

The Teaching of Psychology Advanced Seminar
Teaching for Critical Thinking (CT)
COURSE SYLLABUS
Summer 2008

Professor: William Buskist
212 Thach Hall; 844-8461
buskiwf@auburn.edu

Office Hours: Anytime you need to see me that is convenient to both of us.

Course Objective: To develop a solid conceptual grasp of the basic elements of critical thinking, enhance your own critical thinking skills, and assemble useful critical thinking exercises to use in your own teaching.

Texts: Fisher, A. (2001.). *Critical thinking: An introduction*. New York: Cambridge University Press.

This book is a well-written and solid introduction to critical thinking regardless of one's discipline. We will use this book as a backdrop for the course. I'd like to see you refer to it when you are giving your CT presentations (see below) in terms of which aspects of CT your presentation addresses.

Stanovich, K. E. (2007). *How to think straight about psychology* (8th ed.). Boston: Allyn and Bacon.

This highly acclaimed and popular book has become standard reading for many teachers of introductory psychology. It contains topics of central interest to teaching basic psychological principles well. This book will serve as the main reading for our seminar.

Class Format: This class will be conducted as a true seminar with everyone contributing to class discussion. We will take turns leading discussions by having pairs or triads of you co-lead discussions over Stanovich's book—1-2 chapters for each presentation. There will be NO tests, quizzes, or papers in this course. The primary basis for evaluating your progress in the class will be the quality of your contributions to class discussion (as both presenters and participants) and the quality of your work as represented in a "critical thinking portfolio" (see below). The presentation schedule will be determined on the first day of class.

Portfolio: I would like each of you to develop a small portfolio of **ORIGINAL** critical thinking exercises for your own use in any classes you might be

teaching in the future. The portfolio will consist of a minimum of three but no more than five such exercises. Use the following format for developing each exercise:

Name of Exercise and Your Name

Purpose of Exercise

Materials Needed for Exercise

Detailed Step-by-Step Instructions for Conducting the Exercise

Detailed Interpretation of Meaning of the Exercise

Brief Explanation How the Exercise Taps Critical Thinking Skills

Any References You Used for Developing the Exercise (APA format)

Assemble in a small, clear binder.

Try to keep each description to three or fewer single-spaced pages, including references. (Use double space between outline subtopics.)

Portfolios are due to me at the beginning of our last seminar meeting. Also, by the last day, each of you is to send the contents of your portfolio via e-mail to all the other students in the class (cc me, please).

These exercises will form the basis for your class presentations during the second half of each class period.

Presentation Sched: To be determined on the first day of class and distributed following the first seminar meeting.

Academic Honesty: Students who do not comply with Auburn University’s academic regulations (i.e., those concerning cheating and plagiarism) will be dealt with in the manner outlined in the *Tiger Cub*.

Accommodations: Please immediately notify me if you are a student with a University-recognized disability. I will see to it that any special arrangements you may need are made as soon as possible.

Grading: I assume that each of you will perform at the “A” level and thus, there is no need for grades. However, in the case that one or some of you perform at a level less than this expectation, I will discuss the matter with the student(s) involved.

Class Schedule:

The first part of each class period will be spent discussing the reading material. The second part of class will be for presentations/demonstrations of the critical thinking exercises.

Because many of us will be at APS/ABA the first week of class, it is going to be impossible to meet the first week of class. What I would like to do is to try to have all of us meet (at least electronically) before the semester begins to figure out how we can add another meeting day (or two) into the summer 5-week schedule. I also have to miss the last week of class because of a special national conference on the future of the undergraduate psychology curriculum. So, the schedule below is tentative as well as incomplete!!

	<u>Date</u>	<u>Reading</u>	<u>Notes</u>
TH	22 May	Chapters	Bill gone to APS/ABA
TH	29 May	Chapters	
TH	05 June	Chapters	
TH	12 June	Chapters	
TH	19 June	Chapters	
TH	26 June	Chapters	Bill Gone to NCUEP

The Availability Heuristic and Biased Recall and Thinking
Bill Buskist
(Sample Portfolio entry)

Purpose: The purpose of this exercise is to demonstrate how available information can bias our recall of information as well as our thinking or perception of that information.

Materials: A 28-item list and watch. The list contains 28 names, 14 male and 14 female, presented in alphabetical order according to first name. The 14 female names should be “famous” names; the male names should be names of people most likely known only to you.

Procedure: Use the following methods for this demonstration:

1. Instruct students to put down their pens or pencils and just “listen” as you read a list of names.
2. Read the list of names at about the rate of 1 per sec.
3. When finished, ask students to recall, in writing as many names as possible. Give them 1 min to do so.
4. At about 30 sec, tell them you are giving them a hint, and then ask “Did I give you more male names or more female names?” (They will reply “female.”)
5. At the end of 1 min, ask students to raise their hands if they recalled more than 20 names, then 15, then 10, and then 5.
6. Ask students if they have more male names or female names on their lists. (Again, they will reply “female.”)
7. Tell students purpose of the demonstration and that you gave as many male names as female names. Explain to them that they both recalled more female names and were biased in their perception that the list contained more female names because these names—famous names—were “already in their brains,” and thus easier recall than the names of males who were all unfamiliar to them. That is, the female names were readily “available” but the male names were not—your listing of them simply brought the names into conscious awareness where they were easily remembered.

Interpretation: See #7 above.

Critical Thinking: This demonstration shows how easily biased our memories and thinking can be when we rely only on *available* information to make decisions regarding estimations of frequency of events. We find similar mistakes being made in everyday life when we base our estimation of murder rates or crime rates on what we hear (store, and remember) from the local evening news. Thus, if we rely on the availability heuristic to help us make certain kinds of decisions, that decision may very well be wrong because it is based on faulty thinking.