information Sciences

For helping students identify and correct mistakes in their own thinking habits

"The Intellectual Traits **(pages 13-15)** suggest positive mental habits for learners of any topic. When I use these Traits in class to point out to students when they are not being fair-minded in discussions or conclusions, they begin to notice their own hidden biases, the weaknesses in their own thinking, and many of them will adopt habits that improve their learning in my class and, reportedly, in other areas of their lives."

-Brian Barnes, Department of Philosophy