How Critical is Critical Thinking?
Why is it important?

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