

## Using Critical Thinking in Your Classes

Nowhere is critical thinking more important to use – and demonstrate to your instructors – than when you're in your classes. Here are some strategies to foster your skills as a critical thinker when you are in class:

- **Ask questions.** Most instructors welcome questions. Even if an instructor doesn't have time to provide a full response, the very act of formulating a question will help you think more critically about the course material.
- **Accept that some questions have no right or wrong answers.** Understanding that some questions have no simple answer is a sign of cognitive sophistication. Sometimes the best an instructor can do is present competing theories. Although you may want to know which theory is right, accept that sometimes no one knows the answer to that question.
- **Keep an open mind.** Your instructor and classmates have their own perspectives and opinions. Even if you disagree with them, try to figure out why they hold their views. It will help you to see the multiple sides of different issues.
- **Don't deny your emotional reactions – manage them.** There may be times that an instructor or classmate says something that is bothersome or even makes you angry. That's OK. But be sure to manage your emotions so that they don't overwhelm your rational self. And use your emotional reactions to gain self-understanding into what's important to you.
- **Try to think like a professional in the discipline you're studying.** If you're in a biology class, try to think like a biologist. If you're taking an art history course, put yourself in the shoes of an art historian. Professionals in various disciplines have different perspectives regarding what's important and what's not, and you should try to temporarily adopt those perspectives when you're in a particular class.
- **Don't be afraid of looking unintelligent.** No one wants to look foolish, especially in front of a roomful of classmates. But don't let self-defeating feelings prevent you from expressing your concerns. Take intellectual risks!