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EMP 758: Critical Thinking (3 Credits)

Overview of Course:

Critical thinking is about using and developing our cognitive skills to their deepest levels. Critical thinking is about questioning: not only information but our whole intellectual environment as well as our way of approaching and analyzing issues. Because critical thinking goes beyond the simple and oftentimes mechanical logical and rational processes, it provides a wider scope to our perception of reality.

In this course we refer to the term critical thinking as a mere label describing how we can develop our intellect and cognitive skills so that we are able to break through our visible and invisible walls of assumptions, opinions, and all the other filters and boundaries that we may or may not be aware of that prevent us from creating a more objective and clear view of reality.

This course will introduce the concept of critical thinking with its various elements and how to apply them to one's personal and professional lives. The course will establish a foundation of different types of thinking processes to include, for example, the difference between the Socratic method of teaching and Sophism, and address intellectual pitfalls such as logical fallacies, inferences, and assumptions. Students will stretch their minds by learning to look at the *unthinkable* and identify some events and social behaviors today that were once thought to be impossible, and to be aware of other *unthinkable*, or impossible, events that might manifest in the future.

The objective of the course is for the student to initially explore his/her present process of thinking, and by learning the different components of critical thinking, to develop his/her own style of critical thinking. Students will be given weekly or bi-weekly written exercises based on reflection so that they can implement and apply their new knowledge to their professional and/or personal lives.

Course Topics:

The topics below represent the general outline of the course. Depending upon the students' background, knowledge, and interests, certain topics may be emphasized, replaced or added.

What is thinking, introduction to the concept of critical thinking, and of the intellect

Three basic elements of the mind: create meaning; feeling, and desire; and what fuels them

The role of the intellect and of the emotions

Elements of thought process: purpose, issues, assumptions, information, concepts, inferences, implications, conclusions

Clarity of thought: precision, relevance, superficial approaches, breadth, significance

Points of view, frame of reference

Guidelines for intellectual standard

Socratic thinking, Sophism

The importance of questioning: depth, when and how to question

Concepts of free will, determinisms, truth, moral responsibility

Elements of reasoning, logic, rationality

The role of intuition

Sharpening reading, writing, and learning skills – concept of substantive writing

Intellectual humility and courage versus intellectual arrogance

Recognizing & understanding egocentricity, sociocentrism

Recognizing how and why different cultures think differently

The unthinkable – stretching the mind and pushing the intellect beyond barriers and boundaries, looking at issues that were once thought impossible

Paul & Elder's model of six stages of critical thinking: from Unreflective Thinker to Master Thinker.

Moral responsibility and ethics

Learning Objectives:

This course is a transformational process whereby students will learn the elements of thinking and the concept of critical thinking. They will explore and dissect their own thinking process and discover how they can develop objectivity and clarity of thought while broadening their scope of perceptions. Students will discover their intellectual potential and learn how to continuously develop it by using the principles of critical thinking. They will also learn how to integrate intuitive insights into the decision-making process.

Once students embark on this transformational process, they will realize how they are in charge of their intellect and recognize the moral responsibilities that are intrinsically linked to the implications of thinking. Students will learn how to sharpen their intellectual senses so that they are aware of how they can unconsciously absorb others' ideas and opinions without questioning. They will learn how to either get out of a robotic type of thinking process or how to avoid falling into it.

By learning how to develop their personal critical thinking process students will also build self-confidence in their intellectual and communications skills. They will learn to develop their own critical thinking process that best responds to their professional and personal lives.

They will stretch their minds beyond boundaries by learning to look at the *unthinkable* through events or concepts that were once deemed impossible.

Learning to develop our intellect to a higher level is a crucial quality for leadership in the 21st Century. By acquiring a grounded knowledge base and learning how to intelligently articulate their thoughts, students will establish credibility and enhance their inspirational leadership skills.

Audience:

Open to all students in the distance programs.

Length of Course:

Length of this Energy Medicine course is five (5) months or one (1) semester.

COURSE DESCRIPTION

Critical thinking is about using and developing our cognitive skills to their deepest levels. Critical thinking is about questioning: not only information but our whole intellectual environment as well as our way of approaching and analyzing issues. Because critical thinking goes beyond the simple and oftentimes mechanical logical and rational processes, it provides a wider and scope to our perception of reality.

In this course we refer to the term critical thinking as a mere label describing how we can develop our intellect and cognitive skills so that we are able to break through our visible and invisible walls of assumptions, opinions, and all the other filters and boundaries that we may or may not be aware of that prevent us from creating a more objective and clear view of reality.

This course will introduce the concept of critical thinking with its various elements and how to apply them to one's personal and professional lives. The course will establish a foundation of different types of thinking processes to include, for example, the difference between the Socratic method of teaching and Sophism, and address intellectual pitfalls such as logical fallacies, inferences, and assumptions. Students will stretch their minds by learning to look at the *unthinkable* and identify some events and social behaviors today that were once thought to be impossible, and to be aware of other *unthinkable*, or impossible, events that might manifest in the future.

The objective of the course is for the student to initially explore his/her present process of thinking, and by learning the different components of critical thinking, to develop his/her own style of critical thinking. Students will be given weekly or bi-weekly written exercises based on reflection so that they can implement and apply their new knowledge to their professional and/or personal lives.

NEED STATEMENT

As we make our way into the 21st Century, we encounter issues and events that were, in some cases, unthinkable a mere 20 years ago. How do we navigate in environments that are either fracturing or melding, and in continuous flux? The old paradigms used for forecasting are mostly defunct and repackaging them will no longer work. As our reference points and boundaries dissolve and new ones emerge, we need to be able to meet these challenges with some new sets of thinking skills so that we do not repeat historical mistakes. This 21st Century is giving us an opportunity to make a shift into a more developed consciousness. But how do we get there? How can we develop our thinking skills to another level? How do we discover what it is we do not know? How can we better anticipate the future?

Today's leaders are faced with events and socio/economic, and cultural concepts that were once deemed impossible. Leaders need to be able to stretch their minds and have the necessary tools to look at the *unthinkable* in order to anticipate future possibilities.

Refusing to see reality as it is and as it is developing has been a continuous weakness in our historical evolution. What signals, concepts, situations, are we ignoring because they are too near the border of the *unthinkable*? Which filters are we unconsciously using to rationalize a situation, so that it fits into our comfort zone? How do we engage in constructive discourse with other cultures that do not share our values and ethics? How can we anticipate future challenges that might even go beyond our perception of possible.

There remains another issue that needs to be addressed. In today's society where we spend much of our time interacting with fast-paced technology, and multi-tasking through interruptions, we can become hypnotized and establish a response mode that is purely reactive that creates a robotic thinking process. Gone is the reflection and questioning that make for more intelligent thinking and creates wisdom.

These are some of the intellectual issues that leaders of this 21st Century face. In these challenging times the question is not how to change our environment to fit our thinking mode, but rather how quickly can we transform our thinking process and cognitive functions to a higher level in order to take charge of our evolution, reinstate the human factor that is being eroded, and lead our society to a level of higher consciousness?

FACULTY-STUDENT COMMUNICATION

- Telephone Contacts

Students should arrange all telephone communications with the instructor by email beforehand. An initial phone contact to clarify course objectives and develop a schedule should be made prior to beginning the course. This contact should be scheduled within the first few weeks of commencement of the semester. After this, periodic telephone communication can be arranged with instructor. All telephone calls will be at student's expense.

- Communications

It is requested that students stay in weekly or every other week correspondence with the instructor using email. The student should also set up periodic telephone conversations, at their expense, to discuss problems, concerns, or determine the direction of their course work. Students are always encouraged to contact the instructor by email, fax, or telephone whenever a major concern may arise. It should be understood that as mature students, it is the responsibility of the students to stay in contact with their instructors. Students should check email frequently for professor and EMU messages.

Students will normally send communications via email and submit papers as MSWORD format files attached to email messages. Synchronous Internet sessions may be used for chat sessions using Yahoo Messenger Chat or the instructor may be able to set up one-on-one discussions with the student using Skype. Check with your instructor on the type of communications she uses.

- Internet Threaded Discussion: There is also an on-going Internet threaded discussion among the students and faculty for the entire semester which creates a larger feedback mechanism of communication. It may be accessed anytime. The thread page is located at: http://groups.yahoo.com/group/Energy_Medicine

All lessons, coursework and papers must be copied to lessons@energymedicineuniversity.org from both the student and professor.

COURSE DELIVERY STYLE

Distance Education - Coursework is completed at a location determined by the student utilizing a computer that has the ability to play audio and video clips, with Microsoft Office Word, Excel, PowerPoint, Adobe Reader, along with a current web browser, internet connection and email address. Contact and communication with distance students is typically conducted by telephone, Internet, Skype, text chat, and email. Students are also encouraged to contact the University by facsimiles, and postal mail, and by personal visit to the University.

For this course, the style is primarily:

- 1) Reading Assignments
- 2) Written Assignments
- 3) Weekly Notes
- 4) Online & conference call discussions

Because of the nature of this course which is about developing one's thought process, the course grade will be based upon the quality of each written assignment and participation

in discussions. Each assignment represents a stage of learning and development of the student's critical thinking. The grading of assignments will be based on the amount of reflection and accuracy of response to the readings and the assignment itself. Although a small percentage of the grade is allocated to the readings, the quality of the written assignments will reflect to what depth the student has done the readings

COURSE ASSIGNMENTS

Reading Assignments are from the Textbook:
Critical Thinking: Learn the tools the best thinkers use.

Depending upon the knowledge, background, and interest of students, some of these assignments might change and extra reading articles will be added and provided.

Each assignment requires research.

Assignment #1

Read the Introduction Chapter (iii – xxiii)

Journal: Read the notes about how to keep a journal of your critical thinking transformation and start writing

Assignment #2

Read Chapter 1: How the mind can discover itself
Hand-in Exercise 1.2 page 9

Assignment #3

Read Chapter 2: Discover the parts of thinking
Do exercises 2.2 – 2.9

Write 2 page paper on what you learned in doing the exercises
Hand-in exercises 2.10, and 1.11

Assignment #4

Read Chapter 3: Discover universal standards for thinking

Look at Exhibit 3.1 on page 54. Reflect on which areas you think are your strengths and which areas you might want to work on. Write a two-page commentary.

Look at Exhibits 3.3 through 3.10. Reflect on each and write a three-page commentary on the areas you feel you need to improve. Give examples of situations and how you could improve your thinking in these cases.

Assignment #5

Read Chapter 4: Redefining grades as levels of thinking and learning
The role of Intuition in critical thinking – reading material (articles) will be provided

Hand-in your Journal with a two page critique of your progress

Assignment #6

Read Chapter 5: Learn to ask the questions best thinkers ask

Assignment #7

Read Chapter 6: Discover how the best thinkers learn

Look at the different exhibits 6.2 – 6.7. Think of a profession or area of interest and create a wheel of logic like these exhibits

Assignment #8

Read Chapter 7 pages 133 - 169: The best thinkers read closely and write substantively

An article will be given to you to read using the eight elements of thought on page 154. Address the eight points and comment if and how these questions were helpful.

Assignment #9

Read Chapter 7 pages 170 – 187

Do exercise 2 on page 178 but choose your own topic or concept

Read the three articles: Preparing for Evil, Coping with a Crisis Century, and Outlook 2011. Write a three-page commentary. Start thinking about the concept of *unthinkable* and prepare for discussions on this topic.

Assignment #10

Read Chapter 8: Become a fair-minded thinker

Write up Exercise 8.13 on page 211: a commitment to self-transformation
Hand-in your Journal

Assignment #11

Read Chapter 9: Deal with your irrational mind

Write-up Exercises:

9.12 on page 254: Identifying sociocentric bias in the news

9.13 on page 255: Identifying sociocentric thinking in the news

Assignment #12

Read Chapter 10: The stages of critical thinking development

Write a five page assessment of which stage of critical thinking you were when you started the course and at what stage you feel you are today. Which areas do you feel you need to improve and how do you propose to do so?

COURSE EVALUATION

Because of the nature of this course: developing one's thought process; the course grade will be based upon the quality of each written assignment. Each assignment represents a stage of learning and development of the student's critical thinking. The grading of assignments will be based on the amount of reflection and accuracy of response to the assignment itself. Although a small percentage of the grade is allocated to the readings, the quality of the written assignments will reflect whether or not the student has done the readings.

COURSE GRADING DETERMINANTS

Grades are based on the following elements of a student's participation and accomplishment. In determining a grade for this course, the following formula will be used:

Reading required texts and on-line readings – 10%
Threaded Discussion Postings – 10%
Course assignments– 80%

Using this technique, there will be 100 points assigned to the course. Final semester grades will be calculated as follows:

92-100 points = A range
86-91 points = B range
80-85 points = C range
70-80 points = D range
Under 70 points = F

COURSE COMPLETION TIMETABLE

Course to be completed within one five-month semester.

- Week 1
Assignment #1
- Week 2
Assignment #2
- Week 3
Assignment #3
- Week 5
Assignment #4

- Week 6
Assignment #5
- Week 7
Assignment #6
- Week 9
Assignment #7
- Week 11
Assignment #8
- Week 13
Assignment #9
- Week 15
Assignment #10
- Week 17
Assignment #11
- Week 19
Assignment #12
- Week 20
Hand in Assignment #12

SPECIAL NOTES AND INSTRUCTIONS

All coursework must be completed in a timely fashion. Students are encouraged to phone or email the instructor whenever they need advice, comments, or instruction.

TEXTS

Paul, R., Elder, L. (2006). *Critical Thinking: Learn the Tools the Best Thinkers Use* (Concise Edition). Upper Saddle River, NJ: Person Prentice Hall.

ARTICLES TO BE PROVIDED

Editors, (2010). Outlook 2011: Recent forecasts from World Future Society for the Decade Ahead. *Futurist* www.wfs.org

Mitroff, I., Alpasian, M. (2003). Coping with a crisis century. *USA Today*, March, 18-19.

Mitroff, I., Alpaslan, (2003). Preparing for Evil. *Harvard Business Review, Toolkit*, March, 109 – 115.

SUGGESTED READINGS

Gazzaniga, M. (1998). *The Mind's Past*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.

Houser, No. (2009). Greek philosophy and the crisis of perception: Deconstructing the tyranny of institutionalized thinking. *Journal of Philosophy and History of Education*, 59.

Ikuenobe, P. (2001). Questioning as an Epistemic Process of Critical Thinking. *Educational Philosophy and Theory*, 33(3&4).

Sato, M. (2007). Chinese and Western Historical Thinking: The archetype of history in the Confucian Ecumene. *History and Theory*, 46 (May), 218-232.

Sawai, Y. (2009). The Structure of Reality in Izutsu's Oriental Philosophy. *Intellectual Discourse*, 17(2), 129-145.

Surel, D. (2010). *Intuition and Decision-Making: A new way of thinking*. Saarbrücken, Deutschland: LAP Lambert Academic Publishing.