

**COURSE TITLE:** TEACHING STUDENTS TO THINK FOR THEMSELVES

**WA CLOCK HRS:** 60

**NO. OF CREDITS:** 6 QUARTER CREDITS  
[semester equivalent = 4.00 credits]

**OREGON PDUs:** 60

**PENNSYLVANIA ACT 48:** 60

**INSTRUCTOR:** Charity Staudenraus  
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**COURSE DESCRIPTION:**

Vibrant societies need people who can think for themselves, but too many Americans don't, and our democracy, as well as societal health, suffers as a result. In this course for teachers in grades 4-12, we will cover a wide variety of teaching strategies that provide incentives and opportunities for young minds to develop the courage, skills, and intellectual acumen for robust thinking. Curiosity, choice, standing up for one's beliefs and values, pondering over rich questions, structured dialogue with others, being independent-minded, and learning through projects and problem solution provide a varied menu of teaching strategies, some of which most teachers employ at least some of the time. It is the premise of this course that an instructional approach that incorporates most of these strategies most of the time will, with continued use, generate an authentic intellectual culture in and among students. All reading will be online.

NOTE: Mike Seymour, Heritage Institute Director, developed this course.

**LEARNING OUTCOMES:** Upon completion of this course, participants will have:

- Reinforced their belief in the power of student curiosity and choice as a means of engagement and stimulus for thinking.
- Have experimented with the Socratic seminar or other dialogue formats that promote thinking through research, discussion, and debate.
- Revisited the use of project and problem-based learning as strategies to promote student engagement and thinking.

**COURSE REQUIREMENTS:**

Completion of all specified assignments is required for issuance of hours or credit. The Heritage Institute does not award partial credit.

The use of artificial intelligence is not permitted. Assignment responses found to be generated by AI will not be accepted.

**HOURS EARNED:**

Completing the basic assignments (Section A. Information Acquisition) for this course automatically earns participants their choice of CEUs (Continuing Education Units), Washington State Clock Hours, Oregon PDUs, or Pennsylvania ACT 48 Hours. The Heritage Institute offers CEUs and is an approved provider of Washington State Clock Hours, Oregon PDUs, and Pennsylvania ACT 48 Hours.

**UNIVERSITY QUARTER CREDIT INFORMATION**

**REQUIREMENTS FOR UNIVERSITY QUARTER CREDIT**

Continuing Education Quarter credits are awarded by Antioch University Seattle (AUS). AUS requires 75% or better for credit at the 400 level and 85% or better to issue credit at the 500 level. These criteria refer both to the amount and quality of work submitted.

1. Completion of Information Acquisition assignments 30%
2. Completion of Learning Application assignments 40%
3. Completion of Integration Paper assignment 30%

**CREDIT/NO CREDIT (No Letter Grades or Numeric Equivalents on Transcripts)**

Antioch University Seattle (AUS) Continuing Education Quarter credit is offered on a Credit/No Credit basis; neither letter grades nor numeric equivalents are on a transcript. 400 level credit is equal to a "C" or better, 500 level credit is equal to a "B" or better. This information is on the back of the transcript.

AUS Continuing Education quarter credits may or may not be accepted into degree programs. Prior to registering, determine with your district personnel, department head, or state education office the acceptability of these credits for your purpose.

## **ADDITIONAL COURSE INFORMATION**

### **REQUIRED TEXT**

All reading is online.

None. All reading is online.

### **MATERIALS FEE**

None. All reading is online.

## **ASSIGNMENTS REQUIRED FOR HOURS OR UNIVERSITY QUARTER CREDIT**

### **A. INFORMATION ACQUISITION**

Assignments done in a course forum will show responses from all educators who have or are taking the course independently. Feel free to read and respond to others' comments.

Group participants can only view and respond to their group members in the Forum.

#### **Assignment #1: Introduce Yourself**

Assignments done in a course forum will show responses from all educators active in the course. Feel free to read and respond to others' comments.

Assignment #1: Introduce Yourself

It's time for introductions. First:

Watch the following video

TED Talk Teaching the Next Generation to think for themselves

<https://www.youtube.com/embed/i-FGZYSuoPE>

Record your 90-second video response to the following questions. Use the medium of your choice to record your video. I like both [Loom](#) and [Screencastify](#) among others.

Be sure to watch and comment on recordings from other students.

1. What is your current teaching assignment?
2. What do you hope to gain from this course?
3. What did you find particularly interesting in Jasper's TED talk?

Finally, in the online response space, provide the link to your video response and elaborate on any information you were unable to include in your video response.

#### **Assignment #2: The US is Suffering a Critical Thinking Crisis**

Pundits are flooding the airways with stories regarding this critical thinking crisis, but many fail to see the correlation between the US authoritarian foundations and a lack of critical thinking skills.

- Read the following Article: [Americans Value Critical Thinking But Choose Not To Practice It.](#)
- Watch this [video of Curtis White](#), author of Middle Mind, who talks about the "enemies of imagination," which are institutional practices that undermine independent, authentic thinking. He attacks the vapid, dumbed-down nature of American living, which pushes original thinking into a corner. You can stop viewing at the Q/A or minute 29:45.
- Listen to this podcast, "[America's Critical Thinking Crisis](#)" with Guy Rathbun.

Either through an essay (500+ words), google slides or PowerPoint presentation (minimum of 5 slides), or another modality of your choice (email instructor) share your response to the resources shared above. Explain if and how you agree with White's & Pearlman's contention that our institutions, including education, have hampered imagination, that ability to generate original or divergent thought via the lens of original perception. Share your response in the online response space. If you choose to share something online, please make sure you have updated the share settings so the instructor can access the response.

### **Assignment #3: Tapping Curiosity & Choice**

According to William Glasser's theory of human motivation (Choice theory), we are driven by five basic needs: survival, love and belonging, power, freedom, and fun. That may explain why honoring student curiosity and freedom to choose are such powerful ways to engage and lay a foundation for intellectual life.

View this video by an Indian IT professional who made computers available to illiterate children and saw amazing results in their ability to learn. Natural curiosity drove their learning.

Build a School in the Cloud: Self-organizing learning.

<https://www.youtube.com/embed/y3jYVe1RGaU>

Read the following articles.

[Why Curiosity Enhances Learning](#)

[Choice-Based Learning](#)

[Five Ways to Give Your Students More Voice & Choice](#)

In 500+ words:

- Describe a memorable moment in which one or more students or the whole class was filled with curiosity and the effect that had on their learning and retention.
- Provide a lesson you give students in which there are a choice and comment on the effects of choice on their performance.
- Cite a specific student example. In your experience, what dampens student's enthusiasm?

Share your response in the online response space. If you choose to share something online, please make sure you have updated the share settings so the instructor can access the response.

### **Assignment #4: More on Engagement**

With the proper instruction, students can grow intellectually in a highly engaging classroom environment.

Review the book summary and watch the webinar on the highly engaged classroom, from the book by Robert Marzano and Debra Pickering.

[Tips on Highly Engaged Classroom, Robert Marzano book summary.](#)

Webinar on the Highly engaged classroom, Robert Marzano & Debra Pickering. Start at minute 2.00

<https://player.vimeo.com/video/170170526?byline=0&portrait=0>

[The Highly Engaged Classroom Webinar](#) from [Marzano Resources](#) on [Vimeo](#).

Using the list of the 16 most effective strategies to activate student engagement and interest, analyze one of your most successful lessons, and determine how many of these strategies were used. Determine which of the strategies you rarely use, and think of a lesson that was hard to get kids interested in and choose one or two of these strategies to enhance that lesson. In 250+ words, explain what you would do to enhance that lesson. Add a short analysis of what was the most interesting insight you gained from these resources.

Share your response in the online response space. If you choose to share something online, please make sure you have updated the share settings so the instructor can access the response.

### **Assignment #5: Helping Kids Stand Up For Themselves**

Having a healthy sense of self and the ability to be assertive is integral to not only thinking for oneself but also expressing thoughts authentically and effectively.

Read the following articles:

- [Help Kids Stand Up for Themselves](#)
- [How to Raise Assertive Kids Who Speak Up for Themselves and Others](#)

Watch the following videos:

- Helping Children Stand Up for Themselves  
<https://www.youtube.com/embed/lkqjJe5rwlS>
- Skills for Assertive Communication  
<https://www.youtube.com/embed/vlwmfICb-vc>

Using either a PowerPoint, google slides, or Padlet assemble a list of books, movies, videos, websites, posters, and handouts that would support you in helping students be assertive and stand up for themselves.

In 250+ words, explain how you would use these and other resources to reinforce student's belief in their own worth and stand up for themselves.

Share your response in the online response space. If you choose to share something online, please make sure you have updated the share settings so the instructor can access the response.

#### **Assignment #6: Clarify Values**

People who think for themselves usually have a clear sense of their own values and beliefs. Those that don't are subject to indecision, inconsistency, [conspiracy theories](#), and falling under the influence of social norms and pressures of one group or another.

Read the following articles.

[Helping Your Students Identify their Values](#)  
[Clarifying Values example Lesson Plan](#)

Record a video, using the medium of your choice, discussing your experience as a young person in terms of knowing and standing for values and beliefs. I like both [Loom](#) and [Screencastify](#), among others, to record videos.

Create a plan for using one of the ideas you have found in these resources or something of your own choosing, to introduce an activity to help students explore and grow their own values and beliefs. Explain why you chose that activity, what value(s) you hoped to focus on, and how you connected it to something in their own lives or your curriculum.

Finally, in the online response space, provide the link to your video response and share your plan as outlined above. If you choose to share something online, please make sure you have updated the share settings so the instructor can access the response.

#### **Assignment #7: It's All About Questions**

Education around the world is mostly about telling students what to think and far less about asking them questions that get them thinking. And too often, the questions teachers do ask lack the depth, personal relevancy, and meaningfulness to elicit higher-order thinking.

- View the following TED talk.
- Critical Thinking is Essential: Higher Order questions that develop more complex and critical thinking.  
<https://www.youtube.com/embed/0hoE8mtUS1E>
- Read the following article on how to teach students to formulate rich questions.  
[Teaching Students to Ask Rich Questions.](#)

Select one or more lessons that you have taught and generate at least five new questions that are higher-order in nature. Submit in the space below.

- Submit as well any lesson in which you presented students with what, according to the video you viewed, included what would qualify as challenging questions, and comment on your students' response.
  - I really like this article from Actively Learn, [Expert Strategies to Drive Greater Depth of Knowledge in Your Classroom.](#)
- Develop a chart, diagram, or other visual, which explains to students how to develop rich questions that they themselves need to

respond to.

- o I've used a few different programs to create charts, diagrams, and mind maps. This is a nice [resource](#) listing many different options. I've personally used Trello, Google Keep, Draw.io, Paint.net, Google Drawings, Lucid Chart, and I always find myself coming back to PPT/Google Slides as I find it to be the quickest way to get my ideas out and share them with others.

If you choose to share something online, please make sure you have updated the share settings so the instructor can access the response.

### **Assignment #8: The Socratic Seminar**

The Socratic Seminar can be adapted to many grade levels and is an effective format and structure to foster respectful and thought-inducing discussion among students on subjects that are both academically personally relevant.

- Read the following article on the [Socratic Seminar](#).
- Watch both the Socratic Seminar tutorial and the presentation by 7th-grade students.

1. Socratic seminar tutorial  
<https://www.youtube.com/embed/G-u5iSkZzFE>
2. Socratic seminar from 7th-grade students-video  
<https://www.youtube.com/embed/Ac2VSEROTWc>

Select an aspect of a subject you teach that would lend well to the Socratic seminar model. Create a means of communicating this seminar method to students. Using your distance learning platform (google classroom, etc.) and other tools (videos, written instructions), Google slides, Power Point, Pear Deck, or another option (email instructor) explain how this seminar would be conducted in a regular classroom and virtually via Zoom, Google Meet, or another video platform. Provide your documents, links, and screenshots. Please respond in the online space. If you choose to share something online, please make sure you have updated the share settings so the instructor can access the response.

### **Assignment #9: Sorting Fact From Fiction: Fake News**

Social media has made it especially easy to promote false or heavily biased narratives, and it's important that young people don't get caught up in passing along wrong information.

#### **For Secondary Students:**

- Read: [Evaluating Information: The Cornerstone of Civic Online Reasoning](#)

**OR**

- Using the keywords in "5 Ways to Spot Fake News," find at least 5 sites that give appropriate directions you could use to teach students of the age range you teach about signs of "fake" news. (An especially good one is on Quartz on YouTube.com) If you or your students use TED Talks for valuable information, introduce the possibility that they may find flaws in thinking in some TED Talks, such as "Why the Majority is Always Wrong" by Paul Rulkins

#### **For Elementary Students:**

- If you are working with younger children, start with a story where someone has purposefully told an untruth, like "Pinocchio," or "The Boy Who Called 'Wolf.'" Since younger children cannot always tell the truth from fiction, focus on the dangers of being the source of incorrect information.
- **OR**
- The [Tolerance.org](#) site has some wonderful literacy lessons.

Respond in the online space, in 250-500 words, evaluate the sources you found and describe how you would present the information to a class (introduction, resource/s, and activity or activities you would use to focus on this topic.)

### **Assignment #10: Supporting Independent Thinking**

Because of family, institutional, and societal emphasis on conformity, independent thinkers are the exception in a culture where "go along to get along" is the norm. However, divergent thinking can be taught and encouraged. While out-of-the-box thinking is sometimes

unrealistic, silly or impractical, the greatest social and technological changes have often come from those who have gone beyond convention and accepted views.

Access the following videos and articles:

- [30 Ways to Inspire Divergent Thinking](#)
- [Strategies of Divergent Thinking](#)
- [Fuel Creativity in the Classroom With Divergent Thinking](#)
- Please read and view the embedded videos: [7 Ways to Inspire Divergent Thinking in the Classroom](#)

Refer to the articles above as you record a 90-second video, using the medium of your choice speaking about someone you know who you consider an independent thinker.

- What are their outstanding attributes?
- Create a video recording of your statement. I like [Loom](#) and [Screencastify](#), among others, for video recording.

Finally, in the online response space, provide the link to your video response and elaborate on how you can encourage Independent/Divergent Thinking in your classroom/school.

### **Assignment #11: Project & Problem-Based Thinking**

Often confused, project and problem-based learning are two similar but different strategies that require students to think through questions and issues that often have real-world significance and can be hands-on. Both methods often involve group work requiring collaborative skills. They offer excellent ways to go beyond content memorization, right/wrong answers, giving students the freedom to do their own thinking.

- Search and read two (2) [Edutopia](#) articles on Project-Based learning appropriate to your teaching situation.
- Project-Based Learning. View the following videos on Problem-Based Learning  
[https://www.youtube.com/embed/J63e\\_YSntuo](https://www.youtube.com/embed/J63e_YSntuo)  
<https://www.youtube.com/embed/bUCbCoDpwD0>
- [PBL Works](#)

Describe in 250+ words a lesson you've given that used a project or real-world problem as a learning strategy. Mention:

- What did you notice about the level of student engagement?
- What assessments were used, and what was the impact on content learning?
- Describe any difficulties in making this approach effective
- How did you deal with students who may have struggled with this kind of approach?
- What would you do differently?

Share your response in the online response space.

### **Assignment #12: Wrap-Up: Helping Students To Think For Themselves**

This assignment will help you reflect on all the strategies and perspectives we've covered in assignments 2-10.

Read the following articles which provide additional perspectives and strategies on supporting student thinking.

- [10 Ways To Help Student Think For Themselves.](#)
- [Five Ways To Teach Students To Think For Themselves.](#)

Create a mind-map of strategies and perspectives you think could be useful in teaching your students to think for themselves, both new and ones you have used before. Include notes on how and in what subjects/topics you would employ these. You can use one of the cloud-based mind-map makers below, one of those previously shared, Powerpoint/Google Slides, or do yours by hand and upload a picture. Upload a photo or screenshot of your mind-map.

- [MindMaster](#)
- [Microsoft More Mind](#)

Share your response in the online response space. If you choose to share something online, please make sure you have updated the share settings so the instructor can access the response.

## **ADDITIONAL ASSIGNMENTS REQUIRED FOR UNIVERSITY QUARTER CREDIT**

### **B. LEARNING APPLICATION**

In this section, you will apply your learning to your professional situation. This course assumes that most participants are classroom teachers who have access to students. If you do not have a classroom available to you, please contact the instructor for course modifications. Assignments done in a course forum will show responses from all educators who have or are taking the course independently. ?Feel free to read and respond to others' comments. Group participants can only view and respond to their group members in the Forum.

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#### **Assignment #13: Putting it All Together**

Review a multi-lesson unit you have taught in light of what you have learned so far in assignments 2-12 and use as many of the strategies covered. Complete the following assignments

##### **Assignment A)**

Adapt learning from this course to 2-3 lessons in the unit. Implement your lesson (s) with students in your classroom.

- Write a 400-500 word commentary on what worked well and what could be improved. Include any student feedback or noteworthy student products.
- Submit your lesson to your instructor via the lesson tab below.
- Share what you've learned with other teachers taking our courses by checking the [lesson library](#) box when you submit your lesson.

**AND**

##### **Assignment B)**

Use this option if you do not have a classroom or students available.

Adapt/create several lessons to reflect what you've learned in this course. (Do not implement it.)

Write a 500+ word article concerning any noteworthy success you've had as a teacher with one or more students.

- Please refer to the [guidelines](#) for our blog What Works: Teaching at its Best prior to writing your article.
- When you submit your article to your instructor, please also email a copy to Renee Leon ([renee@hol.edu](mailto:renee@hol.edu)) THI blog curator. Indicate whether or not you are OK with having your article considered for publishing on our website.
- Submit your article to your instructor via the Response field and the modified lesson via Submit Lesson.
- As you submit your lesson, consider sharing it with other teachers taking our courses by checking the [lesson library](#) box.

Finally, please submit a short reflection in the online response space. Reach out to the instructor, [charity.heritage@gmail.com](mailto:charity.heritage@gmail.com), if you have any questions or concerns.

#### **Assignment #14: (500 Level ONLY)**

Complete assignment **Option A** and **two (2)** additional options.

##### **Option A)**

Search for and summarize articles, academic papers, or discussion threads which discuss why so many people don't think for themselves. Select at least 4-5 resources with diverse perspectives, and prepare a 500+ word analysis that addresses:

What are the major points from the articles you read and your own conclusions?

Explain what strategies covered in this course best address the problems described in the articles you read.

What, if any, social, economic, or psychological factors undermine the effectiveness of many educational efforts?

**AND/OR**

##### **Option B)**

Assemble a list of 4-6 of accomplished people--contemporary artists (i.e., Keith Haring), business entrepreneurs (i.e., Elon Musk), biologist/activist i.e., (Jane Goodall), actors (i.e., Helen Mirren), scientists (i.e., Neal Degrasse Tyson) or writers (i.e., Adundhati Roy) or politicians (i.e., Alexandria Ocasio Cortez).

Curate photos, short bio, and accomplishments and research the backgrounds of each using a PowerPoint or web site (google site, Adobe page). Besides the fact that each person is accomplished in some way, note via bullet points what elements in their makeup or history contribute to their achievement, especially related to the uniqueness of their intelligence or talent and the independence they bring to bear on their careers.

**AND/OR**

**Option C)**

Prepare a presentation (PowerPoint, Google slides, Prezi, Adobe pages) for your school colleagues that highlights the key learnings from this course.

**AND/OR**

**Option D)**

Another assignment of your own choice with the instructor's prior approval.

Share your response in the online response space. If you choose to share something online, please make sure you have updated the share settings so the instructor can access the response.

**C. INTEGRATION PAPER**

Assignment #15: (Required for 400 and 500 Level)

**SELF REFLECTION & INTEGRATION PAPER**

**(Please do not write this paper until you've completed all of your other assignments)**

Write a 400-500 word Integration Paper answering these 5 questions:

1. What did you learn vs. what you expected to learn from this course?
2. What aspects of the course were most helpful and why?
3. What further knowledge and skills in this general area do you feel you need?
4. How, when and where will you use what you have learned?
5. How and with what other school or community members might you share what you learned?

**INSTRUCTOR COMMENTS ON YOUR WORK:**

Instructors will comment on each assignment. If you do not hear from the instructor within a few days of posting your assignment, please get in touch with them immediately.

**QUALIFICATIONS FOR TEACHING THIS COURSE:**

**CHARITY STAUDENRAUS, M.A.T.**, received her BA from Willamette University, her MAT from Willamette University. Charity has experience teaching math, science, social studies, business, and language courses at the middle and high school level. She is currently serving on the 2014-2017 Oregon Science Content and Assessment Panel as well as the Oregon Instructional Materials Criteria Development Committee. In addition Charity is consulting on a Rutgers University and WPI project funded through multiple Department of Education and National Science Foundation Grants.

**BIBLIOGRAPHY**

**TEACHING STUDENTS TO THINK FOR THEMSELVES**

Ferlazzo, Larry, *Helping Students Motivate Themselves, Eye on Education*, 2011.  
*Self-Driven Learning*, 2013, and *Self-Motivated Learners*, 2015.

All three of these books are filled directly with lesson plans based on student issues that are interesting, important, and can teach research skills. There are free online handouts too.

Barbara Lewis, *What Do You Stand For: A Kid's/Teen's Guide to Building Character*, 2005,  
Free Spirit, ISBN 1-57542174-7/1-57542-029-5.

In both of these books, you can choose a lesson with stories and activities to focus on important aspects of character like honesty, fairness, respect, and responsibility. There is one book for each age level.

Barbara Lewis has also written a classic book for kids wanting to do local service projects called *The Kid's Guide to Social Action and*



*The Kid's Guide to Service Projects: Over 500 Service Ideas for Young People Who Want to Make a Difference.*

Marzano, Robert J, and Pickering, Debra, *The Highly Engaged Classroom*, 2011. Marzano Research Laboratory, Bloomington, IN.  
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