



Inspiring Critical Thinking Through the Use of Discussion Boards

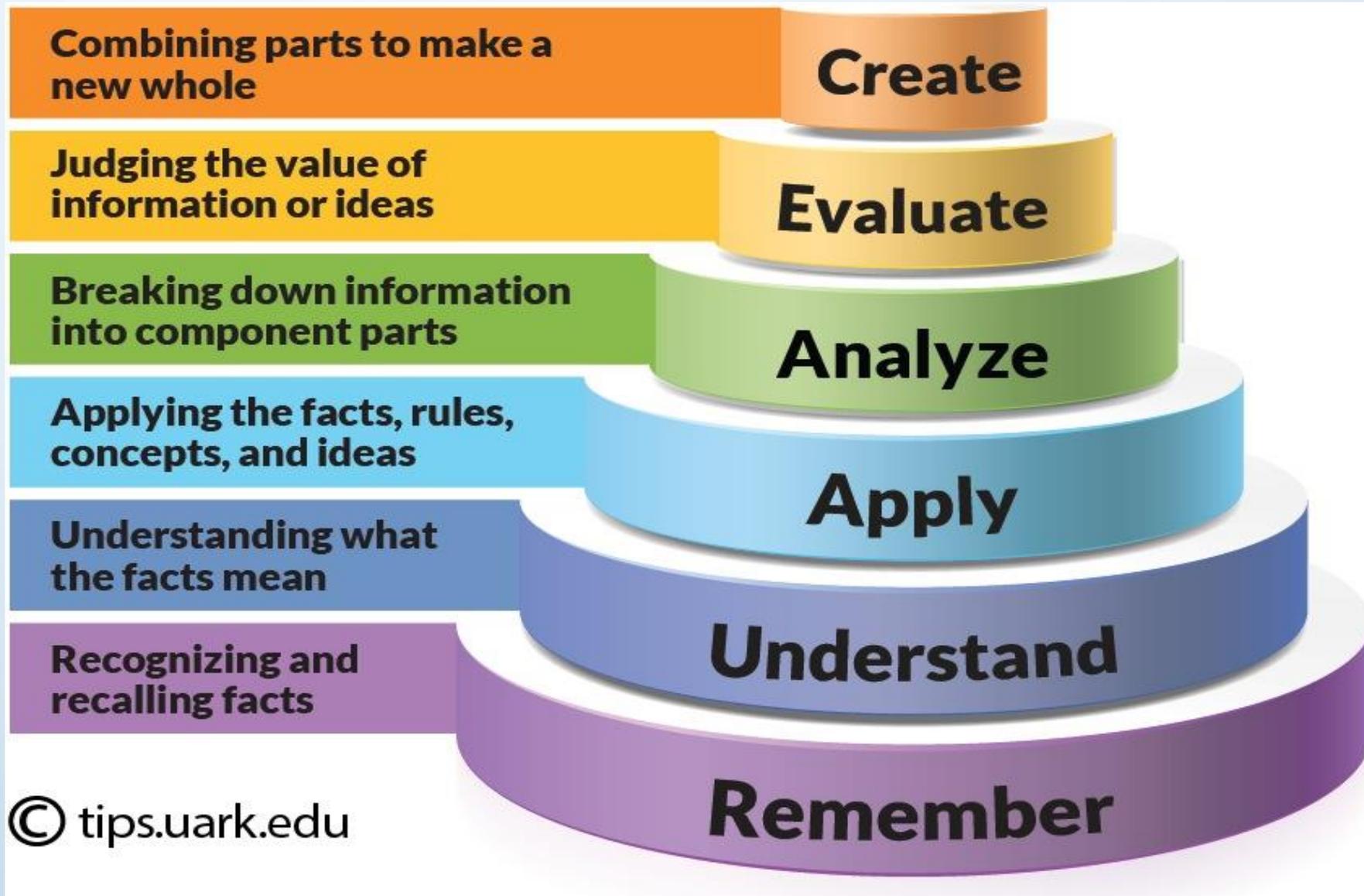
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Higher Order of Thinking

- Go beyond the basics in covering course material
- Applying knowledge to emphasize skills needed in the work environment





Bloom's Taxonomy – Revised version – 1990's

Use of the Discussion Board

- Promotes higher-order thinking when aligned with appropriate coinciding tasks and clear guidelines for participation and grading
- Provides a non-threatening, student-centered environment; a collaborative forum for sharing and examining ideas
- Most students' feedback is generally positive, helps with increased engagement with other students, broaden knowledge and learn perspectives of peers

(Matheson, Wilkinson, & Gilhooly, 2012, p. 259)

Tips in Using the Discussion Board Tool

- Relevant to course content, yet broad to apply personal and professional experience
- Relate to current events and pique student interests and concerns with their field of study
- Can build upon another
- Posts and responses should require critical thinking without excessive research
 - Free-flowing and topically relevant
 - No excessive requirements or restrictions
 - Quality and quantity have equal bearing on outcomes
- If faculty is to facilitate, do not dominate the discussion – stimulate it

(Jones, E. L. & Jones, R. C., 2014)

Challenges & Suggestions with Engagement

- Assignment should have a significant value so it represents approx. 25 – 30% of course grade
- Provide a thorough explanation of the assignments using the board
 - Background
 - Reading assignments
 - Step-by-step how-to
 - Grading Rubric
- Post in a single thread – easier to grade
- Best used in debate forum or role-playing continuous assignment

(Kelly, 2014)

Critical Thinking Important in Massage Therapy?



- Development of the therapeutic relationship with clients/patients
- Recognizing ethical issues and addressing them professionally
- Expansion of the profession, application and progression of the industry

Currently in use . . .

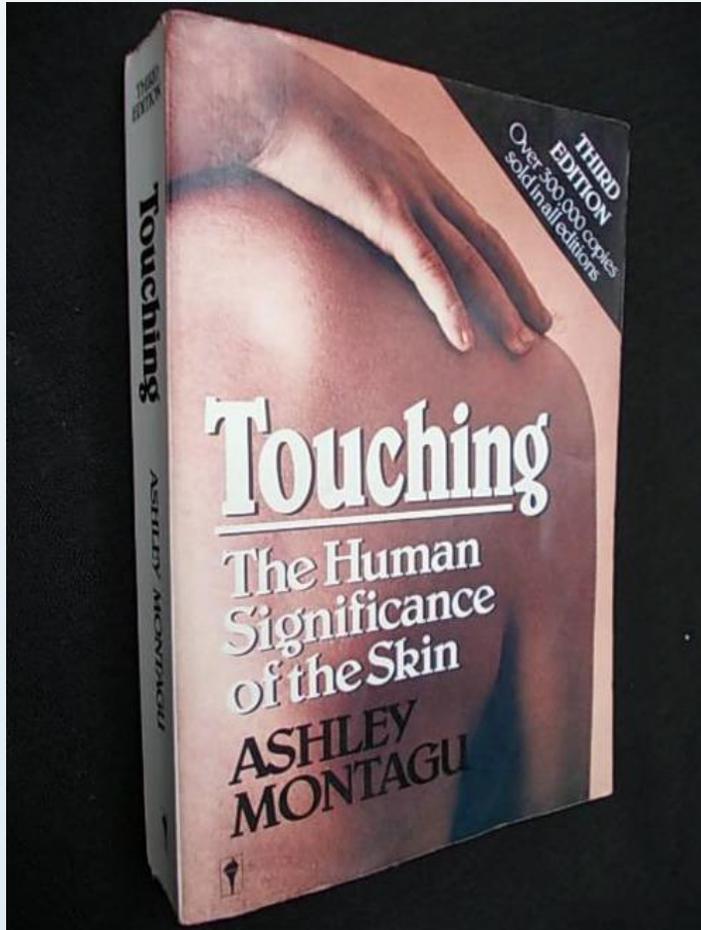
MASS 212 - Kinesiology

- Students are required to read select chapters in “Touching” by Ashley Montagu
- Discussion posts required for each chapter read; discussion starter was provided for each chapter
- Intuitive and introspective concepts learned about the aspects of touch

MASS 223 - Research

- Students divided into smaller groups and required to read research articles and discuss amongst peers
- Recipe assignment at the beginning of the semester to emphasize the fluidity of research articles
- Time saver due to lack of in-class time to spend in analyzing research articles

Kinesiology



- Similarly modeled after study by Hibbard, Bellara, and Vermette (2010)
- Must create initial post in first week after completion of assigned chapter, responses in 2nd week
- Simple rubric used to evaluate quality of content, quantity of posts, and concepts mentioned in discussion

Grading Rubric Used for Discussion Boards

TIMELY SUBMISSION AND CORRECT POSTING:	CONTENT:	GROUP PARTICIPATION:	GRADING SCALE FOR DISCUSSION POSTING:
On time, with the correct discussion group = 10 points	Detailed and shows critical thinking = 10 points	3 or more comments to other student posts with good discussion = 10 points	A = 27 – 30 points
< 1 week late, with the correct discussion group = 8 points	Detailed but shows little or no critical thinking = 8 points	1 – 2 comments to other student posts with good discussion = 8 points	B = 24 – 26 points
> 1 week late or on time with the wrong discussion group = 7 points	Incomplete or minimal post = 7 points	Fewer than 2 comments with minimal discussion = 7 points	C = 21 – 23 points
Not submitted = 0 points	No posts = 0 points	No response posts = 0 points	Fail = less than 21 points

Comparative Outcomes

MASS 212 - Kinesiology

- Opinions about the chapter readings prompted a Socratic dialogue, which created debate and healthy discussion
- Exercise in understanding the significance of touch on the human body, very introspective
- Sharing experiences sparked cultural and spiritual diversity concepts

(Matheson, Wilkinson, Gilhooly, 2012, pp. 261-2)

MASS 223 - Research

- Students were more focused on completing the assignments, fixed mindset
- Divided into smaller groups to assure that different articles were read and discussed, easier to grade

(Hibbard, et.al., 2010, p. 183)

But . . . does it really improve higher-level, critical thinking? How can we measure this?



Regular Homework Assignment vs. Discussion Board – MASS 210 course

Assignment was based on a chapter in required text on ethics and professional standards of massage therapy practice

Fall 2015 Class

- Completed homework assignment by defining ethics terms and submitting on Bb

Spring 2016 Class

- Completed discussion board assignment by viewing movie clips and identifying 3 ethical moments using proper terminology
- Discuss viewpoints on the discussion board in Bb with your classmates

Both Class Groups

- Received same point value for the assignment
- Had in-class, face-to-face lectures & discussions to supplement learning

Measurement Tools

- Point value remained the same for both assignments
- Same Final Exam used for both classes
- Compared outcomes on results from each class group on the exam questions testing knowledge on ethical concepts
 - Term Definitions
 - Critical Thinking/Decision-Making



Comparison of Final Exams – Term Definition Questions - % Success

Item # on Exam	Fall 2015	Spring 2016
#7	80	60
#9	60	40
#24	100	100
#26	100	100
#27	80	100
#28	80	100
Matching Item	80	100
Averages	83%	86%

Comparison of Final Exams – Decision-Making/Critical Thinking Questions - % Success

Item # on Exam	Fall 2015	Spring 2016
#10	100	80
#17	60	100
#23	60	80
#25	100	100
Averages	80%	90%

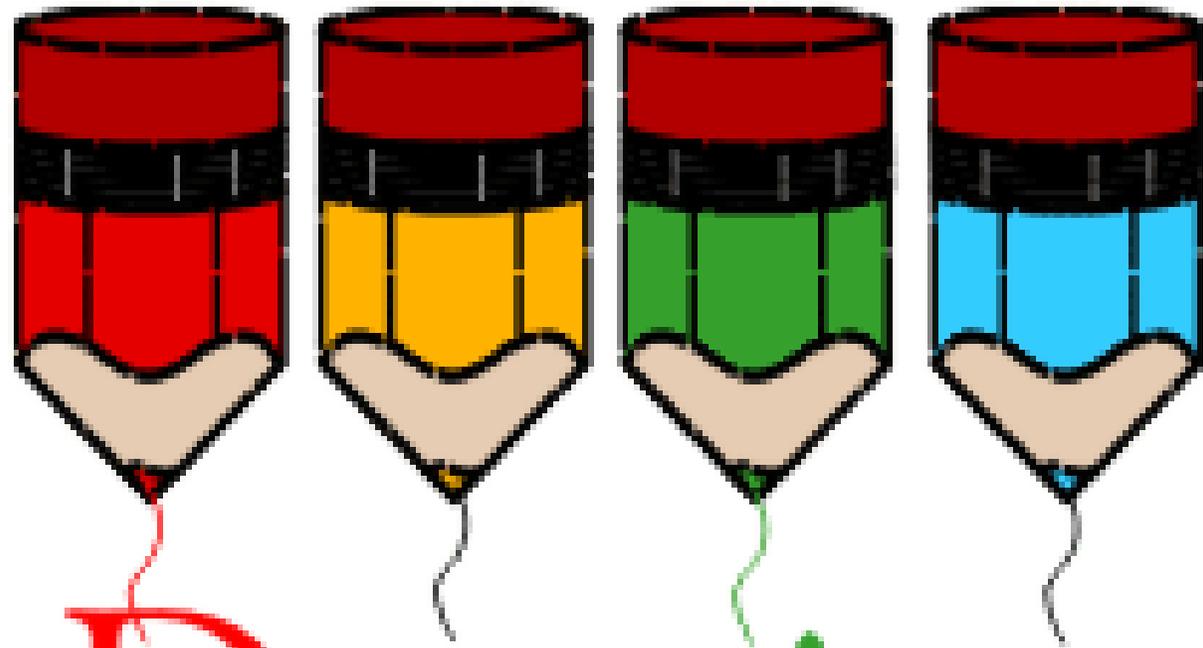
Data Analysis

FALL 2015 Class

- Small class group = less than 10 students
- Completed homework assignment defining terms
- Final Exam results on ethics questions = 81% overall
- Lower success rate on critical thinking, decision-making questions

SPRING 2016 Class

- Small class group = less than 10 students
- Completed 2 week assignment using a discussion board to apply terminology to scenarios
- Final Exam results on ethics questions = 87% overall
- Higher success rate on critical thinking, decision-making questions



Drawing
conclusions

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