

Engaging Ideas: Learning Circle #1 (2.12.18)

Summary

Discussion Point: Critical Thinking & Writing

1



Critical Thinking = "identifying and challenging assumptions and exploring alternative ways of thinking and acting" (Brookfield, 1987, p. 71).

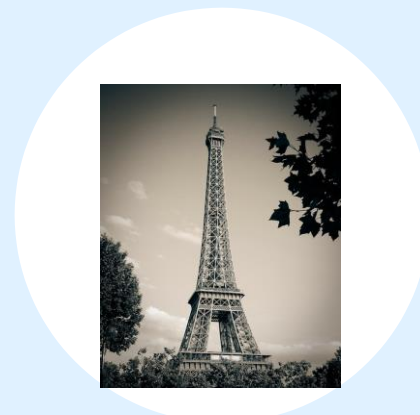
"**Writing is** the process of doing **critical thinking** & a product that communicates results of critical thinking" (Bean, 2011, p. 4)

Engaging Idea:

Design courses to promote critical thinking and coach students in what critical thinking looks like. Help students to see the direct link between writing and critical thinking.

Discussion Point: Writing as a Process

2



Students often do not see writing as a process, but believe a final draft is simply a rough draft edited for grammar. The French word for rough draft is **brouillon** (to place in disorder, to scramble), which highlights the messiness of most first drafts.

Engaging Idea:

Help students to see writing as a process. Emphasize that first drafts are inherently scrambled and multiple revisions are needed even for professional writers.

Discussion Point: Audience & Genre

3



Writing with a **real world purpose** and audience in mind can assist in contextualizing the writing assignment for the student. Helping students to think rhetorically will assist with critical thinking.

Engaging Idea:

Have students identify the audience and purpose of the assignment before they begin writing. Discuss how different styles and rules apply for different genres.

Discussion Point: Grammar & Editing

4



When we grade papers, we often focus much too soon on (and become distracted by) grammatical and spelling errors. This obscures our ability to notice and facilitate more important improvements in students' thinking and writing.

Engaging Idea:

Focus at least two revisions on the thinking behind the writing. Only edit for grammar when the student is approaching a final draft.

Discussion Point: Motivating Students

5



The time and effort it takes to produce good writing requires high levels of motivation. It can be difficult to get students to fully appreciate why good writing is worth the effort.

Engaging Ideas:

- Describe research showing that poor writing makes a poor impression on others socially and professionally.
- Tie writing to their ability to obtain and succeed in their desired careers.
- Structure points/ grades to reward process at least as much as final product.

Remaining questions:

6



1. How do I design a course (and assignments) that will accomplish all of these things?
2. Is it possible to accomplish all of this in a "content" course, where writing is not the primary focus?
3. What kinds of feedback are most useful for developing students' writing abilities? (e.g., minimal marking?)
4. What training is available for instructors at Fontbonne to help us become better teachers of writing?