

# **Critical Voter Curriculum**

**2016**

# The Critical Voter Curriculum

This Critical Voter curriculum is designed to allow educators to integrate material available from the *Critical Voter* book and [www.criticalvoter.com](http://www.criticalvoter.com) web site into their classes in order to teach key critical thinking skills important for all areas of study, work and life.

These resources use election politics (current and historic) as case studies and sources of material to learn about and analyze important critical thinking subjects such as bias, logic and persuasive language in the context of a real-world political campaign.

## Important Notes

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- While this curriculum and associated resources will make use of material drawn from presidential election campaigns, these will just be used as examples to illustrate points being made during a lesson and will never (and should not) be introduced or used in the classroom for partisan political purposes.
- Because this content may need to be integrated into existing classes that already cover a wide range of other material, this curriculum is designed to be modular and flexible, allowing teachers to include any amount of content into their classes over whatever timeframe they choose.
- While some teachers may want to integrate this curriculum into their classes while an election is unfolding, this material will continue to be valid and relevant for any instructors wishing to utilize it after any current election is completed.

## Critical Voter Resources

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Educational resources available from the [www.criticalvoter.com](http://www.criticalvoter.com) web site include:

- The book *Critical Voter*, available from the Critical Voter web site or from Amazon in both print and Kindle editions.
- The Critical Voter Blog – A blog found at the [www.criticalvoter.com](http://www.criticalvoter.com) web site will be updated regularly with material related to the specific critical thinking topics (organized into searchable categories). Blog entries can be used to promote discussion in class or support further study.
- Curriculum Support Materials – This curriculum document will be supplemented with a set of resources (lesson plans, suggested reading, projects and quiz materials) that can help educators promote discussion and assess learning throughout a course.
- In addition to the material described above, the Critical Voter project will also include social media resources (such as a Twitter feed and Facebook page) that can be used to interact with other communities interested in studying this subject. Additional resources may also be added over time (these additions will all be announced on the Critical Voter site and blog).

# The Critical Voter Curriculum

## Domain 1: Introduction to Critical Thinking Concepts

Objective	Objectives & Skill Sets
<b>Objective 1.1</b>	<b>Students will be able to identify specific critical thinking terminology and concepts, including:</b>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Argumentation</li><li>• Bias</li><li>• Cognitive biases</li><li>• Inductive and deductive reasoning</li><li>• Modes of persuasion (logos, pathos and ethos)</li><li>• Logic and fallacies</li><li>• Persuasive speech (including rhetorical devices)</li></ul>
<b>Objective 1.2</b>	<b>Students will be able to relate critical thinking concepts to the real world, including:</b>
	<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Identifying how critical thinking subjects such as bias and argumentation manifest themselves as part of a political campaign</li><li>2. Identifying how these same critical thinking subjects manifest themselves and can be used in other areas of study, work and life</li></ol>

**Suggested Reading:** Critical Voter, Chapter 1 (Introduction)

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## Domain 2: The Brain, Bias and the Principle of Charity

<b>Objective 2.1</b>	<b>Students will have a basic, high-level understanding of theories regarding how the brain processes information, including:</b>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• A "fast process" that rapidly analyzes and acts upon sensory data</li><li>• A "slow process" that performs more deliberative analysis</li><li>• The importance of association and stories in the processing of information</li><li>• The benefits of how the brain processes information (rapid analysis of environmental dangers such as predators, the ability to filter out incorrect information via deliberative processing, etc.)</li><li>• The problems caused by how our brain process information, especially with regard to cognitive biases.</li></ul>
<b>Objective 2.2</b>	<b>Students will be able to identify "cognitive biases" arising out of the way the brain operates, including:</b>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Cognitive illusions</li><li>• Anchoring</li><li>• Framing</li><li>• Confirmation bias</li><li>• The relationship between cognitive biases and traditional understandings of bias (such as media bias)</li><li>• The role cognitive biases play in a political campaign, as well as in other aspects of work and life</li></ul>
<b>Objective 2.3</b>	<b>Students will be able to identify and use tools that can help minimize confirmation bias, including:</b>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Identifying sources of bias (personal, group, external)</li><li>• Separating more relevant from less relevant biases</li><li>• The Principle of Charity</li></ul>

**Suggested Reading:** Critical Voter, Chapter 2 (Thinking About Bias)

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## Domain 3: Modes of Persuasion (Logos, Pathos and Ethos)

<b>Objective 3.1</b>	<b>Students will be able to identify the three modes of persuasion, including:</b>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Logos – An appeal to logic/reason</li> <li>• Pathos – An appeal to emotion</li> <li>• Ethos – An appeal to authority/common interests</li> </ul>
<b>Objective 3.2</b>	<b>Students will understand the fundamentals of logical argumentation, including:</b>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Inductive vs. deductive reasoning</li> <li>• Logic-specific terminology, including premise, conclusion and syllogism</li> <li>• Formal logic vs. other forms of logic</li> <li>• The benefits and limitations of logic in constructing persuasive arguments</li> </ul>
<b>Objective 3.3</b>	<b>Students will understand the fundamentals of emotional persuasion, including:</b>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The power of emotion to persuade audiences</li> <li>• The difference between appeals to “good emotions” (such as affection, concern, etc.) vs. “bad emotions” (such as fear, hatred, etc.)</li> <li>• The ability to identify emotional arguments, including which emotions are being targeted</li> <li>• The benefits and limitations of emotion in constructing persuasive arguments</li> </ul>
<b>Objective 3.4</b>	<b>Students will understand the fundamentals of <i>ethos</i>, including:</b>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How ethos is defined</li> <li>• Different sources of ethos</li> <li>• How ethos can be earned from an audience</li> </ul>
<b>Objective 3.5</b>	<b>Students will be able to identify how all three modes of persuasion are used, separately and together, to convince and persuade, including:</b>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Balancing logos, pathos and ethos (political and non-political examples)</li> <li>• Challenges balancing the three modes of persuasion</li> </ul>

**Suggested Reading:** Critical Voter, Chapter 3 (Modes of Persuasion)

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## Domain 4: Logic

<b>Objective 4.1</b>	<b>Students will be able to identify the difference between different logical systems, including:</b>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Deductive logic</li><li>• Inductive logic</li></ul>
<b>Objective 4.2</b>	<b>Students will understand how a logical argument is structured and analyzed, including use of:</b>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Premises</li><li>• Conclusions</li><li>• Syllogisms</li></ul>
<b>Objective 4.3</b>	<b>Students will understand how to analyze and diagram logical arguments, including:</b>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Analyzing an argument for validity</li><li>• Analyzing an argument for soundness</li><li>• Illustrating an argument using Venn diagrams</li><li>• Analyzing an argument using Venn diagrams</li></ul>
<b>Objective 4.4</b>	<b>Students will understand additional rules for writing an effective logical argument, including:</b>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The rule of economy</li><li>• The rule of charity</li></ul>
<b>Objective 4.5</b>	<b>Students will be able to identify similarities and differences between deductive and inductive arguments, including:</b>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• How accepting the premises of an inductive argument does not require you to accept the conclusion</li><li>• How both inductive and deductive arguments should be based on true premises, as well as the rule of charity</li><li>• Why the rule of economy is still important for inductive as well as deductive arguments</li></ul>

**Suggested Reading:** Critical Voter, Chapter 4 (Drawing on Logic)

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## Domain 5: Argumentation

<b>Objective 5.1</b>	<b>Students will be able to identify arguments vs. other types of discourse, including:</b>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Characteristics of an argument (vs. a fight)</li> <li>• Why arguments are a constructive and cooperative form of discourse</li> </ul>
<b>Objective 5.2</b>	<b>Students will be able to identify different types of arguments, including:</b>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Forensic arguments, used to determine what happened in the past</li> <li>• Demonstrative arguments used to describe, praise or condemn situations or people in the present</li> <li>• Deliberative arguments used to determine what to do in the future</li> <li>• The importance of verb tense in determining what type of argument is taking place and whether an argument is effective</li> </ul>
<b>Objective 5.3</b>	<b>Students will understand typical errors in argumentation (fallacies) including:</b>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Formal fallacies (logical errors)</li> <li>• Informal fallacies (including informal fallacies often found in campaign communication such as the post-hoc fallacy and the fallacy of moderation)</li> <li>• Fallacies related to the use of quantitative information</li> </ul>
<b>Objective 5.4</b>	<b>Students will understand how to map arguments and use maps and other tools to perform analysis on an argument, including:</b>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How real-world arguments using natural language are different than formal, logical arguments</li> <li>• How to map a real-world argument using the Toulmin model</li> <li>• The difference between Claims, Grounds, and Warrants as used in Toulmin argumentation maps</li> <li>• How challenges to an argument can be directed towards a specific component of an argument (Grounds, Warrant, etc.)</li> <li>• How an argument map can be expanded to included responses to challenges</li> </ul>

**Suggested Reading:** Critical Voter, Chapters 5 (Argumentation), 6 (More Fallacies) and 7 (Mathematical Deception)

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## Domain 6: Rhetorical Devices

<b>Objective 6.1</b>	<b>Students will understand fundamentals related to rhetoric and persuasive speech, including:</b>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Categories of rhetorical devices (schemes and tropes)</li><li>• Linguistic devices</li><li>• Devices used to control an argument</li><li>• The benefits and limitations of rhetorical devices in argumentation</li></ul>
<b>Objective 6.2</b>	<b>Students will be able to identify linguistic devices used to make an argument or presentation more interesting, including:</b>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Literary/poetic devices (alliteration, metaphor, etc.)</li><li>• Linguistic devices used primarily in persuasive speech (anaphora, tricolon, chiasmus, etc.)</li></ul>
<b>Objective 6.3</b>	<b>Students will understand rhetorical techniques used to control an argument, including:</b>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Devices that anticipate and/or pre-empt objections</li><li>• Devices that define the terms of debate</li><li>• Devices that imply levels of authority and support</li><li>• Devices that create a connection to an audience</li></ul>
<b>Objective 6.4</b>	<b>Students will be able to identify rhetorical devices used during a political campaign and in their daily lives, including:</b>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Identifying the rhetorical devices used in political speeches</li><li>• Demonstrating the ability to include appropriate rhetorical devices in a presentation</li><li>• Understanding ethical issues related to using rhetorical devices and other persuasive techniques</li></ul>

**Suggested Reading:** Critical Voter, Chapter 8 (Rhetorical Devices)



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## Domain 7: Organizing an Argument or Presentation

<b>Objective 7.1</b>	<b>Students will understand the fundamentals of oratory and how arguments can be structured (the five canons of persuasion), including:</b>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Invention</li><li>• Arrangement</li><li>• Style</li><li>• Memory</li><li>• Delivery</li></ul>
<b>Objective 7.2</b>	<b>Students will understand how arguments can be structured for maximum impact, including:</b>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Setting a scene</li><li>• Telling a story</li><li>• Building to a climax</li><li>• Moving an audience to a decision</li></ul>

**Suggested Reading:** Critical Voter, Chapter 9 (Organizing Arguments)

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## Domain 8: Media, Information Literacy and Research Skills

<b>Objective 8.1</b>	<b>Students will understand the nature of popular media used to deliver persuasive messages, including:</b>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Newspapers and magazines</li> <li>• Radio</li> <li>• Television</li> <li>• Online communication tools (audio, video, e-mail, social networks, etc.)</li> </ul>
<b>Objective 8.2</b>	<b>Students will understand how certain types of persuasive communication make use of different media, including:</b>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Advertising</li> <li>• Marketing material</li> <li>• Political campaign materials (positive and negative ads, etc.)</li> <li>• Strengths and weaknesses of spoken vs. written arguments</li> <li>• Strengths and weaknesses of different delivery methods (face-to-face, written documents, e-mail, video, social media)</li> </ul>
<b>Objective 8.3</b>	<b>Students will understand how to evaluate sources of information for quality, including evaluating sources for:</b>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Bias</li> <li>• Relevance</li> <li>• Timeliness</li> <li>• Completeness</li> <li>• Authority</li> </ul>
<b>Objective 8.4</b>	<b>Students will understand the fundamentals of online research skills, including:</b>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Locating information (keyword research, online vs. offline information sources, etc.)</li> <li>• Evaluating information</li> <li>• Organizing information</li> <li>• Synthesizing information</li> <li>• Communicating information</li> </ul>

**Suggested Reading:** Critical Voter, Chapters 10 (Media and Media Literacy) and 11 (Information Literacy)