***Critical Thinking***

**Definition**

Critical thinking is a habit of mind characterized by the comprehensive exploration of issues, ideas, artifacts, and events before accepting or formulating an opinion or conclusion. (AAC&U VALUE Critical Thinking Rubric). This includes analyzing one’s assumptions and considering multiple perspectives before developing a position as well as accepting the limitations of one’s own perspective.

“In its exemplary form, it is based on universal intellectual values that transcend subject matter divisions: clarity, accuracy, precision, consistency, relevance, sound evidence, good reasons, depth, breadth, and fairness.” (Critical Thinking as Defined by the National Council for Excellence in Critical Thinking, 1987)

**Rationale and Intent**

Fitchburg State University is committed to supporting and promoting our undergraduate students as critical thinkers. It is imperative that today’s students be able to analyze assumptions, evaluate information, generate informed conclusions, and solve problems. “Research suggests that successful critical thinkers from all disciplines increasingly need to be able to apply those habits in various and changing situations encountered in all walks of life,” according to the authors of the AAC&U VALUE rubric for critical thinking.

In the LA&S curriculum, certain skills have been prioritized, so that students have the opportunity to further develop them throughout their general education course of study. Courses designated as Critical and Creative Thinking across the Disciplines (CCTAD) courses must address at least one of these goals as a secondary skill. Critical thinking is one such goal, which can be designated as a secondary skill in a CCTAD course.

**Goal** (approved as a definition for critical thinking in AUC60, 2019)

Fitchburg State University students will develop and practice the mental habit of comprehensively exploring ideas, artifacts, and evidence before formulating an opinion or conclusion, as well as allowing previously held opinions or conclusions to be adjusted with the introduction of new information.

**Potential Course Objectives**

The objectives below are recommended as models for general education course syllabi. The list is not meant to be complete. Faculty should feel free to adopt these as course objectives, or they may develop their own.

● Systematically and methodically analyze one’s own assumptions, and the assumptions of others

● Present and/or critically evaluate positions with attention to the broader socio-historical contexts in which positions are developed and defended

● Generate conclusions that are logical, and that reflect an informed evaluation and an ability to place evidence and perspectives in order of importance / priority

● State clearly and comprehensively issues / problems to be considered critically

● Support a perspective, taking into account the complexities of the issue, and acknowledging the limits of that perspective

* Identify and model essential features of a complex situation, modify models as necessary for tractability, and draw useful conclusions.
* Deduce general principles from particular instances.
* Assess the correctness of solutions, create and explore examples, carry out experiments, and devise and test conjectures.