Critical Reading Questions

(types of questions for discussing a text)

# Epistemological Questions:

probe how an author comes to know that something is true. Here are some examples:

* To what extent does the writing seem culturally biased? For example, does the author make universal claims about . . .
* To what extent are description and prescription confused in an irresponsible and inaccurate way? For example, does the author write as if the philosophical ideals she or he holds about . . . are empirically accurate summaries of reality?
* To what extent are the central insights grounded in documented empirical evidence? (Remember, empirical evidence includes personal experience.)
* To what extent are the ideas presented an uncritical extension of the paradigm within which the author works? For example, does the author’s view of . . . skew his or her treatment of various theories of . . .?

# Experiential Questions:

help you review the text through the lens of your own relevant experiences with the issues covered in the text. Here are some examples:

* How do the metaphors used in the text compare to the metaphors you use to describe your own similar experiences? For example, . . .
* What experiences are omitted from the text that strike you as important?
* If the text addresses experiences with which you are familiar, to what extent are these congruent with or contradicted by your own experiences? For example, . . .

# Communicative Questions:

examine how authors convey meaning and whether or not the forms they choose tend to clarify or confuse. Here are some examples:

* To what extent does the text use a form of specialized language that is unjustifiably distant from colloquial language?
* To what extent is the text connected to practice? For example, does the text analyze problems of practice you face in a helpful way, and does it suggest useful responses to these problems?
* Whose voices are heard in the text? For example, are the most important voices those of the learners studied, the author, or major gatekeepers and theoreticians in the field?

# Political Questions:

alert us to the ways in which published works serve to represent certain interests and challenge others. Here are some examples:

* Whose interests are served by the publication of this text? For example, is this book written primarily to advance the author’s career, to help practitioners, or to enhance the reputation of the organization that sponsored the research, or . . . ?
* What contribution does the text make to the understanding and realization of democratic forms and processes? For example, does reading this book help us create more opportunities for self-evaluation, classroom discussion, collective educational action, or a negotiated curriculum?
* To what extent does this text challenge or confirm existing ideologies, values and structures? For example, does it routinely use capitalistic metaphors for . . .?

Brookfield, Stephen D.; Preskill, Stephen (2009). *Discussion as a Way of Teaching: Tools and Techniques for Democratic Classrooms* (Jossey Bass Higher and Adult Education) (Kindle Locations 1564-1604). Wiley Publishing. Kindle Edition.