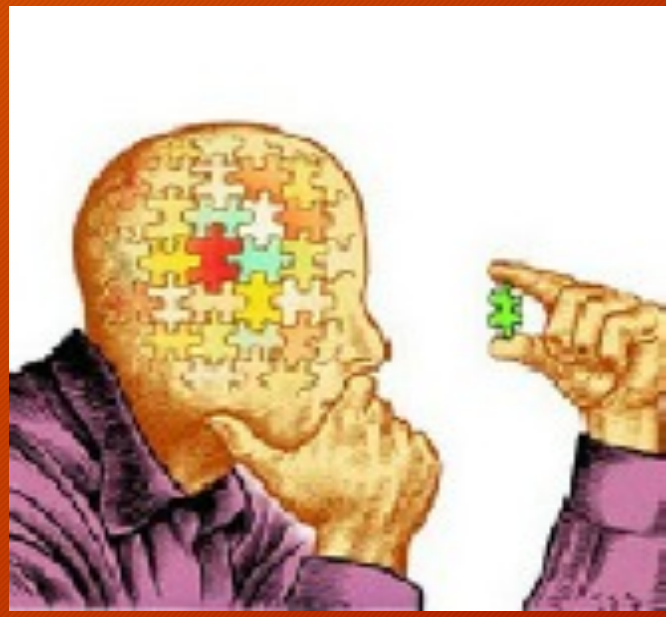
How Critical is Critical Thinking?



Why is it important?

Undergraduate Studies

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Undergraduate Learning Outcomes

A student who graduates from Texas A&M University with a baccalaureate degree will have acquired the knowledge and skills necessary to do the following:

1. Master the depth of knowledge required for a degree, including the ability to:

- Articulate disciplinary and interdisciplinary theories, concepts, principles, skills, and practices
- Synthesize knowledge across courses and other experiences
- Apply knowledge from core curriculum courses, discipline-based courses, and other experiences in a range of contexts to solve problems and make decisions

2. Demonstrate critical thinking, including the ability to:

- Evaluate, analyze, and integrate information from a variety of sources
- Use appropriate strategies and tools to represent, analyze, and integrate information
- Develop critical, reasoned positions

Why?

- Employers want new hires to have critical thinking ability (AACU, 2007; Casner-Lotto, Barrington, & Wright, 2006)
- Preparing students for jobs that don’t yet exist
- Preparing students to solve problems that don’t yet exist

Jobs that didn’t exist 10 years ago…

- App developer
- Admissions consultants
- Social Media Manager/Consultant
- Chief Listening Officer
- Market Research Data Miner
- Millennial Generation Expert
- Zumba Instructor

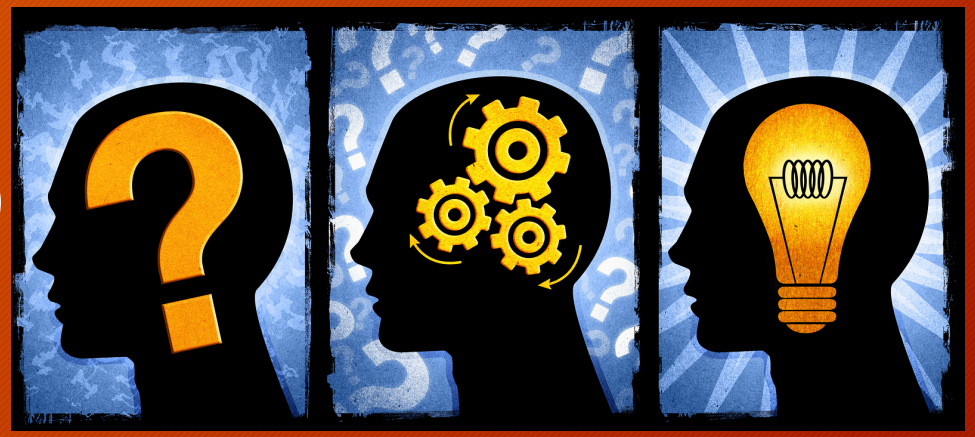
Forbes, (2011)

How are we doing?

- COALS students scored below the university average on the Critical Assessment of Thinking (CAT) in 2011
- < 28% of employers rate students' CT skills as excellent (Casner-Lotto, Barrington, & Wright, 2006)

What critical thinking is not….

- Creative thinking
- Problem solving
- Higher order thinking
  - (analyzing, evaluating, creating)



What critical thinking is….

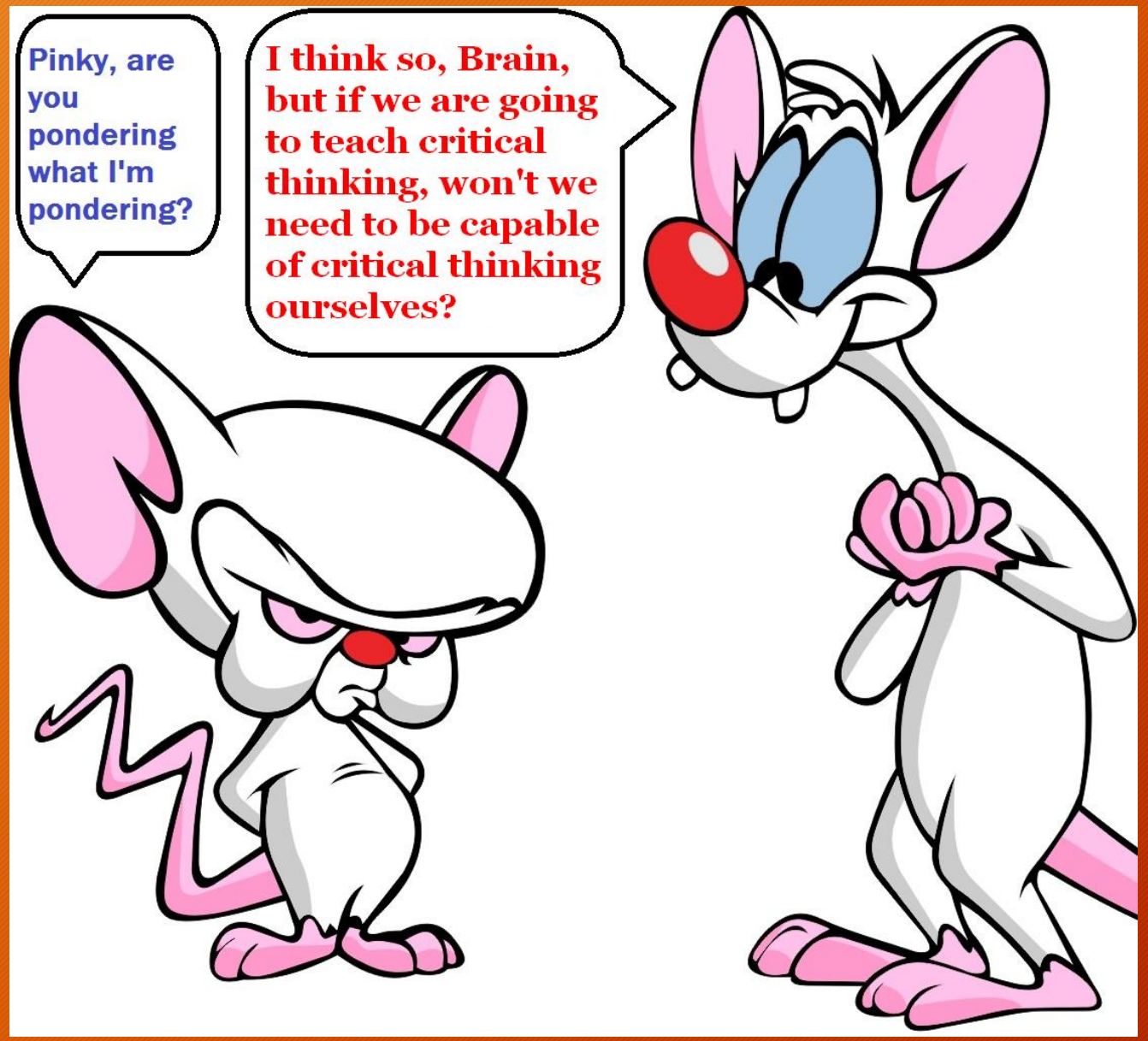
- Peter Facione describes CT as…
- …A set of abilities that facilitates problem-solving process
- …Integrates beliefs and values

Critical Thinking Skills (Facione, 1990)

- Interpretation – clarifying meaning
- Analysis – examining arguments
- Evaluation – assigning value to claims
- Inference – drawing conclusions
- Explanation – presenting argument
- Self – Regulation – examining biases

Critical Thinking Disposition

- ….the motivation to think
- Necessary to increase students' usage of critical thinking
  - Zoller, et al., 2000


Pinky, are you pondering what I'm pondering?
I think so, Brain, but if we are going to teach critical thinking, won't we need to be capable of critical thinking ourselves?

Casner-Lotto, J., & Barrington, L. (2006).
Are they really ready to work? Employers' perspectives on the basic
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