

A FRAMEWORK FOR ENHANCING CRITICAL THINKING WITHIN HEALTH SCIENCE COURSES

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DESCRIPTION OF TEACHING/LEARNING CONTEXT

Critical thinking is a cognitive act that applies analysis and reasoning to answer complex questions and guide decision making (Dwyer et al., 2014). It is an important skill to address in the classroom, but instructors can find themselves at a loss for best practices (Folkins, 2016; Halx & Reybold, 2005; Nicholas & Raider-Roth, 2011, 2016). This chapter provides an evidence-based framework for enhancing college students' critical thinking skills across health disciplines.

Critical thinking is an essential component of clinical practice in the health professions (Huang et al., 2014; Sharples et al., 2017). Providers must draw upon the body of evidence-based literature to guide patients and the interdisciplinary medical team to make informed health decisions. Critical thinking skills can reduce the frequency of diagnostic and management errors that occur in patient care (Harasym et al., 2008). Among students in health disciplines, critical thinking skills are positively associated with academic success (Ross et al., 2013).

The course, FN 4400: Research Methods in Nutrition, Foods, and Dietetics, at Bowling Green State University (Bowling Green, Ohio) was recently redesigned to improve students' critical thinking skills and address their common concerns about research (see Earley, 2014). To do so, we developed an evidence-based framework for teaching critical thinking and incorporated it into the FN 4400 course. The framework consists of the following four themes: