A MUSICAL, SOME MOVEMENTS & A TRIO OF GROUP PROJECTS

One Critical Thinking Seminar Journey

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A CT SEMINAR JOURNEY:
AGED 4160/6160

- Inaugural offering Spring 2015 w/Tom Dobbins
- 2015 & 2016 Spring offered as a general class
- Kirby Player attended institute in June 2017
- 2017 syllabus/class received CT Institute overhaul
- Enrollment for 15-17 were between 30-40.
- 2018 & 2019 enrollment averaged 45.
- COVID Enrollment 35 completely online.
- Collaborated with Lisa Odom to improve CT.
- Evaluations provided qualitative evidence of the impact of class enhancements.
A CT SEMINAR JOURNEY: THE CT OVERHAUL

• Completely reworked the syllabus.

Course Objectives, Descriptions and Student Learning Outcomes:

CT Assessments:
1. Each student will complete a pre and post critical thinking assessment test during the first two class periods.
2. Each student will complete a series of written essays that demonstrate critical thinking ability but not limited to, identification, compare and contrast, evaluation, analysis, planning, cross-context application and summarization.
3. Students will engage with experts on related topics and prepare reflections that demonstrate critical thinking skills regarding the experts identified topic.
4. Working in assigned groups, students will research and explore a relevant, impactful agricultural or natural resources issue. A group oral presentation will be given in class engaging fellow classmates in thinking critically about the assigned topic.
5. Each student will prepare a personal critical thinking report that identifies five critical thinking skills the student has learned and used to navigate the class. The report will cite students’ artifacts from the semester that demonstrates each of the identified critical thinking skills.

Critical Thinking Student Learning Outcomes:
1. Students will explore complex challenges and issues within agriculture, natural resources, food, and fiber systems.
2. Students will analyze the multi-dimensional contexts and issues facing the agriculture industry today and in the past identifying arguments and reasons from varying points of view.
3. Students will extrapolate from one conceptual context to others in regards to some issue contained within the class.
4. Students will develop and communicate creative solutions to the complex agricultural and fiber systems challenges.
5. Students will effectively communicate the various issues and views and possible solutions to complex topics considered in class.

Aspirational Instructional Goal: Through enthusiastic classroom and individual engagement, information transfer, exposure to topic experts, instruction in critical thinking and ethical theory, assignments and exercises involving reflection, writing and oral communication, my goal is that you will aspire to be an “AgEvangelist” who earnestly seeks to fulfill their mission.

The Grain Commission of the AgEvangelist

As a graduate of Clemson University, South Carolina’s Land Grant Institution, you have been given a knowledge, ethos and inspiration to go everywhere and make agriculturalists of all people, influencing them in the name of the Thomas Green Clemson, Frank Lever, E. M. Tiffany and a host of past and present AgEvangelists.

Teaching these new agriculturalists to be tilers and keepers of the land, informed consumers and citizens, and inspiring them to practice self-care and demonstrate concern for their neighbors, near door and around the globe.

And in unity, faith, hope and love – we AgEvangelists, in conjunction with agriculturalists, can employ stewardship, critical thinking and ethical theory, and an enthusiastic work ethic to face the challenges of the future and advance our professions. And behold, with grace and blessings, we will feed, clothe and supply food and fiber for all the world till the end of the age.”

(Adapted in humility from Matthew 28:19-20 – The Bible)
Musicals & Media as a Critical Thinking Teaching Medium:

Theater Thursdays Purpose:
• Exposing the CAFLS student body to art & the process of art appreciation/interpretation as a form of critical thinking and a history lesson of an original American art form.

Musicals & Media as a Critical Thinking Teaching Medium:

Theater Thursdays Purpose:
- Musical excerpt introduces a concept/issue.
- Past/current issues in agriculture are linked.
- Class engages in discussion & CT pairings.
- Reflection/CT Movement paper is assigned.

Image acquired from: http://encoreplayers.org/summer-musical-announced-music-man/
Musicals & Media as a Critical Thinking Teaching Medium:

Student:
- Oklahoma – Western Expansion
- The Music Man – Marketing & Advertising
- Newsies – Ag Labor Issues
- Little Shop of Horrors – Genetically Modified Organisms.

Image acquired from: http://www.artasawapon.info/pages/newsies-broadway-logo.awp
Musicals & Media as a Critical Thinking Teaching Medium: Student Feedback:

• A Mixed Reaction but responses warmed over time.

• Regularly sighted as one of the favorite parts of class

• Acknowledge that the process elicited different views toward issues.
Why Musical Theater in a Critical Thinking Seminar?

• Brain science-informed pedagogy and the power of music to elicit emotions

• The importance of storytelling

• Musical Theatre is storytelling in our vernacular

• Musical Theatre tells OUR stories

• Musical Theatre tells important stories

• Collaboration: what stories do you want to tell?
Critical Thinking Written Assignments: CT Movements Papers:

• An effort to truly evaluate if the student comprehends critical thinking in writing.
• Self-identification of critical thinking writing movements through review in word or parenthetical description.
• Greater emphasis placed on critical thinking structured execution than content.
• A series of sources for research are provided.
Critical Thinking Written Assignments: Reflection Exercises

- Based on a topic/issue addressed during class.
  - Expert lecture
  - Theater Thursday
  - Group project presentation

- Mentor document provided to demonstrate quality.

- Students respond to three questions based on this structure:
Critical Thinking Written Assignments: Reflection Exercises

• **New knowledge/experience:**
  State new knowledge or experience you gained from class regarding XXXXXXX.

• **Reflection from your past:**
  Share a story from your past that was triggered by this new knowledge/experience. Make it vivid (describe scents, colors, people, etc.) Transport your reader back in time with you.

• **Resulting actions/wisdom:**
  Think about the new knowledge and the past experience you have shared. Now, what will you do differently (or not)? Why? Use “I” in this concluding section. Include specific actions (not just thoughts or intentions).
Critical Thinking Written Assignments: White Paper Assignment

- Based on a topic/issue addressed during class.
  - Expert lecture
  - Theater Thursday
  - Group project presentation

- The structure, purpose, use and attributes of a traditional white paper are discussed extensively in class.

- Mentor document provided to demonstrate quality.
Critical Thinking Written Assignments: Student Feedback:

• “Just give us the ANSWER already!!!!!!!!”

• A never ending process to make assignments “clear.”

• A growing appreciation for writing by the end of the class.
A Trio of Group Projects: Try, Try & Try Again

- Years 2015 & 2016
  - Group class presentation on selected hot topic X vs. Y.

- Year 2017
  - Group Social Media projects based on approved group generated idea.

- Year 2018
  - Discussion Meet format for hot topic.

Image acquired from: https://www.pinterest.co.uk/pin/353603008225680042/
A Trio of Group Projects: Hot Topic Presentation:

- Was simply one more Power Point report to a class.
- Created a binary view of a topic of X vs. Y.
- Ultimate goal was to report or propose a solution.
- Required classroom engagement.
- Often was at its core a research report.
A Trio of Group Projects:
Social Media Project:
- AN ADVENTURE.
- We learned as much from mistakes as success.
- Developing an actual working rubric was challenging.
- Bulk of work could fall on the tech savvy students.
- Some projects lacked depth of exploration for current issues.
A Trio of Group Projects:
Discussion Meet:

- Requires group members to fulfill specific roles.
- Exposes entire group to all sides of an issue.
- Wild card offers an opportunity for creativity.
- Creates group dynamic during class room presentation.
- Discussion as a committee vs. debate.
A Trio of Group Projects: Student Feedback:

- TILT – Transparency in Learning & Teaching Methods can motivate your students.

- Gathered Feedback throughout the semester to ensure student comprehension.

- Final Reflection Assignment provided the strongest feedback for the impact of course adjustments.
A MUSICAL, SOME MOVEMENTS & A TRIO OF GROUP PROJECTS: WHAT I HAVE LEARNED ON THIS JOURNEY

• Be willing to adjust, change and alter any aspect of the class until you are convinced your pupils are grasping CT.
• Becoming familiar with aspects of each student's biography helps to access their status and progress through the class.
• Politely ask & request from peers to BEG, BORROW & STEAL.
• COLLABORATE!!!!!
• Utilize Dr. Knox and his team.
• Assess and seek extra evaluations from your students.
• Never stop exploring and learning about CT personally.

Questions and Comments