

Center for Teaching & Learning, UNC Asheville  
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# Using Critical Thinking Tools to Teach about Diversity

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## Recommended Resources from Lorena

- <http://www.criticalthinking.org/>
- Berrett, D. (2012, November 19). Encounters with diversity, on campuses and in coursework, bolster critical-thinking skills. *The Chronicle of Higher Education*. Available at <http://chronicle.com/article/Diversity-Bolsters/135858/>
- Cole, D., & Zhou, J. (2014). Diversity and collegiate experiences affecting self-perceived gains in critical thinking: Which works, and who benefits? *The Journal of General Education*, 63, 15-34.
- Elder, L. (2004). Diversity: Making sense of it through critical thinking. *Journal for Quality and Participation*, 27, 9-13. Available at <http://codac.uoregon.edu/files/2011/01/Elder-2004.pdf>
- Loes, C., Pascarella, E., & Umbach, P. (2012). Effects of diversity experiences on critical thinking skills: Who benefits? *The Journal of Higher Education*. Available at [http://www.education.uiowa.edu/docs/default-source/crue-publications/Loes\\_Pascarella\\_and\\_Umbach\\_2012\\_3.pdf?sfvrsn=0](http://www.education.uiowa.edu/docs/default-source/crue-publications/Loes_Pascarella_and_Umbach_2012_3.pdf?sfvrsn=0)

# Tools for Critical Thinking and Diversity from Lyndi

Markowitz (2001) suggests that students “who resist discussions that critically examine social life sometimes do so because they (1) tend toward reductionism in moral analysis and (2) misconstrue empirical and theoretical information provided in class as moral argument.” Our challenge is to make structural inequalities visible and understandable through the practice of critical thinking.

Driving Questions/Moments to Consider:

## 1) How can we set the stage for a class for critical thinking on diversity?

**Example:** Jocelyn Hollander article on co-creating discussion norms (email Melissa at [Himelein@unca.edu](mailto:Himelein@unca.edu) if interested in article); use this in combination with a conversation about the intellectual standards and/or traits associated with the Paul & Elder model of critical thinking.

## 2) What kind of pedagogical techniques are useful in helping students uncover assumptions, examine evidence, look from other vantage points?

Emphasizing specific critical thinking strategies can give students opportunities to practice skills that help them overcome the tendency toward individualistic explanations/fundamental attribution error.

Stories, analogies, and games powerfully illustrate concepts to which some students might otherwise be resistant, or to reflect the lived experiences of other students.

**Example:** Game play/Simulations: “Pedagogical games are used to challenge our assumptions about how the world works (Waldner & Kinney, 1999). For example, the basic assumption of competitive games is fairness. This assumes that the world is fair (i.e., a meritocracy) and that individual effort or talent is the main factor in success (i.e., an ideology of individualism akin to Ross’ (1977) fundamental attribution error). In competitive games therefore, groups are treated equally and the best players win. But a pedagogical game may challenge the assumption of fairness directly by having structural inequality built into the game.” (Waren 2011)

- e.g., Monopoly: [http://uncw.edu/cte/et/articles/vol11\\_1/waren.pdf](http://uncw.edu/cte/et/articles/vol11_1/waren.pdf); <http://www.understandingrace.org/LIVED/game/index.html>; playspent.org; Ten Chairs game: <http://www.teachingeconomics.org/content/index.php?topic=tenchairs>
- Note: none of these games/simulations work perfectly to illustrate the complexity of identities and inequalities; furthermore, facilitators of discussion within or after these activities should be prepared for different reactions among students who inhabit different social positions. Overall, I’ve found games and simulations to be fruitful opportunities for learning, but I’ve also found that they require careful scaffolding and facilitation.

## 3) How do we know if we’ve accomplished our goals?

**Example:** Use assignments that double as pre/post-assessments. (Please contact Lyndi at [lhewitt@unca.edu](mailto:lhewitt@unca.edu) if interested in an example.) Asking students to evaluate Op-Ed pieces using the Paul & Elder intellectual standards is one possibility.

Using Elements of Reason and  
Intellectual Standards:  
Ideas from Aameena

# Using Selected Elements of Reasoning in Class Discussions & Assignments

How am I looking at this situation? Is there another way to look at it that I should consider?  
Is my view the only reasonable view? Am I having difficulty looking at this situation from a viewpoint with which I disagree?  
What is the point of view of the author of this story?  
Do I study viewpoints that challenge my personal beliefs?

Point of View

Elements of Reasoning

Assumptions

Evidence

What is being presupposed in this theory?  
What am I assuming or taking for granted?  
What assumption is leading me to this conclusion?  
What is... (this policy, strategy, explanation) assuming?

On what information are you basing that comment?  
What experience convinced you of this?  
How do we know this information (data, testimony) is accurate?  
Have we left out any important information that we need to consider?

# Using Selected Intellectual Standards in Class Discussions & Assignments

