

Responses from FEG Kick Off, September 27, 2016

Does argument mapping look like it may assist you in teaching CT to your students? If so, how so? If not, why not?

Yes

- I can tie it to research writing to help students develop problem statements logically into supported hypotheses.
- Making explicit the process of breaking apart arguments, evaluating conclusions, determining premises, identifying assumptions.
- It is visual. It is a new way to look at teaching critical thinking so as a faculty member, I need to learn the process so that I am comfortable with it and can help students develop confidence in using argument mapping. (Kathe Julin)
- It provides a map or path to travel to get to CT.
- Help in evaluating the strength of conclusions or assertions in my class, Natural Resource Policy and Law, NRES 473. Help students see alternative viewpoints and the relative strengths of arguments.
- It complements the curriculum I teach on visual communication and design. It also simplifies a complex network of connections. The brain processes images faster than words.
- Evaluating scientific claims and arguments related to new data and how they relate to old data / established dogma.
- It could provide me and my students with a scaffold on which we can build different interpretations of musical grammar. Zooming out and looking at the musical passage as a whole and making interpretive decisions can be hard to do.
- My students will deal with parents of young children. Learning how we can all look at the same data, especially as regarding their child / student, and come to different conclusions because of one inference, will be helpful in developing better communication and potential conflict resolution.
- Yes, though I'm not enthusiastic about using any new software or online tools. I am interested in coming up with Tupperware-like modules for different CT challenges – i.e. finding a missing premise, etc.
- AM looks like it may assist me in teaching critical thinking to German students and also to future language teachers. Developing writing skills may be difficult for native speakers of English. Developing skills to write in a more sophisticated way in a second language is somewhat more complicated. AM may be a good tool to work on this skill.
- I think there is great value in making argument concretely visual. I also gained insight from the idea of small writing assignments, especially if it is reflective in nature, in order to capture a slow down and focus on one's own evaluative cognitive processes. I think it is key to reduce students' perceptions of vulnerability this way and increase risk taking.

- I really enjoyed today's presentation. I think argument mapping will assist me. It will complement what I already do. Currently I discuss critical thinking techniques. Love the chicken example story.
- Argument mapping may be helpful in engineering as a means for students to see and critique their decision making skills, maybe even provide an objective way to assess those skills. (Karyn Biasca)
- Recognizing patterns and the ability to make connections between "claims" is critical to success in organic chemistry. As yet I do not see the connection between the argument map and pattern recognition. Nevertheless, I think the argument map could help students write better reports. They could learn how to separate data from conclusions based on data.
- I believe I could use argument mapping with my students. In particular, I'd like to connect 1) the argumentative worth of specific examples as evidence of commitment to professional principles, 2) the practical worth of providing that evidence in a job application. I'm tech savvy, so I'm very interested in a digital tool to expedite creating visual instructional materials. I see this as applicable to helping meet GEP outcomes in my course.
- Argument mapping would be helpful if students have seen the puzzle pieces previously. We ask students to write about an environmental issue from two or more perspectives, so really building two arguments without revealing their own opinion.
- I am curious to see how I can use argument mapping to help students dig into analyzing movement / choreography / technique and evaluating research questions. Possibly lead to more open-minded approach to their own learning and more in depth investment in personal growth. What may assist me most is being able to run through scenarios with an expert critical thinking to see if I am on the right track! (Jennie Hill – Dance)

Mixed

- It is the first time I'm attending a mapping critical thinking. Therefore, I can't say if it will help my teaching on critical thinking. I'll explore for examples and see how to use it.
- I think it would be much easier to use [mapping] if students were already exposed to mapping *before* I have them in class. It seems like a bulky tool to teach while trying to provide content. It seems like it would work well in a writing emphasis class. We mentioned a software package at the end of class that could help with meeting facilitation. I think I could potentially really use something like that in my discussion sections. I also think I need to see a little more of the benefits of using mapping. Right now it feels more like an exercise that I can't really connect to a real benefit to my students.
- Yes – in Regards to understanding their motivations and others' rosivalty (?) on subjects.
No – many things that the military does is very binary with many potential results (ROTC Dept.)
- How argument mapping can be useful – visually representing arguments in things we read as a class or in discussions we have, possibly as a tool for students in planning arguments they will make in papers.

How it may not – I have doubts about how useful it is for students as a tool for *discussing* an argument (vs. showing an understanding already arrived at), and therefore concerns about getting too focused on teaching them how to draw the map “correctly.”

I also hope that we’ll have opportunities to explore other strategies for teaching / talking about other aspects of critical thinking, e.g. evaluating evidence, responding fairly to opposing arguments, the disposition to make use of their skills.

No

- Most of my critical thinking activities revolves around unpredictable data results that could be mapped in unpredictable ways. (Rob Michitsch)
- I don’t see how this mapping will fit into some of natural resource discussion classes that I teach. I would like too more tools / software that would be easy to visualize. (Shiba Kar CNR)

SUMMARY

How argument mapping might assist instructors in teaching critical thinking:

1. The instructor can display the map of an argument in order to focus class discussion and evaluation of that argument.
2. The instructor can map a group discussion as it evolves.
3. Students can learn to map the argument in a piece of text in order to clarify and track the reasoning. This process includes distinguishing between data and conclusions
4. Students can learn to refer to the map of an argument in order to identify stated and unstated assumptions.
5. Students can learn to use the map of an argument in order to evaluate the assumptions and inferences in that argument. This process includes assessing the quality of evidence and appreciating alternative viewpoints.
6. Students can learn to defend a conclusion by mapping an argument in its support.
7. Students can learn to plan a paper or presentation by reviewing the argument map in order to decide what ideas to say in what order.
8. Students can learn to communicate an argument more fluently by writing it in a way that would make it easy to for a reader to map.