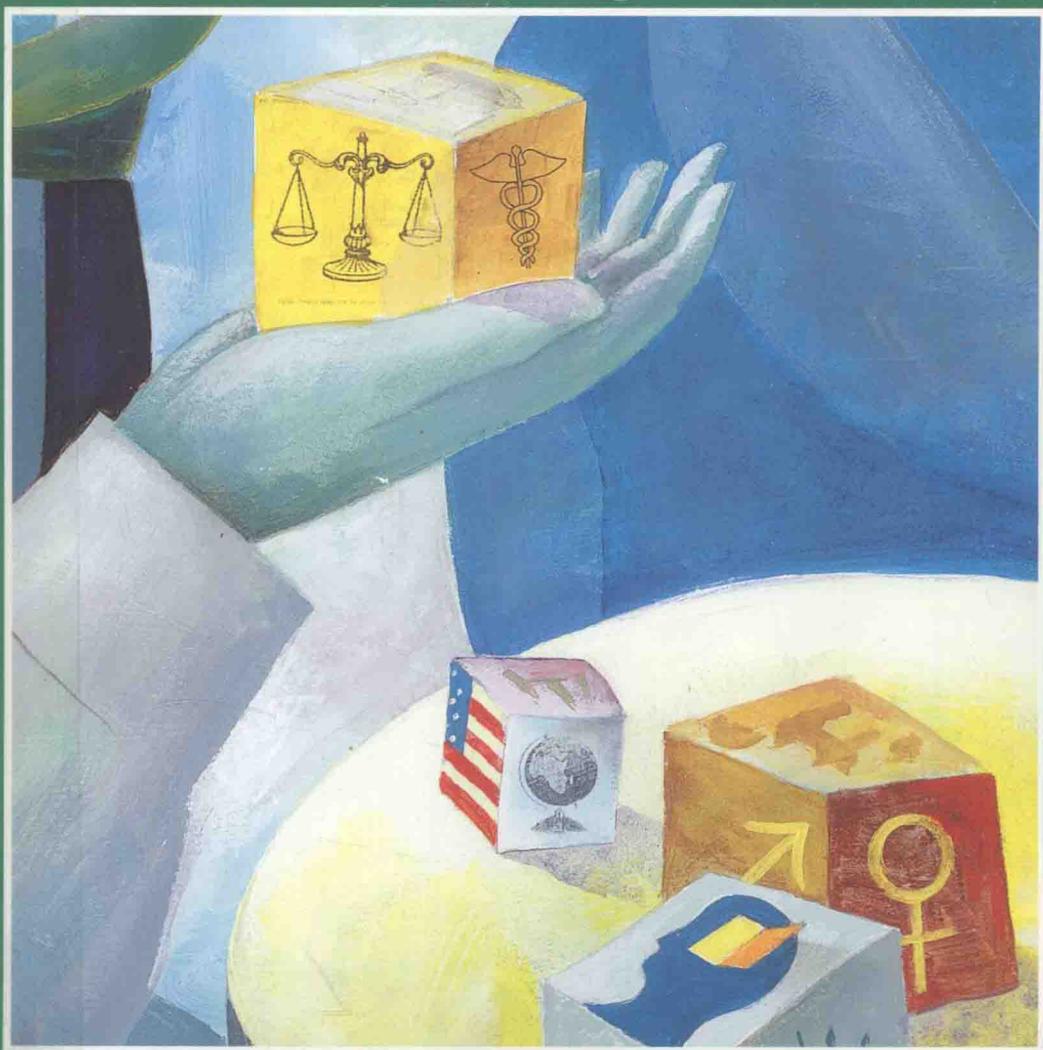


JOHN CHAFFEE

THINKING CRITICALLY

A Concise Guide





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A Concise Guide

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P R E F A C E

Critical thinking is the cornerstone of higher education, the hallmark of an educated person, and teaching a course in critical thinking is one of the most inspiring and rewarding experiences that a teacher can have. Because the thinking process is such an integral part of who we are as people, the prospect of expanding students' thinking implies expanding who they are as human beings — the perspective from which they view the world, the concepts and values they use to guide their choices, and the impact they have on the world as a result of those choices. Teaching persons to become critical thinkers does not mean simply equipping them with certain intellectual tools; it involves their personal transformation and its commensurate impact on the quality of their lives and those around them. This is truly education at its most inspiring!

Thinking Critically: A Concise Guide is based on *Thinking Critically*, Seventh Edition, and is designed to focus specifically on the core critical thinking abilities needed for academic study and career success. Whereas *Thinking Critically*, Seventh Edition, is a comprehensive introduction to the thinking and language processes and is most often used for a three-credit course devoted mainly to teaching critical thinking, *Thinking Critically: A Concise Guide* is designed to serve as a supplementary text for academic courses in various subject areas that incorporate critical thinking as an integral dimension. This brief text is also intended for critical thinking courses that focus specifically on the skills of critical thinking. In addition to a substantive, in-depth treatment of the core critical thinking abilities, *Thinking Critically: A Concise Guide* retains from its parent book all of the thinking activities associated with these themes, as well as selected readings at the end of each chapter.

Both *Thinking Critically*, Seventh Edition, and *Thinking Critically: A Concise Guide* are based on a nationally recognized interdisciplinary program in critical thinking established in 1979 at LaGuardia College (The City University of New York) and involving more than eighteen hundred students annually. These texts integrate various perspectives on the thinking process drawn from a variety of disciplines such as philosophy, cognitive psychology, linguistics, and the language arts (English, reading, and speech-communication).

Thinking Critically: A Concise Guide addresses a crucial need in higher education by introducing students to the rapidly emerging field of critical thinking and fostering sophisticated intellectual and language abilities. Students apply their evolving thinking abilities to a variety of subjects drawn from academic disciplines, contemporary issues, and their life experiences. This book is based on the assumption, supported by research, that learning to think more

effectively is a synthesizing process, knitting critical thinking abilities together with academic content and the fabric of students' experiences. Thinking learned in this way becomes a constitutive part of who students are.

With these considerations in mind, it should be clear that teaching a course in critical thinking involves embarking on high adventure, a journey that is full of unanticipated challenges and unexpected triumphs. I have written this concise edition to serve as an effective guide for this journey. In the final analysis, however, you must embark on the journey with your students, relying on your collective experiences, expertise, and critical thinking abilities to create productive educational experiences.

Features

This book has a number of distinctive characteristics that make it an effective tool for both instructors and students. *Thinking Critically: A Concise Guide*

- **teaches the fundamental thinking, reasoning, and language abilities that students need for academic success.** By focusing on the major thinking and language abilities needed in all disciplines, and by including a wide variety of readings, the text helps students perform more successfully in other courses.
- **stimulates and guides students to think clearly about complex, controversial issues.** The many diverse readings provide in-depth perspectives on significant social issues such as the criminal justice system, racism, euthanasia, AIDS, drug and alcohol abuse, liberty versus security, patriotism, and cloning. More important, the text helps students develop the thinking and language abilities necessary to understand and discuss intelligently these complex issues.
- **presents foundational thinking, reasoning, and language abilities in a developmentally sequenced way.** The text begins with basic abilities and then carefully progresses to more sophisticated thinking and reasoning skills. Cognitive maps open each chapter to help students understand the thinking process as well as the interrelationship of ideas in that chapter.
- **engages students in the active process of thinking.** Interspersed exercises, discussion topics, readings, and writing assignments encourage active participation, stimulating students to critically examine their own and others' thinking and to sharpen and improve their abilities. *Thinking Critically* provides structured opportunities for students to develop their thinking processes in a progressive, reflective way.

- **provides context by continually relating critical thinking abilities to students' daily lives.** Once students learn to apply critical thinking skills to situations in their own experiences, they then apply these skills to more abstract, academic contexts. Additionally, by asking students to think critically about themselves and their experiences, the text fosters their personal development as mature, responsible critical thinkers.
- **integrates the development of thinking abilities with the four language skills so crucial to success in college and careers: reading, writing, speaking, and listening.** The abundant writing assignments (short answer, paragraph, and essay), challenging readings, and discussion exercises serve to improve students' language skills.
- **is accompanied by a provocative critical thinking videotape.** A one-hour critical thinking videotape developed by the author, entitled *Thinking Towards Decisions*, is designed to work in conjunction with Chapter 2, "Thinking Critically." The tape uses a creative interweaving of a dramatic scenario, expert testimony, and a seminar group to develop students' critical thinking abilities.
- **includes a critical thinking test.** The Test of Critical Thinking Abilities, developed by the author and included in the Instructor's Resource Manual for *Thinking Critically*, Seventh Edition, and in interactive form on the Web site, provides for a comprehensive evaluation of student thinking and language abilities. Using a court case format arising from a fatal student drinking incident, the test challenges students to gather and weigh evidence, ask relevant questions, construct informed beliefs, evaluate expert testimony and summation arguments, reach a verdict, and then view the entire case from a problem-solving perspective.
- **uses illustrations and photographs to stimulate thinking.** Numerous photographs and illustrations, many created specifically for this book by the artist Warren Gebert, provoke thoughtful responses, present key concepts, and visually engage the reader.
- **includes substantive treatment of creative thinking.** A concluding Chapter 8, "Thinking Critically, Living Creatively," analyzes the creative process, developing creative thinking abilities, and creating a life philosophy through moral choices. The chapter also explains how "creative thinking" is the natural partner to "critical thinking."
- **includes a capstone section on "The Critical Thinker's Guide to Reasoning"** that provides an illustrated model that integrates the thinking and reasoning abilities explored in the book.

The Influence of Recent Events

September 11, 2001, I was sitting at my desk, working on the seventh edition of *Thinking Critically*. It was a stunningly beautiful day, suddenly pierced by a siren, then a second, quickly swelling into a cacophony of urgent and desperate sounds. I looked out of the window and saw police cars, fire engines, and emergency vehicles screaming down West Side Drive along the Hudson River. Many of the men and women in those first vehicles had only moments left in their lives. I ran to another window facing south, and there, fifteen blocks away, was one of the World Trade Center towers scarred with an obscene gash from which smoke poured. From this spot, I watched with disbelieving eyes the second plane disappear into the second World Trade Center tower, igniting a huge fireball. An hour later, with people streaming up the highway and smoke billowing behind them, the first tower imploded, then the second, extinguishing almost 3,000 souls in a matter of seconds, and changing this nation forever.

This catastrophe has altered each of our lives in profound and lasting ways, and it has informed both the full and concise editions of *Thinking Critically* as well. I have introduced issues and themes related to this event that demand our critical reflection and analysis. I believe it is our unique responsibility as educators to help our students develop the critical thinking abilities required to navigate effectively in this new and perilous world, to help them think clearly and make intelligent choices. And I believe it is our sacred responsibility, as individuals and citizens, to find ways to transform this unimaginable horror into the creation of a more enlightened world. It is by making good come out of evil that we can best ensure that the nearly unbearable loss of those innocent lives will not have been in vain.

The enduring themes surrounding the events of September 11 have been infused throughout the text, encouraging students' (and faculty's) critical reflection and analysis. I urge students to consider not just the World Trade Center attack but larger themes and dilemmas such as patriotism, individual freedom versus national security, and journalists' need to balance security issues against their mission to report breaking news. The text presents a global view by providing news articles and speeches from other countries, allowing students to compare these views with U.S. perspectives.

Ancillaries

Extensive support for users of the *Concise Guide* is available from the Instructor's Resource Manual for *Thinking Critically*, Seventh Edition, designed to help instructors tailor this book to their own courses.

- **Critical thinking courses:** Part 1, “Using *Thinking Critically*,” written by John Chaffee, contains an overview of the field of critical thinking as well as suggestions and exercises of interest to teachers using this text. Also included is the Test of Critical Thinking Abilities.
- **Reading and writing courses:** Parts 2 and 3 — “Thinking Critically and Reading” and “Thinking Critically and Writing” — present assignments, useful suggestions, and syllabi for instructors using *Thinking Critically* in reading and writing courses. These materials have been newly revised.
- **Freshman Studies courses and seminars:** Part 4, “Thinking Critically and Freshman Studies,” written and revised by Fred Janzow of Southeast Missouri State University, details how to use the text in courses and seminars explicitly devoted to entering freshmen. This section includes a sample syllabus, specific suggestions, and activities designed for the special needs of freshmen students.

The Manual concludes with an extensive bibliography.

The Web site to accompany *Thinking Critically* (both full and concise editions) includes a wealth of links, activities, graphic organizers, quizzes, and video clips to complement the text. Go to college.hmco.com/english.

Acknowledgments

Many people from a variety of disciplines have contributed to this book at various stages of its development over the past eighteen years, and I would like to thank my colleagues for their thorough scrutiny of the manuscript and their incisive and creative comments. In addition, I would like to offer my deepest gratitude to the faculty members at LaGuardia who have participated with such dedication and enthusiasm in the Critical Thinking program, and to the countless students whose commitment to learning is the soul of this text.

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This book also benefited from the talented contributions of Connie Gardner, who displayed her typical excellence in researching photographs, and Warren Gebert, who once again invested his creative genius in developing art for the book. Steve Brauch did a superb job of crafting the new Internet activities for this edition. I would also like to express special appreciation to Edward Heimers, Jr., for his generosity in sharing his expertise on issues explored in the book, and for his friendship during the darkest days following September 11.

Finally, I want to thank my wife, Heide, and my children, Jessie and Joshua, for their complete and ongoing love, support, and inspiration. It is these closest relationships that make life most worth living. And I wish to remember my parents, Charlotte Hess and Hubert Chaffee, who taught me lasting lessons about the most important things in life. They will always be with me.

Although this is a published book, it continues to be a work in progress. In this spirit, I invite you to share your experiences with the text by sending me your comments. I hope that this book serves as an effective vehicle for your own critical thinking explorations in living an examined life. You can contact me on line at jctthink@aol.com, and visit my Web site at www.thinkingworld.com. My mailing address is LaGuardia College, City University of New York, Humanities Department, Long Island City, NY 11101.

J.C.



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Working Toward Goals

How do goals function in my life?
What is the appropriate goal?
What are the steps and strategies?

Thinking

A purposeful, organized, cognitive process that we use to understand the world and make informed decisions.

Deciding on a Career

What career should I choose?
What are my interests and abilities?
How do I discover the appropriate career?

Analyzing Issues

What is the issue?
What is the evidence?
What are the arguments?
What is the conclusion?

Making Decisions

What is the decision?
What are the choices?
What are the pros and cons?
What is the best choice?
What is my plan of action?

Thinking can be developed and improved by becoming aware of, carefully examining, and practicing the thinking process.

Thinking is the extraordinary process we use every waking moment to make sense of our world and our lives. Successful thinking enables us to solve the problems we are continually confronted with, to make intelligent decisions, and to achieve the goals that give our lives purpose and fulfillment. It is an activity that is crucial for living in a meaningful way.

This book is designed to help you understand the complex, incredible process of thinking. You might think of this text as a map to guide you in exploring the way your mind operates. This book is also founded on the conviction that you can improve your thinking abilities by carefully examining your thinking process and working systematically through challenging activities. Thinking is an active process, and you learn to do it better by becoming aware of and actually using the thought process, not simply by reading about it. By participating in the thinking activities contained in the text and applying these ideas to your own experiences, you will find that your thinking — and language — abilities are becoming sharper and more powerful.

College provides you with a unique opportunity to develop your mind in the fullest sense. Entering college initiates you into a community of people dedicated to learning, and each discipline, or subject area, represents an organized effort to understand some significant dimension of human experience. As you are introduced to various disciplines, you learn new ways to understand the world, and you elevate your consciousness as a result. This book, in conjunction with the other courses in your college experience, will help you become an *educated thinker*, expanding your mind and developing your sensibilities.

Becoming an educated thinker will also help you achieve your career goals. In this rapidly evolving world, it is impossible to predict with precision your exact career (or careers) or the knowledge and skills that this career will require. But as an educated thinker you will possess the essential knowledge and abilities that will enable you to adapt to whatever your career situation demands. In addition, becoming an educated thinker will elevate your understanding of the world you live in and help you develop insight into your self and that of others, qualities that are essential to high achievement in most careers.

In this chapter we will examine three areas of our lives in which we use the thinking process to understand our world and make informed decisions:

- Working toward goals
- Making decisions
- Analyzing issues