

# **TEACHING CRITICAL THINKING**

**Much of college instruction is delivered through lectures.**

**The instructor stands in front of a classroom and recites facts and information, while students sit passively and soak up (or ignore) what the instructor is presenting.**

**The goal of teaching, in this mode, is to facilitate students' rote memorization of facts from lectures and textbooks.**

**According to one point of view , this type of lower-order learning, "undisciplined, associative, and inert" hinders rather than facilitates the educational process. Instead, students must be encouraged to go beyond the memorization of a fact, and adjust that fact to a particular domain of thought.**

**For students to gain critical thinking skills, teachers will have to change the way they present materials and change who does the presenting in their classrooms.**

## **Learners must learn to....**

- **ask more open-ended questions –**
- **why, how, and what if**
- **and coach students through the process of learning how to answer them.**

**Rather than having students absorb knowledge, teachers must encourage students to .....**

- think problems through,**
- **analyze,**
- conceptualize,**
- ask questions,**
- be questioned, and reflect on how their beliefs might affect and compare to others.**

- **In addition to memorizing facts and figures for a final examination, students must *be challenged to apply what they have learned to the real world.***

**It is suggested that teachers can reinforce verbal critical thinking skills by focusing greater attention on students' "why" questions than their "who," "where" and "how" questions. Teachers should also pay attention to their own methods of asking questions, questioning answers, and questioning questions. Let's consider the following:**

➤ **When a student asks a why question, have the rest of the class discuss the kinds of questions that are most powerful and the sources of their power. Explain the structure of analytical questions. Use such questions -- especially those generated by students -- in quizzes.**

➤ **Once students become accustomed to answering analytical questions using material presented in class, ask similar questions that must be answered through their own work experience or out-of-class inquiries.**

- **Have students analyze the information presented in the textbook to discern which forms of inquiry were used to generate it.**
- **Have students read critical analyses of their text, and encourage students to develop their own criticisms based on their personal experiences.**
- **Compare opposing positions on a topic, and help students identify the sources of the differences of opinion. Avoid emotion-laden topics until students begin to perceive the "universality of reinterpretation and redefinition."**