Critical Thinking

The Student Learning Advisory Service

Dr. Gina May
Key terms

- Proposition
- Argument
- Line of reasoning
- Assertions
- Premises
- False premises
What is critical thinking?

- Constructive scepticism

- Detachment

- Stages – consider:
  - Prior assumptions, contextual information and premises
  - Development
  - Evidence
  - Conclusion
Why use critical thinking?

- Ability to explain and illustrate
- Develop an informed opinion
- Awareness of persuasion techniques
- Identify hidden assumptions
Identify the line of reasoning

Consider:

- How does the author set out his/her position?
  Paragraphs:
  central point
  exploration
  evidence
  transition
Critically evaluate line of reasoning

Consider:

- Is it relevant?
- Sufficient propositions/reasons
- Is there cohesion?
- Logical Progression?
- False premises
- Flawed reasoning
- Drawing ‘general conclusions’
- Inappropriate comparisons
Look beneath the surface

Does the text:

- Make implicit judgements?
- Provide all the necessary information?
- Fail to acknowledge alternative interpretations?

Is the text:

- Peer reviewed?
Evaluate the evidence

Date
Source
Bias
Question statistics
Language
Percentages
Sample size
Conditions of data research
Identify conclusions

Look for:

- Final conclusions
- Sub-conclusions
- Signpost statements
- Trigger words
Finally ....

- Does the evidence support the conclusions?
- Does conclusion rest on a false conclusion?
- Is the conclusion sound?