Online Open Access Critical Thinking Tutorial

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Objectives & Impacts:

Critical thinking skills are essential for law students and legal professionals. Yet, given the diverse academic backgrounds of first-year law students, whereby some have developed these skills more than others, and also due to the rise of social media and other relevant societal aspects that devalue critical thinking, both law professors and law students have indicated that further guidance is necessary to further facilitate the development of critical thinking skills. This tutorial will aid first-year law students in cultivating these skills, and will help upper-year law students broaden these skills, especially when it comes to disciplines related to law and relevant in many court cases (e.g., social sciences, medicine).

This online, open access critical thinking tutorial endeavors to target this need and this tutorial can be integrated either partially or completely into legal research and writing as well as other law courses. There are several benefits of this tutorial being both online and open access:

- Class-time can often be limited and so the online component enables students to spend time outside of class developing these skills.
- Given that this tutorial is open access, it can be used not only by students at UBC who are not enrolled in Allard School of Law but those beyond UBC as well.
- Unlike other online and in-person critical thinking resources which tend to be brief, introductory, and cost-prohibitive, this tutorial provides students with an opportunity to develop their critical thinking skills in-depth, over an extended period of time at no cost to them.

Students Reached & EDI:

The tutorial will be a crucial resource for students in legal research and writing courses in Allard's JD and LLM programs (LAW 281, LAW 430, LAW 530). The critical thinking skills taught will also support students in experiential learning placements and moot courts and in legal practice.

The tutorial is free and open access and is being developed in accordance with accessibility standards. Thus there will be minimal technology barriers and no financial barriers to use the tutorial. The examples, language, and end-of-section quizzes aim to be inclusive of students of diverse backgrounds and genders.

Progress So Far & Future Directions:

Team members have been working in pairs to research and develop content for the tutorial's chapters and sections. Drawing on other textbooks on critical thinking, as well as materials on logic, numbers, biases, and scientific and social scientific methodology, the team has worked to write an accessible and practical text readers can use in scholarly activities and in professional settings.

Each chapter includes self-assessment quizzes, with a combination of fill-in-the-blank, multiple choice, and open-ended questions using relevant scenarios. These quizzes give students an opportunity to test knowledge and understanding in a way that supports learning.

When complete, the critical thinking tutorial will be openly available in Pressbooks format that interested parties can return to as needed to refresh significant aspects of critical thinking skills.

Project Outputs:

Understanding Arguments

- Elements of an Argument
- Deductive Arguments: Soundness & Validity
- Valid Argument Forms
- Inductive Arguments
- Fallacies

Numbers

- Statistics
- Measures of Central Tendency and Spread
- Percentages and Rates
- Data Visualization
- Probability

Biases

- Cognitive Biases
- Social Biases
- Recognizing and Mitigating Bias

(Social) Scientific Methodology

- Methods in Science and Social Science
- Understanding Scientific and Social Scientific Findings
- Surveys and Other Study Types
- Science and Social Science in Law

What students have said so far...

"This reading is very easy to follow, and well-structured, and the use of key terms at the start of each section is precise and informative."

"Content was interesting. I appreciated the models that were used to break down more clearly what was being said in the paragraph above it. I appreciate the quizzes interspersed throughout."

"Share this with people pre-LSAT to help them learn and to show them how it connects to law school arguments."