

Teaching Critical Thinking Skills and Other Tips for E-Faculty

***“The facilitator [a.k.a. instructor] in the online environment
must possess a unique set of tools to perform effectively.”***

[Online Education Resources](#), Illinois Online Network

It has become a tradition to devote the first BEEP of the new academic year to information of interest to e-faculty. In that spirit this issue features a look at the teaching of critical thinking skills. This was a topic popular in the earlier days of the Web, when the reliability of its materials was often questioned. Once again critical thinking has become a matter of instructional interest, this time to maximize use of the Web's vast store of authoritative sources as an effective part of the e-learning curriculum.

Also included is a collection of valuable online instructor resources not seen before in BEEP, as well as some recent technological advances that will impact the way e-courses are taught now and in the future.

Teaching Critical Thinking Skills

- [Critical Thinking and the Internet](#). Website created and maintained by Deborah Wells, librarian at Wilfred Laurier University (Canada), with links to suggested sources for teaching critical thinking on and about the Web. Contains an extensive list of articles, many online, on the subject.
- [Critical Thinking on the Web](#). Treasure trove of links assembled by Tim van Gelder of [Austhink](#), “a critical thinking research, training and consulting group specializing in complex reasoning and argumentation.” It includes links arranged by category, a top ten list and even relevant blogs.
- [The Critical Thinking Community](#). Impressive website maintained by the Foundation for Critical Thinking that includes links to [articles from its library](#), a [professional model for colleges and universities](#) that fosters critical thinking, [a method for helping students assess their thinking](#), and much more.
- [“Critical Thinking in Asynchronous Discussions.”](#) Article by Greg Walker in the *International Journal on Instructional Technology & Distance Learning*, 2(6), June 2005. Examines strategies and challenges to encourage learners to think critically in asynchronous discussions.
- [“Insights into Promoting Critical Thinking in Online Classes.”](#) Article by Daithl O. Murchu and Brent Muirhead in the *International Journal on Instructional Technology & Distance Learning*, 2(6), June 2005. Explores the authors' insights into promoting critical thinking in what they call managed learning environments (MLEs).
- [Online Resources for Critical Thinking](#). Interesting and eclectic collection of links by [Coping.org](#) to various sources, including tutorials, for critical thinking skills improvement. Also from the same source is the useful is the broader [Tools for Improving Your Critical Thinking](#).
- [Open Courseware on Critical Thinking](#). Website created by Dr. Joe Lau (University of Hong Kong) and Dr. Jonathan Chan (Hong Kong Baptist University) that includes 100 online tutorials on a variety of topics, plus a downloadable manual, [Class Exercises on Critical Thinking](#), 4/06.
- [Teaching Critical Thinking](#). University of Nebraska. A compilation of links, both recent and historical (by Web standards), on the subject of critical thinking.
- [“Teaching Critical Thinking with Electronic Discussion.”](#) Article by Steven A. Greenlaw and Stephen B. DeLoach in the *Journal of Economic Education*, 34(1), Winter 2003, about the natural framework electronic discussion provides for teaching critical thinking.
- [2004-2005: The Year of Critical Thinking](#). Entire free online handbook of critical thinking resources collected by Bill Peirce, Prince George's Community College (MD), from contributions by the school's faculty.

Some Valuable Resources for E-Faculty.

- [“Five Roles I Play in Online Courses.”](#) Article by Scot Headley in *Innovate* 2 (1), 10/11/05, about five roles for distance instructors: space planner, pacesetter, host, connector, and mirror.
- [Online Resources.](#) Nothing more or less than a list of links by [Faculty Development Associates](#), arranged alphabetically from Academic Integrity to Writing Learning Objectives.
- [A Short List of Online Resources About Student Learning Outcomes.](#) List of lists related to learning outcomes assembled by [4faculty.org](#), an online professional development network of resources and learning modules designed specifically for the needs of community college faculty.
- [vuDAT Teaching and Learning Website.](#) Compilation by Michigan State University of information for instructors who are involved in developing and delivering teaching and learning experiences, whether fully online, blended or enhanced.
- [What Makes a Successful Online Facilitator?](#) One in a series of tutorials on Pedagogy and Learning created by the Illinois Online Network.

Technological Advances with E-Learning Impact

- [“Colleges Go Cellular to Contact Students.”](#) AP article by Lisa Cornwell, 7/9/06, on a requirement by some colleges that new students have cell phones for ease in contacting them.
- [“Cheating Students Outsource on Web.”](#) Reuters release, 5/13/06, about a new twist on Internet plagiarism – websites where bidders compete to write students’ coursework for them.
- [“Imagining the Multisensory Classroom.”](#) Essay by David J. Staley in *Campus Technology*, 6/07/06, examining cutting edge technologies like voice recognition software and [haptic \(tactile\) interfaces](#), that will “transform the shape and contours of our classrooms and learning spaces.”
- [“iPods Now Double As Study Aids.”](#) Article by Ken Fuson in *USA Today*, 3/14/06, about the growing number of professors who make lectures and study materials available via iPods and other MP3 players. (See also [“Academic MP3s: Is It iTime Yet?”](#) by Michael Blaidsell in *Campus Technology*, 3/06, and [“iPods, and Wikis and Blogs \(Oh My!\)”](#) *BEEP* #48, 1/01/06.)
- [“93-Minute Italian Film Shot with Cell Phone.”](#) AP release, 6/14/06, about yet another use for cell phones with definite and immediate classroom implications and applications.
- [“Wikis Made Simple – Very Simple.”](#) Article by Wade Roush in *Technology Review*, 6/21/06, about new Web-based software, [Wetpaint](#), that allows registrants to create community websites that can be edited by anyone or by invited members only.

BEEP’s Best Bets

Free Information Sources

- **Google Updates.** Moving ever upward and onward, [Google](#) has recently announced several services of interest to online instructors: [Shakespeare Site](#), added 6/19/06; [Government Search Site](#), added 6/25/06; and [Google Base](#), designed to improve the quality of search results by letting the user create specific categories, added 11/25/05.
- [“Growing Wikipedia Refines Its ‘Anyone Can Edit’ Policy.”](#) Article by Katie Hafner originally published in the *New York Times*, 6/17/06, about the [Wikipedia’s](#) decision to protect a growing number of entries from free-for-all editing because of repeated vandalism or disputes.

Student Support Services

- [“At Their Service.”](#) Article by Matt Villano in *Campus Technology*, 3/06, about colleges’ additions of new student e-services from serious academic support to late-night snack delivery.
- [“Colleges Employ Blogging to Woo Tech-Savvy Students.”](#) AP article by Heather Hollingsworth, 5/22/06, about a Web-based recruitment strategy that allows prospective newcomers to contact students or read their journals, arrange dorm furniture, and more.

www.spcollege.edu/eagle/research/BEEP/BEEP52.htm

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