

Critical Thinking in the ESL Writing Classroom

Matthew Overstreet | New Economic School

Critical Thinking

...the correct assessing
of statements.

Robert Ennis, "A Concept of Critical
Thinking" (1962).



Steps of Critical Thinking

Students have to be able to recall verbs, nouns, adjectives, adverbs, etc.

Students can ask and answer questions in set formats and also describe things and situations.

You can have students collaborate in pairs or groups



Give students some new vocabulary and have them create their own descriptions and questions & answers of the subject.

Have students swap their Step 4 masterpieces with other students.

Give students the ability to be able to describe and compare certain subjects.

Creating

Evaluating

Analyzing

Applying

Understanding

Remembering

Higher Order Skills

designing, constructing,
inventing, devising...

hypothesizing, judging,
checking, critiquing...

organizing, structuring,
outlining, integrating...

using, implementing...

summarizing, inferring,
interpreting, comparing...

recognizing, listing,
naming, identifying...

Critical and Analytical Thinking

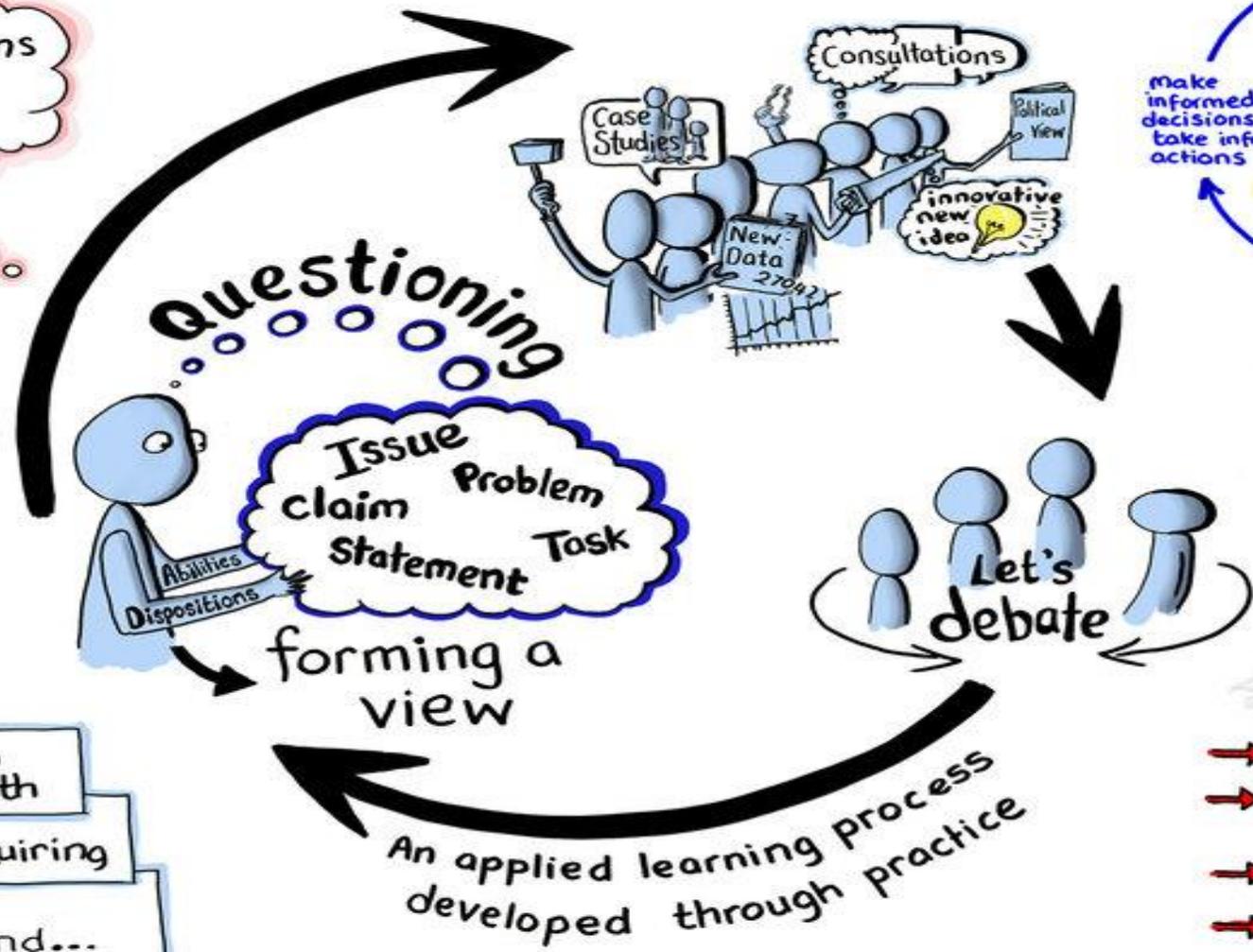
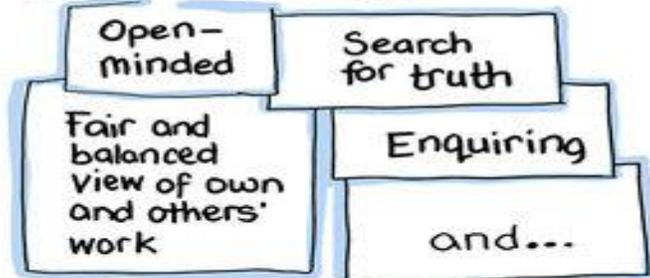
Objective analysis and evaluation of an issue in order to form a judgement
Succeeding in Postgraduate Study



Abilities



Dispositions



- **Misunderstanding** - Language process
- **Reluctance to critique:** - the norm - experts
- **Lack of focus** on detail
- **Just wanting to know the answers** without questioning

Critical Thinking

Active, persistent, and careful consideration of any belief or supposed form of knowledge in the light of the grounds that support it, and the further conclusions to which it tends.

John Dewey, *How We Think* (1910).

Critical Thinking

...the art of thinking about your thinking while you are thinking in order to make your thinking better: more clear, more accurate, more defensible.

Richard Paul & Linda Elder, *Critical Thinking: Tools for Taking Charge of Your Professional and Personal Life* (2002).

Critical Thinking

- Is active & intensive
- Involves looking backwards & forwards
- Demands reflection, not just on single claims, but systems of thought
- Occurs when we are challenged

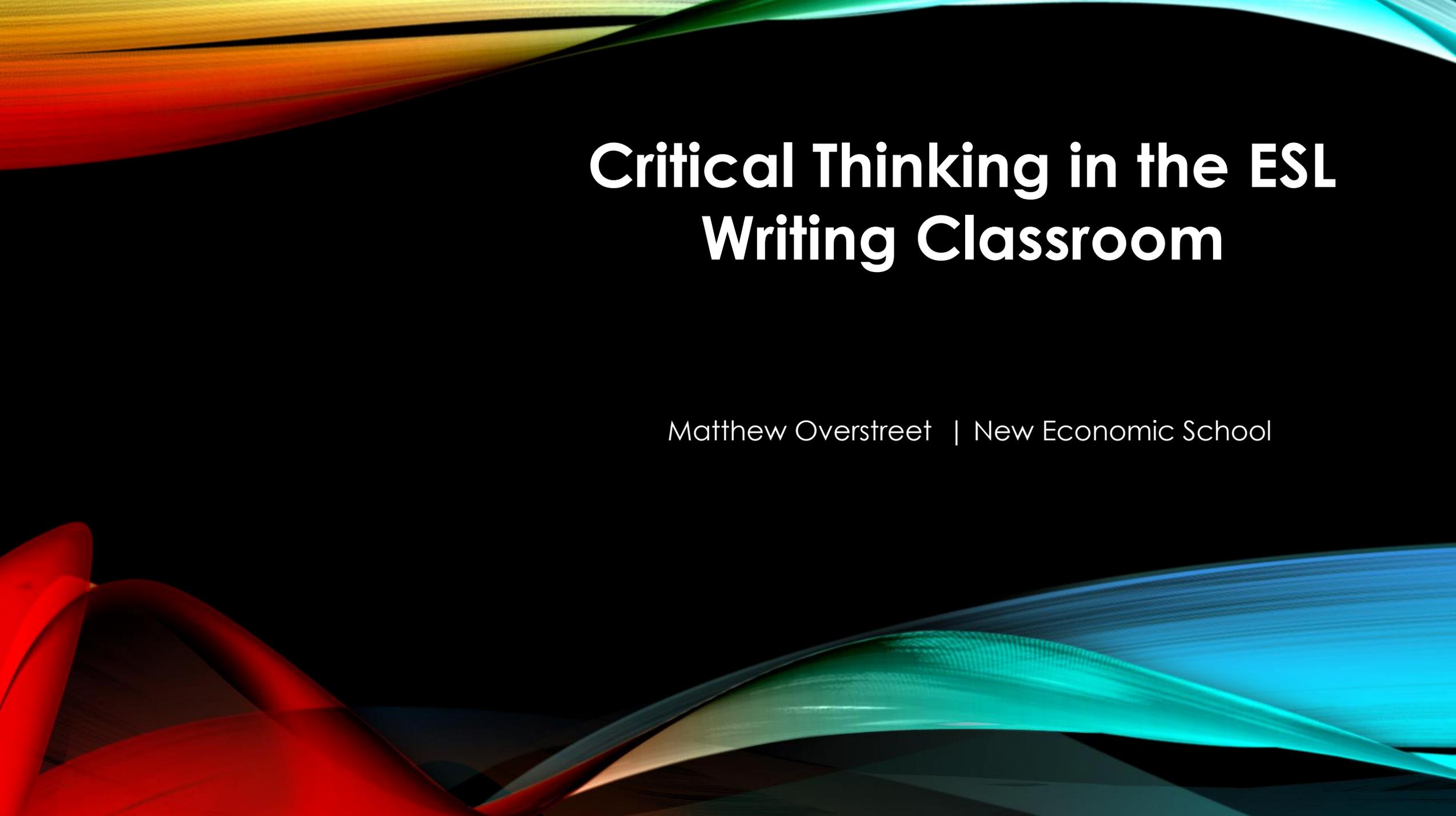
Elaboration

Marx expected the struggle of classes to be inevitable for all types of societies. If this proposition was holding for earlier dates, like the end of 19th century or first half of 20th century, today the situation changed completely.

Now, it is rather challenging to find any society in which different social groups hate each other and have been in constant conflict for a long time: now “proletariat” and “bourgeoisie” are merging and sometimes it is hard to distinguish one class from another....

Even if there still is a group of people with extremely high incomes, this group is so few in numbers, then it in most cases could be excluded from the society. Most people have comparable shares of income, so there is no dichotomy as it was in the times of Marx. Social groups are not different in income, so there are less ways to create a split in society.





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