Creative & Critical Thinking Strategies
Welcome to the Creative & Critical Thinking Guide, a resource for SCAD-Atlanta faculty created by the Creative & Critical Learning Council. We respect the work that you do and want to offer help where we can.

This guide is intended to enhance student and teacher experiences by presenting concrete and accessible strategies designed to develop critical thinking skills in and out of the classroom.

Use the tabs at the top of the document to select particular methodologies by category.

Who knows, maybe something great will happen. Good luck!
Categories include:

1. ASSIGNMENT PLANNING
2. CRITIQUE STRATEGIES
3. DISCUSSION
4. EXERCISES
5. RESOURCES
6. RUBRICS
Work in Progress

Develop an assignment or grading system that allows for experimentation and mistakes. In my project classes, I have “in-progress” critiques throughout the quarter. They count as a grade, but the grade is based on the students showing their work in progress, including any experiments and failures. The critique discussion is centered around process and how to move forward. It is only at designated critiques (usually midterm & final presentations) that they receive a grade for the quality of the work. –
Making Connections

What connection can you make between this artwork (design, photograph, fashion, film, advertisement, short story, illustration, graphic image, etc.) and other areas in the humanities? Does it have a connection with a book, film, or another work of art that you’ve seen or read?
Sensory Connections

Did this artwork (design, photograph, fashion, film, advertisement, short story, illustration, graphic image, etc.) trigger any sensory responses, i.e., in terms of touch, hearing, smell, taste, sight? If so, what and why?
Connections Beyond the Frame

Imagine what might be beyond the frame of this image? Imagine what goes on outside of the literal edge of the artwork (design, photograph, fashion, film still, advertisement, graphic image, etc.)?
Reading

Assign persuasive essays, articles, and other readings that encourage students to evaluate various forms of material.
Writing

Assign written responses to assigned reading material in which questions must be answered, logical reasoning utilized, analytical understanding demonstrated, and critically supported conclusions drawn.
Engaging with Science

Critical thinking is scientific thinking—exploring a subject scientifically provides a way in which to apply reasoning to questions and problems encountered in virtually every academic discipline.
Create Discussions through Questions

In workshops, have students ask the student being critiqued questions rather than offering opinions or directed “what I would do . . .” statements. This approach to critical review helps students learn more about the intentions of their classmate (and that classmate will learn a thing or two about themselves), allowing them to see a point of view beyond their own.

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Create Discussions through Questions, cont.

On the flip side, employ critiques where students react to the work while the student being critiqued remains silent (but can be asked technical questions). This approach to critical review allows students to see how their work is being interpreted without their explanation or guided input. Direct responses help students learn more how their work is or isn’t communicating, giving them a chance to hear a variety of interpretations and helping them determine if changes are necessary to ensure clarity.
The Hallway Test

A project always makes perfect sense to the student who created it. However, this isn’t always the case for others. In order to illustrate that everyone might not understand a student’s objectives, display the artwork in a public campus space and ask random students what they believe the work conveys or evokes. The Hallway Test works best if everyone vows to acknowledge and give credence to the results.
Usability Test

When the students create web sites and are sure that they work, one professor invites strangers in the hallways to go to the classroom and test the sites. The students who created them have to watch the users behavior and make revisions, based on their behavior. First there has to be a discussion of what worked and why as well as what did not.
Round Robin

In this critical review, project “rounds” are submitted in stages before the completed project is due. In large classes, there is not enough time to thoroughly critique each round; therefore, each student spends a maximum of five minutes with each project. During this time, they write their feedback for the work they are evaluating.

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Round Robin, cont.

Students are encouraged to write honestly, without censorship, about each reviewed project. However, they are also encouraged to be constructive in their candid responses, without being cruel. When they return to their own project they review and assess their classmates’ comments.
Design Issues

At the start of class, students review good and bad graphic design examples. They are asked to articulate what makes these examples successful or not, and the class takes a vote and makes a conclusion - even though there can be one rebuttal. The process generally evokes strong opinions, with a robust and vocal debate. Words such as “like,” “hate,” “love,” “ugly,” and “pretty” are not allowed.
Thinking Out Loud

Using a sample project, the professor demonstrates specific critique approaches using clear categories of analysis, such as proper use of color, shape, value, movement, etc. The professor also discusses and shows how these avenues of critique can and should support the particular subject matter at hand. These categories are then adopted by all the students in the class and incorporated into their critiques.
Critical Vocabulary

Written assignments can have specific parameters and goals, and can utilize specific categories of analysis. These categories can include and incorporate known paradigms such as comparison and contrasting of specific characteristics. With this approach, all group critiques use these terms in discussions of the particular subject. Subjective comments or criticism are prohibited, since these kinds of evaluations do not lead to accurate or useful analysis. The overall goal is to encourage the development of an expanded critical vocabulary, while also developing an ability to critique and discuss the work generally.
Be the Teacher

After the professor has led one or two of the critiques, a student is asked to lead the next evaluation. The student whose work was just evaluated is then in turn the next to critique. This continues until each of the student works have been discussed. As a part of this exercise, students are asked to describe, analyze, interpret, and judge the overall success of each piece using the project’s assigned vocabulary.
Critical Analysis

Example rubrics that address critical thinking skills are listed below (these can also be questions addressed during critique):

• “There is a tangible connection between the media selected and the concept of the artwork.”

• “Metaphor was used to communicate the narrative or emotional tone present in the work.”

• “Components of the artwork were recontextualized to construct new meaning in the piece.”

• “A level of ambiguity was maintained allowing for multiple interpretations of the work.”
Questionnaires

Professors can create questionnaires that help students identify and isolate what they are actually interested in creating. These questionnaires could also help to identify what the students specifically enjoy in art, and help to identify what they wish to communicate to viewers.
Information Now

A Graphic Guide to Student Research is a graphic novel and textbook that can be read and used in contexts involving creative or academic research. The book has critical thinking exercises at the end of every chapter, and an examination copy may be requested for free. This book can help students to understand the importance of developing general research strategies beyond simple Google searches. This book can also help students understand how to use information ethically and responsibly.
### Mind Mapping

Professors can create practice exercises for students to help them generate creative ideas and concepts (the creation of “mind-mapping” templates for example).
Reflective Practitioner

A strategies sheet that helps to identify why students are not thinking creatively can also be developed by the professor. Questions can be asked, such as “Are students bored?” “Are they not generally motivated?” “Are they overworked?” or “Are the students simply not enjoying the course content for some reason?” Once a teacher is able to more objectively look at the reasons why there may be a lack of creative thinking, a solution or method of motivating them becomes clearer and more achievable.
Student Reflection

To aid in general discipline, and to assist in the development of self-motivation and decision making skills, students can also be encouraged to create a self-reflective diary or journal over the 10 weeks of the quarter. The teacher can provide guidance through a number of self-evaluation categories, such as “Study Skills,” “Time Management,” Project Management,” and “Research.”
Integrating Pinterest

Keeping a Pinterest Journal can also help to develop critical thinking skills, and can additionally have the added benefit of connecting the use of the computer to constructive and creative activities. The simple act of posing questions provokes deeper thought, and a more active and engaged mind. The answers to questions may not be immediately obvious, but persistent and sustained exploration can lead to an expanded and sharpened creative process.
Integrating Pinterest, cont.

Possible questions:

- “What do I know?”
- “How could it be done better?”
- “Who might pay me to do it?”
- “What do the customers want?”
- “How is the industry changing?”
- “What customers are not being served?”
Integrating Pinterest, cont.

1. Make a list of search terms that identify a new creative approach or direction. Share this with the class.

2. Create a new pin-board for the class in Pinterest.
   Ask the class to follow the board and re-pin it with new or suggested images.

3. Discuss how questions can spark new thought and new creative directions. Use these questions to stimulate new and dynamic approaches to the coursework.
Lynda Tutorials

The Information Literacy tutorial is available on Lynda.com. This tool may be embedded in Blackboard and is a great option for online courses, or when an instruction session with a librarian is not possible. This tutorial takes an in-depth look at various resources and provides helpful instruction on research processes and evaluation of sources.
Rubrics Rubrics Rubrics!

Forallrubrics.com is a great site for assisting in the creation of rubrics. The site has examples of rubrics, with a critical thinking focus and emphasis. Through use of provided tools, educators can quickly and easily create rubrics that outline research and critical thinking goals which ensures students have the information necessary to meet expectations. Signing up for an account is free and easy to complete.