This course explores the diverse nature and techniques of critical thinking. Views about observation and interpretation, reasoning and inference, and valuing and judging will all be considered, giving special attention to how we can help others to develop the skills and dispositions needed to do these things well. We will consider central concepts of critical thinking, their applications in a variety of domains, and ways to assess the effectiveness of their applications. Working with diverse material, from political and scientific events occurring in the world to issues and dilemmas that characterize everyday life, we will examine and practice kinds of thinking that promote reasonable, reflective action and belief. We will also consider several current issues in the field of critical thinking such as the role of gender in critical thinking, relationships between critical and creative thinking, domain-specific critical thinking, and best practices for applying thinking skills and dispositions.

We understand our thoughts better when we express them. Your contributions to learning experiences in class will be sought and you will be encouraged to gain useful insights from others as well. All of us, the instructor included, can learn from each other and grow in our abilities to challenge and modify ideas in constructive ways. Through extensive interactions with each other, in a climate of enjoyment, this class is designed for us all to continue to develop our abilities to use careful thinking and sound judgment.

Course Goals:

(1) To develop further the critical thinking skills and dispositions of the course participants.

(2) To help participants understand what critical thinking is and how to apply the skills and strategies of critical thinking in a wide variety of settings.

(3) To help participants develop the capability of helping others become better critical thinkers in a wide variety of settings.

Texts:  Shari Tishman, David N. Perkins, and Eileen Jay, The Thinking Classroom: Learning and Teaching in a Culture of Thinking (Boston: Allyn and Bacon)

Arthur L. Costa (ed.), Developing Minds: A Resource Book for Teaching Thinking, 3rd
Additional readings will be distributed through email.

Requirements:

(1) Doing the reading carefully in preparation for class.

(2) Taking part in class discussion and activities and making a class presentation. The presentation may take any of several forms, including leading the class discussion of an assigned reading or guiding an activity on a related topic. A proposal for the presentation is due by October 25. [20%]

(3) Doing the weekly writing [40%]. Some weeks there will be a specific assigned topic for a short paper (2-3 double-spaced, typewritten pages). Other weeks you may write informally on any topic of your choice related to the course. This may include reflections on the readings, reactions to the class discussions, thoughts about how you might go about relating the issues we are considering to your own teaching, careers, and lives, difficulties you are having, and so on. Each week I will collect the written work and respond to it. (On-line students should e-mail the written work by the day of the class.) The writing assignment for December 6 will be the course metacognitive assignment (a Critical Thinking Manifesto of about 3-4 typewritten pages), suitable for inclusion in your Reflective Practice and Metacognitive Portfolio.

(4) Writing an 8-10 page (double-spaced, typewritten) final paper, due December 20 [40%]. A 2-page proposal for this is due by November 29. The topic of your paper may also be the basis for your presentation, but it need not be. The paper will allow students to pursue their individual interests connected to the themes of the course. Teachers, for example, may wish to consider applications to their own teaching. Other students may similarly write on topics connected to their personal or professional interests.

Class Schedule and List of Readings


2) Sept. 20 Educational reform and the CCT Program. Critical thinking and intelligence.

3) Sept. 27 Who is a critical thinker? What do critical thinkers do?


6) Oct. 18 Examples of critical thinking skills: assessing source credibility and observation.
Perceptual filters; point of view; frame of reference; world view. Thinking and writing. Metacognition as mental management (awareness, evaluation, and planning). Self-assessment.


Proposal for Presentation Due


8) Nov. 1 Methodological believing as part of critical thinking. Listening. Teacher behaviors. The teacher as designer.

9) Nov. 8  Critical thinking skills: causal reasoning.  Pedagogical constructivism.

Readings:  Owen Gingerich, “The Galileo Affair”;
David Perkins, “The Social Side of Thinking” [DM, pp. 158-163];
David Perkins, “Thinking for Understanding” [DM, pp. 446-450];


Readings:  Shari Tishman et al., pp. 125-154 ("Higher Order Knowledge" and "Higher Order Knowledge: Pictures of Practice");
Robert J. Sternberg, “Teaching Problem Solving as a Way of Life” [DM, pp. 451-454];
John Barrell, “Designing the Invitational Environment” [DM, pp. 106-110];

Nov. 22  Thanksgiving


Proposal for Final Paper Due

Readings:  Robert J. Swartz, “In the Grips of Emotion” [DM, pp. 164-169];
Richard Paul, “Dialogical thinking: Critical Thought Essential to the Acquisition of Rational Knowledge and Passions”;
Barry K. Beyer, “What Philosophy Offers to the Teaching of Thinking” [DM, pp. 87-91];


Manifesto Due


December 20 Final Paper Due

The University of Massachusetts Boston is committed to providing reasonable academic accommodations for all students with disabilities. This syllabus is available in alternate format upon request. If you have a disability and feel you will need accommodations in this course, please contact the Ross Center for Disability Services, Campus Center, Upper Level, Room 211 at 617.287.7430. "http://www.umb.edu/academics/vpass/disability/" http://www.umb.edu/academics/vpass/disability/ After registration with the Ross Center, a student should present and discuss the accommodations with the professor. Although a student can request accommodations at any time, we recommend that students inform the professor of the need for accommodations by the end of the Drop/Add period to ensure that accommodations are available for the entirety of the course.

Code of Conduct and Academic Integrity:
It is the expressed policy of the University that every aspect of academic life—not only formal coursework situations, but all relationships and interactions connected to the educational process—shall be conducted in an absolutely and uncompromisingly honest manner. The University presupposes that any submission of work for academic credit is the student’s own and is in compliance with University policies, including its policies on appropriate citation and plagiarism. These policies are spelled out in the Code of Student Conduct. Students are required to adhere to the Code of Student Conduct, including requirements for academic honesty, as delineated in the University of Massachusetts Boston Graduate Catalogue and relevant program student handbook(s) http://www.umb.edu/life_on_campus/policies/code.