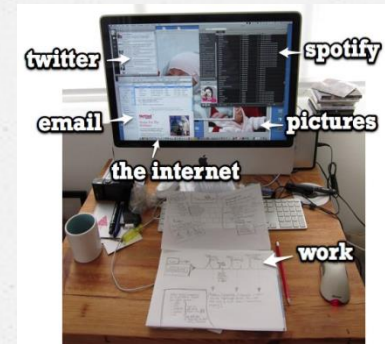# Is Multitasking a Myth? *
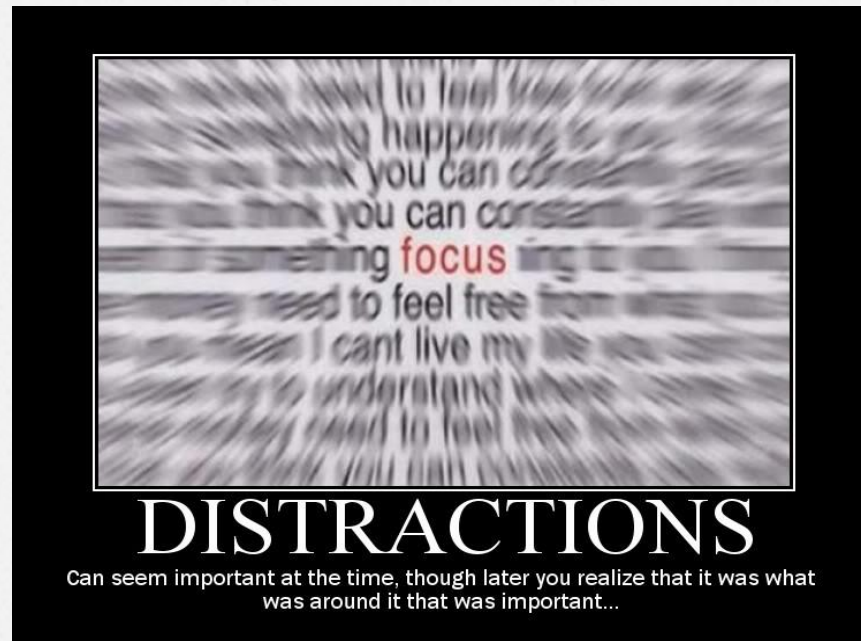
Engaging Students Through Performance Tasks While Enhancing Critical Thinking

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*pictures courtesy of Google Images

Well, let's just see if you can multitask!!!

DISTRACTIONS

Can seem important at the time, though later you realize that it was what was around it that was important…

YES…IT'S A QUIZ!

This is one of those topics that:

O Has practical implications in the real world (authenticity)

O Is multi-disciplinary (social sciences, biology, business, education, communication, etc.)

O Lends itself very well to a performance task that taps critical thinking and problem-solving, as students weight evidence
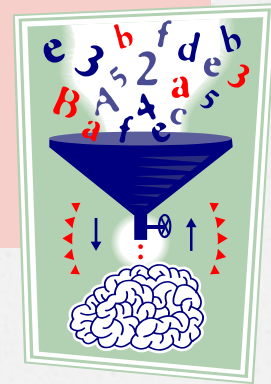
Some Facts…

O 90% of higher ed faculty feel that critical thinking is the most important goal of an undergrad education[1]

O 6% of college seniors are "proficient" in critical thinking, 77% are "not proficient"[2]

O A good [college] education should provide multiple opportunities for students to engage in "inquiry-based learning," both independently and in collaborative teams."[3]

1 Bok, D. (2006). *Our Underachieving Colleges.*
2 2003-04 Academic Profile, Educational Testing Service.
3 Assoc. of American Colleges & Universities. (2007), *LEAP* Document.

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Just what is "critical thinking"?
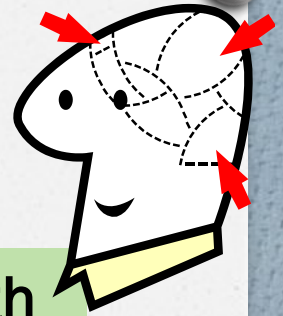
O Subset of "higher-order thinking" along with analytical reasoning & problem-solving

O Includes considering issue from multiple perspectives

O Critically examining evidence

O Valuing claims backed by appropriate & adequate evidence

O Reasoning objectively & dispassionately

O Arriving at informed judgments & decisions

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Some background...

O BU applied & accepted to join the CIC/CLA Consortium (Council of Independent Colleges and Collegiate Learning Assessment)

O BU began using the CLA (approx. 100 freshmen and 100 seniors) in 2010-11

O Collaboration among institutions, strategies, assessment data for institutional use (we now have two data sets)

THE COUNCIL OF INDEPENDENT COLLEGES

Let's try a Performance Task!

Boutique Architectural

You have been hired as a consultant. Your charge is to review the literature on employee distractions and productivity and make a recommendation regarding the pros and cons of adopting a policy on the use of the internet and social media by employees at Boutique Architectural.

(See attached scenario.)

So...what answers do you have???

O Learning objectives/outcomes for the task?

O Questions you want students to identify?

O Types and sources of evidence?

O Format for the final product?

O Should there be one "correct" finding or multiple solutions?

How was this a Performance Task?

O Used authentic scenario for active engagement

O Mirrored the ambiguity and complexity of real-world challenges, ie., information may be conflicting or partial, or have competing frameworks

O Engaged higher-order thinking, with a focus on analyzing, synthesizing, & applying evidence to arrive at a judgment or decision

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In designing this task,

O You would create a "product" that is authentic (memo, presentation, plan of action)

O You would have clear evaluation criteria and rubrics to provide for self-evaluation and diagnostic feedback on strengths & weaknesses

O You would have designed the task by determining learning outcomes *first* (backward design)

Multitasking: the single best way to screw up both jobs.

How does one do "backward design"?

O **STEP 1:** Identify desired results (what do you want students to know & do?)

O **STEP 2:** Determine acceptable evidence (what will give you evidence of student proficiency?)

O **STEP 3:** What learning experiences & instruction (including materials & resources) will accomplish 1 & 2?

More decisions…
or, how do I score this?

O Scoring depends on the objective for the task and the skills attached to the task

O Do you want only individual scores, group scores, or both?

O Is your goal to assess writing effectiveness?

O Yes, a different rubric may need to be created with each task

O You may want to use broader categories such as: emerging – developing - mastering

Implementing metacognition (thinking about one's own thinking) will...

O Encourage students to define "higher level thinking" for themselves

O Encourage students to evaluate & assess their own skills in problem-solving & critical thinking

O Provide feedback to the instructor as to which students have not mastered the content or skills fully
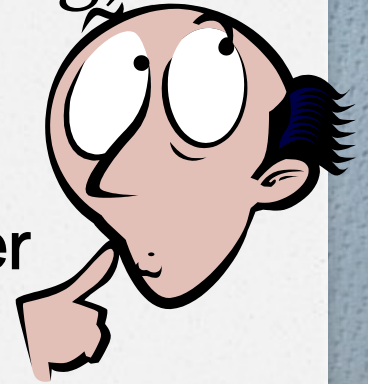
Accomplishments/Hurdles

Yea!!!

O Student engagement

O Multiple perspectives

O Group dynamics

O (What else?)

Ohhhh...

O Preparation

O Time to administer

O Varying assessments

O (What else?)

What can BU do to support faculty in this endeavor? Perhaps a Faculty Learning Community?

Additional Resources:

O www.collegiatelearningassessment.org

O http://collegiatelearningassessment.org/files/Architecture_of_the_CLA_Tasks.pdf

O www.claintheclassroom.org

And...there's more to come next week!

O We'll tackle the specifics of assessing performance tasks;

O How they might be developed and used across disciplines; and

O How to integrate them into courses!

In the meantime...keep