

Test 1 Review

Chapter 1

The purpose of thinking critically is to come to correct conclusions

Beliefs and claims are propositional: they can be expressed in true or false declarative sentences

Claim - when a belief (judgement, opinion) is asserted in a declarative sentence, the result is a claim, statement, assertion

An objective claim - whether it's true or false is independent of whether people think its true or false

Ex. "There is life on mars" - whether or not life exist there doesn't depend on whether people think it does

Subjective claim - whether a subjective is true or false is not independent of whether people think its true or false

Ex. Rice vinegar is too sweet - it depends on what YOU think

Objective claim vs. Subjective claim

An objective claim is true or false regardless of whether people think its true or false. Claims that lack this are said to be subjective

Relativism - the idea that truth is relative to the standards of a given culture

Ex. If two cultures have different meaning to the word water, then neither of them are mistaken for the meaning of the word itself

Facts vs. Opinion - people sometimes refer to true objective claims as facts, and use the word opinion to designate any claim that is subjective

Factual claim - an objective claim. Saying saying that a claim is factual is not the same as saying it is true. A factual claim is simply a claim whose truth does not depend on our thinking it is true

Moral subjective - the idea that moral judgements are subjective. There is nothing either good or bad but that thinking makes it so

Issue - a question

Argument - an argument consists of two parts - one part of which (the premise or premises) is intended to provide a reason for accepting the other part (the conclusion)

Argument - people sometimes use this word to refer just to an argument's premise

Argument and issues - the conclusion of an argument states a position on the issue under consideration

Cognitive bias - a feature of human psychology that skews belief formation.

Belief bias - evaluating reasoning by how believable its conclusion is

Confirmation bias - a tendency to attach more weight to considerations that support our view

Availability heuristic - assigning a probability to an event based on how easily or frequently it is thought of

False consensus effect - assuming our opinions and those held by people around us are shared by society at large

Bandwagon effect - the tendency to align our beliefs with those of other people

Negativity bias - attaching more weight on negative information than to positive information

Loss aversion - being more strongly motivated to avoid a loss than to accrue a gain

In-group bias - a set of cognitive biases that make us view people who belong to our group differently from people who don't

Fundamental attribution error - having one understanding of the behaviour of people in the in-group and another for people not in the in-group

Obedience to authority - a tendency to comply with instructions from an authority

Overconfidence effect - a cognitive bias that leads us to overestimate what percentage of our answers on a subject are correct

Better-than-average illusion - a self-deception cognition bias that leads us to overestimate our own abilities relative to those of others

Truth - a claim is true if it is free from error

Knowledge - if you believe something, have an argument beyond a reasonable doubt that it is so, and have no reason to think you are mistaken, you can claim you know it

Chapter 2

Arguments always have two parts, a premise(s) and a conclusion

The same statement can be a premise in one argument and a conclusion in a second argument

The two fundamental types of reasoning are deductive demonstration and inductive support

A deductive argument is used to demonstrate or prove a conclusion, which it does if it is sound

An argument is sound if it is valid and its premise(s) is true

An argument is valid if it isn't possible for its premise(s) to be true and its conclusion to be false

An inductive argument is used to support rather than to demonstrate a conclusion

An argument supports a conclusion if it increases the likelihood that the conclusion is true

Support is a matter of degrees: an argument supports a conclusion to the extent its premise(s) makes the conclusion likely

An argument that offers more support for a conclusion is said to be the stronger than one that offers less support; the latter is said to be weaker than the former

Some instructors use the word “strong” in an absolute sense to denote inductive arguments whose premise(s) makes the conclusion more likely than not

If it doesn't make sense to think an argument as providing evidence or support for a contention, it is probably because it is a deductive argument

Inductive arguments and deductive arguments can have unstated premises

Whether an argument is deductive or inductive may depend on what the unstated premise is said to be

If an argument is written, diagramming it may help you understand it

Balance of considerations reasoning often involves deductive and inductive elements

Influence to best explanation is common type of inductive reasoning in which the conclusion explain the cause of something

Chapter 3

Clarity of language is extremely important to the ability to think critically

Clarity of language can often be lost as a result of multiple causes, including, importantly, vagueness, and generality

Vagueness is a matter of a degree; what matters is not being too vague for the purpose at hand

A statement is ambiguous when it is subject to more than one interpretation and it isn't clear which interpretation is the correct one

Some main types of ambiguity are semantic ambiguity, syntactic ambiguity, grouping ambiguity, and ambiguous pronouns reference

A claim is overly general when it lacks sufficient detail to restrict its application to the immediate subject

To reduce vagueness or eliminate ambiguity, or when new or unfamiliar words are brought into play, or familiar words are used in an unusual way, definitions are our best tool

The most common types of definitions are definitions by synonym, definition by example, and analytical definitions

Some definitions are used not to clarify meaning but to express or influence attitude. This is known as the rhetorical use of definition

The rhetorical use of definitions accomplishes its ends by means of the rhetorical force (emotive meaning) of terms

Critical thinking done on paper is known as an argumentative essay, a step of writing worth mastering, perhaps by following our suggestions

Chapter 4

Claims lack credibility to the extent they conflict with our observations, experience, or background information, or come from sources that lack credibility

The less initial plausibility a claim has, the more extraordinary it seems, and the less it fits with our background information the more suspicious we should be

Interested parties should always be viewed with more suspicion than disinterested parties

Doubts about sources generally fall into two categories: doubts about the source's knowledge or expertise and doubts about the source's veracity, objectivity, and accuracy

We can form reasonably reliable judgements about a person's knowledge by considering his or her education, experience, accomplishments, reputation and position

Claims made by experts, those with special knowledge in a subject, are the most reliable, but the claims must pertain to the area of expertise and must not conflict with claims made by other experts in the same area

Major metropolitan newspaper, national newsmagazines, and network news shows generally credible sources of news, but it is necessary to keep an open mind about what we learn from them

Governments have been known to influence and even to manipulate the news

Sources like Wikipedia, institution websites, and news organizations can be helpful, but skepticism is the order of the day when we obtain information from unknown internet sources or advocacy TV

Advertising assaults us at every turn, attempting to sell us goods, services, beliefs, and attitudes. Because substantial talent and resources are employed in this effort, we need to ask ourselves constantly whether the products in question will really make the differences in our lives that their advertising claims or hints they will make. Advertisers are always more concerned with selling you something than with improving your life. They are concerned with improving their own lives

What goes for advocacy television also goes for talk radio

Chapter 5

Persuasion attempts to win someone to one's own point of view

Rhetoric seeks to persuade through the rhetorical force of language and other devices

Although it can exert a profound psychological influence, rhetoric has no logical force or probative value

There are a multitude of rhetorical devices in common use; they include:

- Euphemisms - seek to mute the disagreeable aspects of something or to emphasize its agreeable aspects
- Dysphemisms - seek to emphasize the disagreeable aspects of something
- Weaselers - seek to protect a claim by weakening it
- Downplayers - seek to tone down the importance of something
- Stereotypes - a cultural belief about a social group's attributes, usually simplified or exaggerated
- Innuendo - using the power of suggestion to disparage someone or something
- Loaded questions - questions that depend on unwarranted assumptions
- Ridicule and sarcasm - widely used to put something in a bad light
- Hyperbole - overdone exaggeration
- Rhetorical definition and explanation - definition and explanations used to express or influence attitudes or affect behaviour by invoking images with emotional associations
- Rhetorical analogies - analogies used to express or influence attitudes or affect behaviour by invoking images with emotional associations
- Proof of surrogates - suggest there is evidence or authority for a claim without actually saying what the evidence or authority is
- Repetition - hearing or reading a claim over and over can sometimes mistakenly encourage the belief that it is true

These devices can affect our thinking in subtle ways, even when we believe we are being objective

Although photographs and other images are not claims or arguments, they can enter into critical thinking by offering information bearing on an issue. They can also affect us psychologically in the same way that emotional language affects us psychologically in the same way that emotional language affect us, and often even more powerfully

Demagogues use extreme rhetoric to spread false ideas and to gain power over people. Four rhetorical techniques persistently used by demagogues are otherizing, demonizing, fostering xenophobia, and fear and hate mongering. One of the most important tasks of critical thinking is to recognize these techniques for what they are