

Critical thinking

State: Critical Thinking is the act of objectively evaluation information in order to find solutions to complex problems.

Elaborate: The way we think is important to how we live and function. We can use the elements of thought to think critically by evaluating perspectives, potential biases, assumptions, evidence and implications in order to solve the issue at hand.

Exemplify: There is an overwhelming amount of information that is presented to us on a daily basis, whether it's memes, music, news broadcasts, articles or peer reviewed texts. Misinformation is one of the biggest dangers to us in the digital age. An article by Arnold (2018) in Forbes explains how "fake news" is used to mislead or deflect viewers and how simple steps like checking sources can allow you to think critically and make a sound decision about whether you choose to accept this information.

Source: <https://www.forbes.com/sites/andrewarnold/2018/02/27/how-to-maintain-critical-thinking-in-the-modern-world-of-new-media/?sh=a3ed0dc50e5f>

Critical thinking (cont)

Illustrate: This artwork is titled "Critical Thinking", it was made by Artist Pavlov Bellwether also known as Jack Smith in 2021. The artist note reads "Artists are meant to question everything - often taking the road less travelled. Questions need to be asked." The artist notes the importance of critical thinking as an artist, as someone who has the potential to reach and move thousands through their work. In a sense, art is like thought. Everyone thinks differently, everyone has their own definition of art as well as different ways of producing art. This painting can be interpreted many different ways by many different people. Regardless, truly admiring art requires critical thinking to really evaluate the visual information that is presented to you.

Source: <https://www.saatchiart.com/art/Photography-Critical-Thinking-Bribery-Monoprint/672079/8249044/view>

"Critical Thinking" - Jack Smith (2021)



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Point of View

State: Point of View is how we see the world.

Elaborate: Every person has a slightly different view of the world. Our views may be shaped by many factors such as gender identity, racial identity, age, and past experiences. For example, a white female from a middle class family living in Connecticut may have different views on defunding the police than a black male from a middle class family living in South Carolina. Considering different point of views allows us to understand different perspectives and thought processes.

Exemplify: One of the best examples of considering points of view is perspective-taking. Perspective-taking is the act of understanding the perspectives of others. It is defined as "The ability to understand how a situation appears to another person and how that person is reacting cognitively and emotionally to the situation." (Gelhlbach, 2004). An article by AMP Creative (2020) outlines the many benefits of practicing perspective-taking, as a way to open new doors to learning and constructive engagement when faced with a scenario where two people have opposing viewpoints due to their difference in experience and thinking.

Source: <https://ampcreative.com/what-is-perspective-taking/>

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Point of View (cont)

Illustrate: When I think of point of view I think of the common saying "Step into the other person's shoes". This saying is used to illustrate how considering point of views works. Stepping into someone's shoes allows you to be put in the same situation as them, making you think about how you would think, what you would feel, or how you would react in that situation. Another example of point of view would be to imagine that you had the ability to watch someone's life on a screen like a movie. Sometimes we judge people without considering their point of view or what in their life could've caused them to think or act a certain way. This analogy also allows us to reflect on why we have certain viewpoints ourselves.

Civic Engagement

State: Civic engagement is participating in enacting change in your community through the involvement with social issues.

Elaborate: Civic engagement is how involved you are in attempting to make your community better for all. Civic engagement is gaged by how aware you are of the problems affecting your community and how you use your role or voice to enact change. This can be something as simple as organizing a school supply drive in an impoverished neighborhood, donating to a local charity, attending town hall meetings, or educating yourself and others on how lack of education is a key contributing factor to poverty.

Civic Engagement (cont)

Exemplify: An example of civic engagement is Houston's Coalition for the homeless and their efforts to remove stigma and decriminalize homelessness and mental illness by providing educational resources about the relationship between mental illness and homelessness. The coalition also places unhoused persons directly in homes/apartments without the thousands of hoops to jump through such as getting clean, finding a job first, and having a down payment (the number one reasons housing programs fail). Practicing civic engagement can be visiting the coalition's website and getting educated or visiting one of their volunteer opportunities.

Source: <https://www.nytimes.com/2022/06/14/headway/houston-homeless-people.html>

Illustrate: Civic engagement reminds me of when you were younger and your parent or teacher told you to pick up that trash or clean up that table even if you weren't the one who made the mess. Sometimes the social issues in our communities are not directly affecting us or are not caused by us but helping eradicate the struggle for those around us makes our community a better place just like picking up trash even if it's not ours makes our air cleaner, our life better, and our space much more desirable and safe to live in.

Implications

State: Implications are the potential consequences of our actions.

Implications (cont)

Elaborate: Considering implications during the decision making process allows us consider the potential consequences of our choices so we can make better informed decisions. This also prevents us from making mistakes or decisions that we might regret later on. As critical thinkers, when we are faced with complex problems and we then find the solutions to these problems, it is important to consider what will happen when we act on these solutions. Who will be affected? are there any unexpected outcomes? These are important questions to ask during the decision making process.

Exemplify: In "what the eyes don't see", Dr. Mona often struggles with her past decision to tell the parents of her patients that the water in Flint was safe to use and drink. Of course, this was before she was aware of the water crisis and that the water was in fact not safe. There's no way she could have known but as soon as she was aware of the suspicions she did her research. Very extensive research on the changing of the water supply, corrosion, and past water crisis. She then considered the implications of her decision to tell them that the water was fine. When she decided that she had enough information to confidently make a decision on what to do, she was faced with another issue. She hadn't considered what telling the patients would mean, many of them could not afford to switch to water bottles or didn't have transportation or the means to simply get water from somewhere else.

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Implications (cont)

Illustrate: When thinking of implications Newton's third law comes to mind. His third law states that for every action in nature there is an equal and opposite reaction. Metaphorically speaking all of our decisions have a sort of cause and effect relationship with something else. Whether it be that our words or actions hurt someone's feelings or we decide to text while driving and get in a wreck with another driver. Considering implications can strengthen relations with others and help us make better informed decisions.

Assumptions

State: Assumptions are thoughts or opinions that affect our decision making and cause us to make preconceived notions.

Elaborate: Assumptions and implicit bias go hand in hand. These are thoughts or statements that are said with little to no thinking about the reason they exist or whether they are true or not. We all have biases and sometimes make assumptions that are unfair. Stereotypes and misinformation often conjure assumptions because proof is not always readily available to us in the decision making process. By asking questions like what information is being left out or what assumptions have led me to this conclusion, we can identify schemas that cloud our judgement.

Assumptions (cont)

Exemplify: It is impossible for us to completely stop making assumptions, it's human nature, it's one of the many way our brain makes connections. Sometimes making assumptions (especially too often) can halt progressive ideas and actions for change. For example, in the critical reading text "Learning past the hate" (pg. 106), the author explains how mass media was used to paint the picture of white male authors works no longer being taught in schools to instill public outrage. This misinformation comes from the assumption that wanting diversity and inclusion in certain spaces means that there is a want to replace the people who currently occupy this space. Which is just not the case, assumptions like these are made by jumping to conclusions and simply not listening to and understanding the call for change.

Illustrate: This artwork by Andrew Fairclough is the perfect illustration of assumptions. The best way to challenge unfair assumptions that we may make on a daily basis is look within ourselves and reflect on biases or anything that could be blocking us from thinking critically. Isaac Asimov says "Your assumptions are your windows on the world. Scrub them off every once in a while, or the light won't come in". Assumptions hinder our intellectual potential, when we close our minds off to challenges and critical thinking, we close our minds to learning and exploring the world.

Artist's instagram @Kindred_studio

Assumptions Artwork by Andrew Fairclough



Clarity

State: Clarity is being able to effectively articulate thoughts and ideas.

Elaborate: Clarity allows us to evaluate information by determining if the information is sound. Clarity also allows us to clearly identify the problem at hand in order to come up with the best solution. Being able to clearly articulate is important as critical thinkers because it allows us to take one idea and adapt it for more many audiences to understand. Implementing clarity also ensures the quality of our thinking by making us check for errors and ways we could make our thinking more clear and concrete.

Exemplify: An article from psyche.co written by Tom Ghatfield illuminates the benefits of clarity and clear thinking. Through clarity we can not only identify what we really think and mean but also find ways to effectively share what we think with other people. The article talks about the importance of taking a pause, setting out the essentials for the line of thought, and opening a dialogue in clear thinking. All of these tips were beneficial to him as a tech philosopher and critical thinker.

Source: <https://psyche.co/guides/how-to-think-clearly-to-improve-understanding-and-communication>

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Clarity (cont)

Illustrate: To illustrate clarity, imagine being tasked with explaining your thoughts at five different levels: child, teen, college student, graduate student, and expert. To do this takes clarity, even if you are not an expert at what you are thinking or discussing, using clarity will allow you to lay out your thinking by evaluating why you think this way, and what information/evidence is there to support your thinking. In this scenario, clarity will also serve as a roadmap of how to present your thinking to different audiences.

Evaluating Information

State: Evaluating Information is identifying different types of authority and misinformation that is used to mislead.

Elaborate: One of the dangers of information overload is cognitive dissonance, where we are constantly being presented with information that challenges our worldview and sometimes we tend to reject that information. On the other hand, information that confirms or is aligned with our world view is sometimes easily accepted without considering the validity of that information. Evaluating information allows us to carefully examine authority and where our information comes from. For example, fact checking can challenge the validity of the information and potential biases.

Evaluating Information (cont)

Exemplify: If you ask people in academia “where’s the best place to get factual information?” the answers will vary but among those answers will be scholarly peer reviewed journals. Due to the peer revision process a lot of the claims made in scholarly texts are fact checked and it’s impossible for anything to be published without proper references to track the source of information. Hegewisch and Hartmann’s Occupational Segregation (2014) paper is a good example of evaluating information because it reads like a literature review as the authors review the existing conversation about occupational segregation, identify flawed arguments, and errors in existing research before recommending their solutions. To an extent, when we are presented with information we should all do literature reviews to determine; who is supplying this information, what’s their motive, what type of authority is present, and what are some potential biases from this source. Doing so will allow us to get a full picture before we decide to reject or accept this information.

Illustrate: This art work by Leon Zernitsky titled “Global market and technology” (2016), is a good illustration of evaluating information as the woman in the artwork is navigating her way around the loads of information around her.

Artwork: <https://fineartamerica.com/featured/global-market-and-technology-leon-zernitsky.html>

“Global market and technology” - Zernitsky



Voice

State: Voice is communicating something of importance or showing advocacy in a way that can be heard.

Elaborate: Voice is the ability to be heard by others. As critical thinkers, voice is needed to find solutions to problems such as marginalization. Through voice we can determine where power is limited and who has a stronger voice in society. There are many ways to use your voice but the most effective use of voice has considered methods of delivery and accessibility with the goal of making yourself persuasive and heard.

Exemplify: On September 16, a 22-year-old woman named Mahsa Amini was arrested in Iran by the morality police in Tehran for wearing her hijab “incorrectly”. While in police custody Mahsa died under mysterious circumstances, it is speculated that she was killed by police. According to the authorities Mahsa suffered a heart attack while at the detention center but witnesses have stated that Mahsa was beaten by police on the way to the detention center. Since Mahsa’s death Iranians all over the country have begun to protest. “Death to the oppressor, be it the Shah or the Supreme Leader!” What’s being protested isn’t Islamic practice but the oppressive regime imposed by the Iranian government. Protests are one of the most common uses of voice, and sometimes the most effective. This is an example of thousands of people communicating or advocating for something or importance to them.

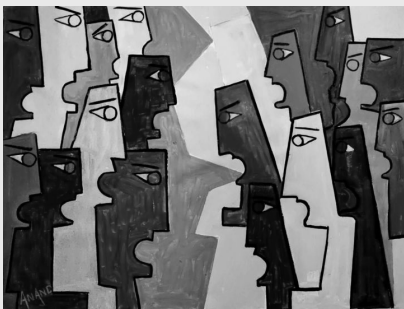
Source: <https://time.com/6216513/mahsa-amini-iran-protests-police/>

Voice (cont)

Illustrate: This artwork titled “Human voice” by Anandswaroop Manchiraju illustrates how different voices can come together in unison to create a single voice. The artist’s note: “The tongue can paint what your eyes cannot see, human voices have the power to set the emotional tone of an individual and the society as a whole. It’s important to voice your thoughts, but let us voice positivity. Let us think before we talk and remember that our voice has the power to make someone or break someone”. As Americans, we are privileged to have the ability to speak freely without fear of prosecution or harm but speech is never really free. Our voice is often times not free of consequences, sometimes protesting leads to imprisonment or sometimes the way we use our voice is harmful to others. It’s important to think of the consequences of how we use our voice before we use it.

Artwork: <https://www.artmajeur.com/en/anandmanchiraju/artworks/14052863/human-voice>

“Human voice” by Anandswaroop Manchiraju



Marginality

State: Marginality is the reduced ability to have your voice heard.

Marginality (cont)

Elaborate: Considering marginality allows us to assess where power is limited and who has a bigger voice in society. Acknowledging that marginality exists allows us to solve complex problems caused by disenfranchisement like poverty, lack of access to healthcare, and education. Addressing causes of marginality and assisting marginalized groups help society progress physically, economically, mentally, and intellectually.

Exemplify: The Introduction from Brewis and Wutich’s “Lazy, Crazy, and Disgusting: Stigma and the Undoing of Global Health” discusses why stigmatization occurs and how it all stems from the human fear of contagion and disease along with our innate need to distance ourselves from things that are deemed disgusting and unwanted. “Stigma is used to control and exploit communities — used as a tool to block access to quality healthcare and the basic resources like food and water that are needed to support health” (Brewis and Wutich pg. 11). In this example, stigma is used to purposely keep marginalized communities like those living in poverty disenfranchised. As critical thinkers, we can combat marginality by eliminating stigmas.

Illustrate: Marginality can be illustrated with the analogy of keeping people in boxes on shelves. The shelves rank from bottom to top shelf. Marginalized groups are kept in a box and prevented from moving up the shelves. This means that no matter how hard the people in the box work or how determined they are to change their circumstance, there will still be forces preventing them from escaping the box or ascending to another shelf.

Citizenship

State: Citizenship is the participation and engagement in a community, culture, or society.

Elaborate: Citizenship isn’t just about the literal sense of belonging to a country or territory. Citizenship is more about the rights and responsibilities that are given to you as a member of society. For example, as a citizen we are provided with public transportation, welfare, and public health policy to make our lives easier but, as citizens we also have the responsibility to actively participate in the democratic process by voting, pay taxes, or do our part in the courts by attending jury duty. Citizenship isn’t just about what you can contribute but also about what you represent, whether that be a specific community or social group within society.

Exemplify: Citizenship allows us to carefully and sympathetically consider the different viewpoints and experiences of groups within a society. For example, American Samoa became an unincorporated and unorganized territory of the United States in 1900. Recently, the U.S supreme court rejected an appeal to take the case of *Fitisemanu v. U.S.* concerning American Samoan citizenship rights. In this case three American Samoans living in Utah requested that the court declare American Samoans U.S citizens. The plaintiffs argued that a law that makes American Samoans “nationals but not citizens for the United States at birth” is unconstitutional.

Illustrate: The best way to illustrate citizenship is to show the diversity of people coming together to exercise the rights and responsibilities provided with being a participant in society. This artwork by Claire Williams titled “Colours of the NHS” does that perfectly.

Citizenship (cont)

Artwork: <https://cardiffandvale.art/2021/10/20/artwork-supporting-equality-diversity-and-inclusion-for-all/>

Claire Williams – "Colours of the NHS"



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