In this lesson, we will:

- Understand the hindrances to thinking in a discipline
- Analyze the logic of a discipline
- Learn the process of thinking within a discipline
- Apply the elements of thought to ethical thinking (an essay, chapter, book, or article)
How do we begin to think within a discipline?

1. Learn the language – the vocabulary – of the field of study.
2. Identify key concepts and their logical connections.
3. Identify the central question or questions that the field revolves around.
4. Apply the three parts of critical thinking discussed in Lesson 2 to any subject, field or discipline.
   a. Asking good questions
   b. Reasoning it out
   c. Accepting the results of our thinking
Hindrances to Thinking within a Discipline

Although learning to think critically in a field, subject, or discipline such as English, Math, History, Business, Political Science, Religion, or Education is foundational to long term success, it can be hard. Why is learning to think in a field or disciple difficult?

1. We are skeptical about or even distrusting of the field and what we will learn.

2. Critical thinking requires that you recognize what we know and what we need to learn in order to master the material, skill, or process. We generally respond in one of three ways:
   a. Intellectual inferiority complex – “I already know everything I need to know about this (subject, problem, situation).”
   b. Balanced approach – intellectual humility
   c. Intellectual arrogance complex – “I already know everything I need to know about this (subject, problem, situation), so give me my “A” and let’s move on.”

3. Critical thinking requires that we recognize the limitations of a particular field of study.
What should I do when I disagree?

Ask yourselves these questions:

• Did I understand clearly what was said and what was meant, in context?
• Is my disagreement based merely on common sense? What is the real evidence for the common sense view?
• Are my beliefs based on sources I accepted uncritically?
• Is my own experience limited? Is it applicable only in one area?
• Do I have a vested interest in disbelieving what is in the text? Is my ego bound up with accepting one view over another?
• Do I feel some fear I may be unaware of when I’m put in situations where my worldview doesn’t provide all necessary answers?
• Do findings in the discipline make me angry?

Adapted from Nosich, *Learning to Think Things Through*, 123.
A field or discipline consists of:
• A body of information that may change or grow over time
• One or more methods or means for processing information – analyzing or “figuring things out”
• A point of view or perspective in which people draw conclusions that could not be drawn without the discipline

One can understand the logic of a field by analyzing it in terms of the elements of reasoning.
Critical Thinking within a Discipline: Step 1

The elements of thought are core concepts that allow us to master any subject or academic discipline.

The process of critical thinking within a discipline begins with identifying:

1. Your fundamental purpose for working in the discipline
2. Point of view
3. Assumptions
4. Implications – both positive and negative
5. Information: data, facts, observations, experiences used
6. Fundamental inferences
7. Key basic concepts and their meanings
8. Key questions asked in the discipline

Critical Thinking within a Discipline: Step 2

The second step in the process of critical thinking in a discipline is learning the vocabulary (key concepts) of the discipline.

To understand a discipline, one must

1. Master the language of the discipline
2. Understand the logical relationships between the concepts (create concept maps)
3. Understand the key questions associated with the concepts

http://s3.amazonaws.com/libapps/accounts/11132/images/concept_map.png
Critical Thinking within a Discipline: Step 3

The third step in the process of critical thinking in a discipline is the application of the Intellectual Standards to the Elements of Thought:

1. Clarity
2. Accuracy
3. Precision
4. Relevance
5. Depth
6. Breadth
7. Logical
8. Fairness

Nosich, Learning to Think Things Through, 4th ed., 37
Making Ethical Decisions
Some Preliminary Questions:

• What is ethics?
• What is Christian ethics or what makes ethics distinctly Christian?
• What is an ethical dilemma?
• What is the difference between thinking ethically and thinking legally?

*Use the SEE-I to clarify the concept or to expand your understanding of the concept*
The Logic of Christian Ethics

What is ethics?

What makes ethics Christian?

The American Medical Association did a large study that was published four years ago on unnecessary deaths due to the failure of medical practitioners to do what is called for in standard practice. How many Americans died unnecessarily because their medical practitioners — their doctors and nurses — did the wrong thing and people died as a result? According to the American Medical Association, somewhere around 50,000 every year. Why are so many people dying through malpractice? They're dying because of the way we have educated medical practitioners. They are not learning to think critically about what they're doing. They are not learning to monitor their behavior accordingly. They are failing to follow basic good practice. They are oversimplifying, jumping to conclusions, making faulty inferences, misconceptualizing, etc.... Some diagnosis is put into the record and then a patient is trapped by anyone who subsequently examines them because "They have a diagnosis!" Virtually no one says, "Forget the standard diagnosis in your case, it's obviously not working, you're still having problems ... let's rethink the case." That rarely happens. There's a good book out on this subject, entitled something like, "How Doctors Think." It points out how there are patterns of thinking amongst doctors not in the interest of patients, and there are very many basic things that doctors, in subconscious states of intellectual arrogance, are failing to do.
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2. The key question that the author is addressing is . . .

(Figure out the key question in the mind of the author when s/he wrote the article.)
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Template for Analyzing a Source

6. The main assumption(s) underlying the author’s thinking is (are) . . .

(Figure out what the author is taking for granted [that might be questioned].)
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9. What are the similarities and differences in the point of view of the author and a Christian point of view (worldview)?
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**Template for Analyzing a Source**

10. If we take the author’s line of reasoning seriously:

a. What positive consequences are likely to follow?

b. What negative consequences are likely to follow?
For Further Study


https://www.aft.org/sites/default/files/periodicals/Crit_Thinking.pdf
Questions?
Email questions and comments to your instructor.