CRITICAL THINKING: NEVER TOO LATE TO LEARN!

Week 2
Getting Started with Your Thinking
Elements of Critical Thought

- Implications and Consequences
- Point of View
- Purpose
- Question
- Information
- Interpretation and Inference
- Essential concepts
- Assumptions

EKU uses Elder & Paul Critical Thinking Framework.

Elder & Paul:
- Easy to understand
- Augments other frameworks
- Teaching support system exists

Use of this framework helps you overcome cognitive thinking problems (i.e., biases) just identified.
WHAT WE’LL LEARN IN WEEK 2

This week we investigate the Elements of Critical Thought covering Purpose, Questions, Information, Context, Points of View, and Assumptions, which help you develop a deeper level of understanding of the overall context of your analysis.

The material this week will make your “head hurt” as it covers each element in greater detail—much of this information you will have not seen before. It will also likely challenge your personal Points of View.
Elements of Critical Thought

- Implications and Consequences
- Point of View
- Purpose
- Question
- Information
- Interpretation and Inference
- Assumptions
- Essential Concepts

Context Alternatives

Getting Your Thinking Started
Definition:

The **purpose** is your aim, goal, objective, i.e., what you are trying to accomplish. This term can also consider strategies, motives, intentions, functions, etc., that lead to a critical thinking process.

This usually includes reflection on the type of analysis:

- Descriptive
- Explanatory/Evaluative
- Predictive/Estimative
- Policy of Programmatic
What should be done about Problem Y?

Policy, Decision & Programmatic Analysis

Predictive
Estimative Analysis
Evaluative Analysis
What Happens Next?
Forecasts
Evaluates and Judges
Identifies Cause and Effect
Descriptive Analysis
Explanatory Analysis
Why?
Academics Combine These 2

Data-Driven
Concept-Driven
Thought Process

Data, Concept, and Logic-Driven

Source: Modified from Pherson & Pherson, Critical Thinking for Strategic Intelligence, 1st ed.
QUESTION DEVELOPMENT

- Start with:
  - Who, what, where, when, or how—descriptive research
  - Why or how—explanatory/evaluative research
  - What/where/who/when will... (something happen) —predictive/estimative research
  - What should Agency X (or Person X) do about problem Y? —policy & programmatic analysis, problem-solving, general decision-making

- End with the identification of the phenomenon you want to describe, explain, predict, evaluate, address, or solve (be specific).

- Examples of specific research questions:
  - How did the Al Qaeda terrorists legally enter the US? (descriptive)
  - Why did US government officials not stop the entry of the Al Qaeda terrorists? (explanatory)
  - Where will the Al Qaeda terrorists attack next in the US? (predictive)
  - What should the U.S. Government do to prevent Al Qaeda from attacking the U.S. again? (policy decision)
Definition: Information literacy refers to a constellation of competencies revolving around information searching, use, and practice across all occupations and professions.

This means—finding information, assessing information, using information, and documenting information sources.

Information literacy is the foundation for life-long learning.
WHERE TO FIND INFORMATION

Get a Good Start at the Williamsburg Regional Library and William & Mary Library

- Academic & Professional Journal Articles (many in digital databases, many use EbscoHost digital search engine)
- Government Reports, Think Tank Reports, Professional Reports
- Legal Databases (Lexis/Nexis, Westlaw (news, business, law))
- Books—both Academic and Professional (e.g. WorldCat digital database)
- Newspapers/Magazines/Media Reports (national & local)
- General Web Links/Internet—last sources to consult

Most of our accumulated knowledge is not accessible on the web
Assessing news sources: Where do you get your news?

[Diagram showing various news sources categorized by political leaning, reliability, and other factors.]

www.newsguard.com
- Review systematically all sources for accuracy (use the critical thinking elements of thought to analyze material).
- Identify information that appears the most critical or compelling.
- Check for sufficient and strong corroboration of critical reporting (try to triangulate sources, i.e., look for multiple sources with the same or similar evidence).
- Consider whether ambiguous information has been interpreted and caveated properly.
- Indicate a confidence level (high, medium, low) that can be placed on sources used in the ongoing project.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Critical Information (Data, Evidence, Facts)</th>
<th>Corroboration of Information</th>
<th>Confidence Level (H, M, L)</th>
<th>Comments</th>
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ASSESSING QUALITY OF INFORMATION
Elements of Critical Thought

- Point of View
- Purpose
- Question
- Information
- Interpretation and Inference
- Essential concepts
- Assumptions
- Implications and Consequences
- Context

Point of View, Context, and Assumptions are key elements in good critical and creative thinking.

Must assess Context (Political, Economic, and Social factors) leading to Points of View and Assumptions.

EKU uses Elder & Paul Critical Thinking Framework. Use of this framework helps you overcome cognitive thinking problems (i.e., biases) just identified.
Definition

**Context** includes the historical, political, social, economic, cultural, linguistic, scientific, and/or personal setting or background that directly relates to the issue at hand.

Two or more cases seldom have the same surrounding context. Through your literature search, you must find the detailed circumstances surrounding a case before you can make comparisons and seek insights. Those who use analogies to support their thinking often do no consider the context of the current and past situations. There are big pitfalls into trying to use the past to understand and predict the future.
Definition

**Point of view** is literally “the place” from which you view something. It includes what you are looking at and the way you are seeing it.

Assessing **Points of View** requires an investigation of the subject’s, author’s or analyst’s political, economic, religious, cultural, and social backgrounds—it means uncovering their “belief systems.”
A Liberal Arts education prepares you to understand differing perspectives and provides a foundation for critical and creative thinking!

Social Science is the study of human behavior, human decision-making, and human conditions.

Not everyone has broad preparation in all the disciplines of Social Science.

Positivist—someone who thinks you can use the scientific method to study human behavior.
Three main theoretical approaches govern most points of view and how politics and economics function, i.e., the *dominant worldview* often starts with the theory:

- Marxist Theory
- Liberal Theory
- Realist Theory

**THEORIES OF HOW THE WORLD WORKS DRIVE DIFFERING POINTS OF VIEW AND DIFFERING ASSUMPTIONS**
MARXISM: LAYER CAKE APPROACH

Basic Assumptions:
Top Layer: political, social, cultural, religious, etc., institutions—The Superstructure

Bottom Layer: The Structure of the Economy (Production)—The Base

According to Marx, the structure of the Economy drives all other societal institutions.

Critical Theory is a modern-day update grounded in Marxism and theorizes an improved world order based on “Democratic Socialism.”
MARX’S ANALYSIS USING HISTORICAL MATERIALISM

Political System | Primitive Communism | Basic Gov. to Facilitate Slave Control | Aristocracy (Authoritarian) | Democracy | Communism
---|---|---|---|---|---
Economic System | Hunters & Gatherers | Slavery | Feudalism | Capitalism | Socialism

World Today | Future World (Theorized)

G.W.F. Hegel’s Dialectic

Ex: Capitalism

Ex: Socialism
MARX’S THEORY OF CAPITALISM

- **Bourgeoisie**—owners (controllers) of the means of production (raw materials, finance, factories, transportation, communications)

- **Proletariat**—workers that extract raw materials & work in factories, banks, transportation, and communications or provide services to the Bourgeoisie and workers

- **Bourgeoisie**—make their fortunes from the “surplus value” created by not paying the workers or service providers enough for their labor (i.e., they exploit the workers)
BASICS OF SOCIALISM

- **Socialism**— Marx’s theory calls for social ownership of the means of production and exchange, with a goal of equal distribution of wealth by eliminating private property and ending exploitation of workers by the ruling class. Marx saw societies transitioning from democracy/capitalism to socialism and eventually communism. To speed up this transition, Marx & Engels published the Communist Manifesto.

- **Democratic Socialism**—seeks to promote and adopt the ideals of socialism within a democratic system. They see capitalism as incompatible with the ideals of liberty, equality, and solidarity.

- Many flavors of socialism exist or existed:
  - **Authoritarianism (not Communism) + (Not) Socialism** (Soviet Union, China, Cuba, North Korea, Vietnam, Laos, and more) Cold War View
  - **Weaker Democracy + State-Ownership of Industry** (mainly in Latin America, Brazil still) Never Called Socialism
  - **Authoritarian or Weaker Democracy + (Not) Socialism** (Venezuela, India, Bolivia, Ecuador, Nicaragua, El Salvador) Maximize Corruption
  - **Stronger Democracy + Socialism** (Scandinavian countries, Switzerland, Denmark, Netherlands, Belgium, Ireland, Canada, New Zealand and France (somewhat)) Millennials View

“The proletarians [workers] have nothing to lose but their chains. They have a world to win. Workingmen of all countries, unite.”
LIBERALISM: COBWEB APPROACH

Institutions (states, organizations, etc.) and people make up nodes (where webs cross)

Nodes have multiple connections (relations) with other nodes

Strength of relationships are based on frequency and nature of interactions, laws, rules, regulations, treaties, etc.

Basic Assumptions:

Theories tend to be normative (how world should or ought to work)

Security View: The stronger the “web” the more likely there will be peace

John Locke
Two Treatises of Civil Government
THE NEW WORLD ORDER

- Characteristics of the post-World War II New World Order:
  - Spread of Democracy (not everyone wants it)
  - Free Trade (remove trade barriers)
  - Globalization (communications, economic, political)
  - Environmental Stewardship (added recently)

Began forming during and after World War II and has strengthened over last 70 years.
REALISM: BILLIARD BALL APPROACH

Basic Assumptions:

Organizations (states, agencies, etc.) have hard outer shells (internal workings matter less)

Organizations and people constantly bump into each other (frequent interactions)

Organizations and people sometimes form groups (alliances)

Relationships among organizations and people are based on power and negotiations (diplomacy)

Realism is normally the approach of strong conservative and authoritarian governments.
REALIST THOUGHT

Political Power

Niccolo Machiavelli (1469-1527)

- Italian historian and philosopher.
- Best known work: The Prince.
- In order to keep social and political stability, a new prince must be willing to exercise brute force, deceit — to act immorally if need be — to maintain control.
- Realist v. Utopian

Henry Kissinger

Diplomacy

Thucydides

History of the Peloponnesian War

Leviathan

Thomas Hobbes

THREE ELEMENTS OF POLITICAL POWER

1. Power: A gets B to do what A wants
2. Power is earned, not simply grabbed
3. Hard to measure power

Diplomacy

Contemporary

Institutions

Critical Issues

International

Changing

Patterns

Practice

Emerging

Public

American

European

International

Cultural

Historical

Scholars

Machiavelli

Thomas Hobbes

Henry Kissinger
It may be hard to uncover the theoretical point of view if assessing a Post-Modernist

- Do not believe in social science (not positivists), often offer every phenomenon has its own unique explanation as there are no identifiable patterns in social behavior.

- Often focus on culture, identity, and gender explanations for human behavior. Main methodology is to criticize work done by social scientists.

- Includes Constructivists, Feminists, and other non-mainstream theoretical approaches.
All societies have different cultures.

All levels of political divisions and government agencies have different cultures (countries, states, counties, cities, towns, villages, etc.)

All organizations of groups of people have different cultures (corporations, businesses, churches, scout groups, sports teams, military services, etc., etc.)
ASSESSING DIFFERING POLITICAL CULTURES OR ORGANIZATIONAL CULTURES EXPLAINS A LOT

- Every political division and organization creates its own culture
- Laws, regulations, rules, behaviors, norms, beliefs, values, etc., help define cultures
- It is extremely hard to change a culture
- Three main cultural types:
  - Collectivist
  - Individualistic
  - Egalitarian
COLLECTIVIST CULTURES

- Authoritarian, Dictatorial, Elite Controlled
- Power/resources/communications flow from leaders/elite down to rest of society
- Central Concept – the good of the leaders/elite
INDIVIDUALISTIC CULTURES

- Hierarchical, Chain-of-Command
- Power, resources, communications flow up and down within the hierarchy
- Central Concept – the good of the individual

Note: the individual can be a country, organization, person, etc.
EGALITARIAN CULTURES

- Multiple Lateral Networks (very complex societies)
- Power, resources, communications flow horizontally and vertically across the many interconnected networks
- Central Concept – the good of the entire society
SOCIAL CAPITAL

- Assess by analyzing:
  - Social Networks & Interactions
  - Social Norms (Rules)
  - Social Trust

- Two Types:
  - Bonding Social Capital (within group)
  - Bridging Social Capital (with other groups)
SOCIAL CAPITAL IN THE UNITED STATES

Source: Putnam (2001), Bowling Alone
The Left vs. Right Political Spectrum

Left Wing
- Fantasy Land
- Communism
- Socialism
- Liberalism
- Democratic Socialism

Constitutional Monarchism

Right Wing
- Absolute Monarchism
- Dictators
- Nazism
- Fascism

Authoritarian Systems

Worldviews:
- Marxism
- Liberalism
- Realism

Cultures:
- Egalitarian
- Individualistic
- Collectivist

Social Capital:
- High
- Medium
- Low
TIME FOR A 10 MINUTE BREAK!
RELIGION HELPS DETERMINE CULTURE BY HELPING PEOPLE UNDERSTAND AND VIEW THEIR ROLE IN SOCIETY

Selected List of World Religions

- Monotheistic Religions (one God)
  - Jewish, Christian, Islamic
- Polytheistic Religions (many Gods)
  - Hindu, Buddhist, Taoist, Shinto
- Other Well-Known Religions
  - Sikhism, Nature Focused, Syncretic, Non-Believers—and many more
Root of the Problem with Religious Differences

- Those in the West (mainly Christians) have a common perception that religion is a private matter separate from the larger society.

- Other Cultures though perceive their beliefs, rituals of worship, and spiritual practice are all part of a common life and not just a private concern.

MAJOR SOURCE OF MISPERCEPTION AND CONFLICT
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Religion</th>
<th># Adherents</th>
<th>Date Started</th>
<th>Sacred Text</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Judaism</td>
<td>14 Million</td>
<td>~2000 BCE</td>
<td>Tanakh, Torah (Bible Old Testament)</td>
<td>emerged during the Bronze Age in area of present-day Egypt/Israel/Lebanon (The Levant), emphasis is on relationships between people and between people and God</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Christianity</td>
<td>2.2 Billion</td>
<td>After 1 CE</td>
<td>Bible (Old and New Testaments)</td>
<td>follows the teachings of Jesus, who was seen as the divine Son of God, includes Catholics, Protestants (many sects) and Mormons (sacred text is Book of Mormon, plus Old and New Testaments)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Islam</td>
<td>1.6 Billion</td>
<td>After 632 CE</td>
<td>Qur’an Sharia (ethics)</td>
<td>eternal religion based in writings/teachings of Muhammad who is seen as last Profit of God, extremism forbidden, Sunni &amp; Shia sects differ</td>
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**MONOTHEISM (ONE GOD): THE GOD OF ABRAHAM**
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<tr>
<th>Religion</th>
<th># Adherents</th>
<th>Date Started</th>
<th>Sacred Text</th>
<th>Description</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hinduism</td>
<td>1 Billion</td>
<td>3300 BCE</td>
<td>Vedas</td>
<td>world’s oldest religion, centered around Indus River (India), sees no path to truth is universally valid, umbrella term for many native religions, no single founder</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Buddhism</td>
<td>376 Million</td>
<td>405 BCE</td>
<td>Theravada</td>
<td>based on teachings of Gautama Buddha, centered in Tibet, Nepal and Southeast Asia, ethical religion focused on virtuous and exemplary behavior, Dali Lama most visible modern leader</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Taoism</td>
<td>394 Million</td>
<td>BCE (no date)</td>
<td>Tao Te Ching, Zhuangzi</td>
<td>umbrella of Chinese indigenous religions, based on Chinese folk culture that looks at life, society, and a person’s place in it, Confucius major philosopher</td>
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<tr>
<td>Shinto</td>
<td>4 Million</td>
<td>6th Century CE</td>
<td>Kojiki &amp; others</td>
<td>umbrella of folk religions in China and Japan, influenced by Buddhism, worship natural phenomenon, commune with nature</td>
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<td>Religious Beliefs # Adherents</td>
<td>Description</td>
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<td>Sikhism 23 Million</td>
<td>started 1469 CE, monotheistic, founded in Punjab region (India, Pakistan), grew out of Hinduism and Islam, based on teachings of ten Sikh Gurus, very egalitarian and stresses gender equality</td>
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<tr>
<td>Nature-Focused Religions # Unknown</td>
<td>polytheistic folk culture worship of nature and spirits, includes Pagan, Neo-Pagan, WICCA (witches), Druidism, Shamanism—and more</td>
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<tr>
<td>Syncretic (Western Hemisphere) # Unknown</td>
<td>polytheistic blend of African folk culture religions and Christianity, includes Haitian Voodoo, Santería (Cuba and Caribbean), Candomble’ (Brazil)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Non-Believers, Atheism, Agnosticism, 1.1 Billion</td>
<td>those who do not believe in religion (non-believers), do not believe in the existence of gods (atheists) or see that there is no evidence to prove or disprove existence of divine forces (agnostics)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Societal Conditions</td>
<td>Egalitarian</td>
<td>Individualistic</td>
<td>Collectivist</td>
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<td>Goal is the good of the...</td>
<td>Entire Society</td>
<td>Individuals</td>
<td>Leaders/Elite</td>
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<td>General Types of Government</td>
<td>Mature or Strong Liberal Democracies</td>
<td>Transitional or Weak Democracies</td>
<td>Authoritarian</td>
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<tr>
<td>Political Process—Actors that Most Affect Decisions or Policy</td>
<td>All Actors Eligible (Exact Actors Differ by Issue)</td>
<td>Executive/Advisors, Interest Groups, Legislature, Gov’t Orgs.</td>
<td>Executive &amp; Advisors Only</td>
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**Religions**

- No Acceptable Method to Classify

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<tr>
<th>Levels of Elite Accountability</th>
<th>Significant</th>
<th>Some</th>
<th>Little</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Economic/Resource Management Systems</td>
<td>100 Market/Socialist</td>
<td>Statist</td>
<td>Patrimonial</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Levels of Social Trust or Social Capital</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>Moderate</td>
<td>Low</td>
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<tr>
<td>Levels of Mass Participation</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>Moderate</td>
<td>Low</td>
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<tr>
<th>Elite Corruption Behaviors</th>
<th>Paragons</th>
<th>Opportunists</th>
<th>Pirates</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Societal Political Corruption Patterns</td>
<td>100 Incidental (Low)</td>
<td>Institutional (Moderate)</td>
<td>Systemic (Severe)</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Coordinates of Culture

- Heritage Index of Economic Freedom
- Transparency International Corruption Index
- Freedomhouse Scale of Political Rights & Civil Liberties

- CA, NZ, AU, AT, Northern EU
- US, UK, JP, GE Southern EU
- Developing Democracies
- KP, RU, SY, IR, CU, IQ, CN, AF, VN
WORLD CONFLICT IS FOUND AT THE INTERSECTION OF DIFFERENT IDEOLOGICAL, POLITICAL, CULTURAL AND RELIGIOUS BELIEFS
ASSUMPTIONS (EMERGE FROM BELIEF SYSTEMS)

Definition

**Assumptions** are theoretical or other propositions you take for granted. They usually operate at the subconscious or unconscious level of thought.

**Assumptions** usually fall into one of 3 categories:
- Paradigmatic – core belief systems
- Prescriptive – how it “ought” to be
- Causal – cause & effect
Concern the deeply held assumptions framing how a person views the way the world works (i.e., their belief system).

Go to the heart of a person’s points of view and include political, economic, religious, cultural and social aspects of how the person views the way the world works.

These beliefs usually spring from dominant ideologies (political, economic, religious, social, etc.).

These assumptions are often never questioned in analyses.

Are often hard to uncover, especially by those whose thinking is also influenced by the same paradigmatic assumptions.
Concern those assumptions defining desirable ways of thinking or acting.

Define what “ought” or “should” be the desirable ways of thinking or acting (we call these normative).

Tend to flow from a person’s paradigmatic assumptions of how the world should work.

Also result from the structure of laws, regulations, policies, rules, etc., applying to the situation under study. There are many social rules (both formal and informal) that influence thinking and behavior that are prescriptive assumptions.
Concern the causal linkages that make the world work and conditions under which the causal linkages might change.

In the behavioral or social sciences, causal conditions are often elusive due to the complexity of human behavior and the lack of valid research in many aspects of human behavior.

Also include the quality of evidence used to support an argument based on causal linkages.

Causal assumptions related to behavioral or social science are often deemed invalid because of the poor evidence resulting in use of poor logic and reasoning and anecdotal data or small sample size of cases governing the proposed causal linkages.
TECHNIQUES FOR ASSESSING POINTS OF VIEW AND ASSUMPTIONS

- 4-Ways of Seeing (2 actors)
- Key Assumption Checks

Not Good
Critical Thinking
**Assessing Differing Perspectives**

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<tr>
<th>How does Actor A view her/himself and/or the issue at hand (sources of the view)?</th>
<th>How does Actor B view her/himself and/or the issue at hand (sources of the view)?</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>How does Actor A view Actor B her/himself and/or vis-a-vis the issue at hand (sources of the view)?</td>
<td>How does Actor B view Actor A her/himself and/or vis-a-vis the issue at hand (sources of the view)?</td>
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What are sources of differing perspectives (views): theoretical, political, economic, cultural, social, religious, linguistic, historical, etc.?
## Key Assumption Checks

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Key Assumption</th>
<th>Category/Comments On Influence</th>
<th>Solid</th>
<th>With Caveats</th>
<th>Unsupported</th>
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<td>Actor A</td>
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<td>Paradigmatic, Prescriptive, or Causal</td>
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OPENLY QUESTIONING PEOPLE’S POINTS OF VIEW AND ASSUMPTIONS CAN MAKE YOU A PARIAH
IN WEEK 3 WE REVIEW THE ELEMENTS OF CRITICAL THOUGHT THAT HELP YOU GENERATE YOUR FINDINGS AND REPORT THE RESULTS OF YOUR THINKING.