



## Course Learning Outcomes for Unit IV

Upon completion of this unit, students should be able to:

3. Formulate questions that result in critical thinking.
5. Develop strategies for self-assessment.
6. Evaluate decision-making patterns that result in problem solving.

## Reading Assignment

### Chapter 5:

Standards for Thinking, pp. 91-103

### Chapter 6:

Ask Questions That Lead to Good Thinking

### Chapter 7:

Master the Thinking, Master the Content

Please review the PowerPoint presentation below from the CSU Success Center to help guide you:

Columbia Southern University. (2014). PowerPoint best practices. Retrieved from <http://columbiasouthern.adobeconnect.com/powerpointbestpractices/>

*In order for the links below to function properly, you must first log into the myCSU Student Portal and access the Opposing Viewpoints in Context database within the CSU Online Library.*

*You may also access the resource by visiting the Opposing Viewpoints in Context database and performing a search for the title and/or author.*

Bryjak, G. J. (2005). Executions should be televised. In M. E. Williams (Ed.), *Current Controversies. Capital Punishment*.

Muhlhausen, D. (2013). The death penalty deters crime. In J. Cromie & L. M. Zott (Eds.), *Opposing Viewpoints. The Death Penalty*.

Weil, J. (2013). The death penalty does not deter crime. In J. Cromie & L. M. Zott (Eds.), *Opposing Viewpoints. The Death Penalty*.

*In order for the links below to function properly, you must first log into the myCSU Student Portal and access the Academic OneFile database within the CSU Online Library.*

Leche, P. (2009, June). Say what. *Policy & Practice*, 67(3), 36.

## Unit Lesson

### Rhetorical Devices

Often when humans receive information from other sources, those sources seek to influence the people. The art of influencing people through language is called *rhetoric*. Rhetoric is used in both written and spoken language. Nothing is more powerful in persuasion than effective arguments that are presented with rhetorical excellence. Dr. Martin Luther King's "I Have a Dream" speech would have been much less effective if he had walked up on the stage and said, "All people should have equal rights and consideration....Thank you." Instead, Dr. King utilized metaphorical language and captured the audience through his impassioned and emotional style. Rhetoric is extremely useful for those who practice it well, and just like all good things, it can be used in a way that is manipulative and injurious. In this lecture, we are going to examine some of the rhetorical devices that people use to manipulate others' thinking.

Depending on your perspective and life experiences, words will take on different shades of meaning. In addition, by the mere addition or subtraction of one word, you can change the perceived meaning of a sentence drastically, even when the sentence factually says the exact same thing. Let's look at an example. Suppose someone said the following:

"Can you believe that Juan has three kids?"

Most people would interpret the perspective of the speaker as one of disbelief at the fact that Juan has three kids. Many people could not imagine trying to complete the activities of their lives with the added responsibility of three children. However, let's change the preceding sentence with only one word and see what happens to the meaning of the sentence. Suppose that same person were to rephrase the previous statement in the following way:

"Can you believe that Juan has only three kids?"

With the addition of the word "only," the entire rhetorical meaning of the sentence has shifted. In this second example the tone of the speaker has gone from amazement to expectation. If you were to ask a group of people about the life of the speaker you would probably often hear the response that this person has more than three kids. Parents with five, six, or seven children might look at others who have three children from this perspective. Let's imagine Vanessa and Juan work the same job, and Vanessa continually outperforms Juan. Juan often leaves work early to pick his kids up, or do other school related activities. Meanwhile, Vanessa is the mother of five children and she regularly has to stay at work to pick up the slack that is left over when Juan leaves early. Vanessa might critique Juan's excuses because Juan "only has three kids," while another co-worker who has no children might be amazed that Juan can accomplish so much with all the extra responsibility. This example gives us insight into how words can connote different meanings depending on how they are delivered and the audience to whom they are delivered. Now let's look at some of the rhetorical techniques of which the critical thinker must be aware.

### Euphemisms and Dysphemisms

A euphemism is a positive word that is used to express something that is negative or neutral. People use euphemisms in subtle ways depending on the situation. For example, if you were to attend the wake of a close friend after he lost his wife, you might say, "I am sorry that Iris has passed. At least we know she is in a better place." In this example, "passed" and "being in a better place" are euphemisms for the word "dead." Very rarely would someone try to console another by saying, "I am sorry that Iris is dead." In another example, you might claim that he is "big-boned" rather than saying overweight. In either case you have substituted a positive word for something neutral. However, euphemisms can be used to put a positive spin on something negative as well. When companies have large-scale firings of their employees they call it "downsizing." When someone is killed in battle, those doing the killing often can claim that "the target has been eliminated." One hears news anchors say, "16 U.S. soldiers died in a skirmish on the Afghan border." Any time that 16 people get killed this extends well beyond the idea of a skirmish. The word "skirmish" would be more effectively used to describe a middle school fight in the hallway after lunch, not to depict a large scale military battle. In any case, a euphemism is something that is used to put a positive spin on a concept or event that is neutral or negative.

A dysphemism is the opposite of a euphemism. A dysphemism is a negative word that is used to describe something that is neutral or positive. For example, calling a Democrat a "Lib" or a Republican a "War Hawk"

would be examples of negative spins on neutral terms. Referring to someone's dorm room as a "pig sty" is another example. In relation to our previous example about death, referring to someone as "worm food" would never be something that one with any compassion would say to someone who was grieving over the loss of this person. Calling an atheist a "God-hater" does not represent the person's beliefs in a neutral light. Dysphemisms are used to direct someone's mind to negative connotations when thinking about an issue or another person, and both euphemistic and dysphemetic language pervades the language of life and media.

Euphemism	Neutral Word	Dyphemism
Progressive	Democrat	Lib
Fluffy	Overweight	Fat
Public Servant	Police Officer	Cop
Pre-owned	Used	Bucket of Bolts
Freedom Fighters	Soldiers	Rebels

## Rhetorical Definitions

Another common rhetorical technique involves defining things based on emotive language that evokes strong responses in those viewing the definitions. Rhetorical definitions are these types of definitions. Rhetorical definitions are not true definitions. Instead, they define terms using figurative or provocative language in order to promote certain ideas about the thing being defined. These definitions are popular in political debates and other social issues, and they are often used in a way that demeans or belittles the other side. Here are some examples of rhetorical definitions.

- A conservative is a bigot who is too selfish to pay taxes.
- A liberal is a tree hugger who thinks that responsible people should pay for all the irresponsible people.
- The opera is a place where people go when they want to be bored.

## Stereotypes

A stereotype is an over-simplified general belief or statement made about a certain group of people. We are all familiar with various ethnic and political stereotypes. However, if you believe in those stereotypes, you are falling into uncritical reflection. Stereotypes are always based on a lack of experiences and information. For example, if someone gets robbed in a specific neighborhood in Chicago, you might claim that "the people in that neighborhood are thieves." Really, most humans are not thieves, only a few are. Just as one bad apple can spoil the whole bunch, one bad experience can spoil the human mind and make it engage in stereotypical thinking. Stereotypical thinking influences humans in ways that are often subconscious. If someone has a stereotypical belief about certain types of people, that belief will translate into different behaviors based on the group with which one interacts.

Whenever your mind encourages you to engage in stereotypical thinking, it is important to think the following: "Does this belief represent all members of the group that I am thinking about?" In all cases, the answer will be no. There will always be members of the group that fall outside of the stereotype. There are smart and unintelligent people of all ethnicities. There are hard-working and lazy humans of all classes. There are athletic and non-athletic members of all groups. Enjoying certain activities has nothing to do with your sexual preference. Refuse to let your mind be influenced by stereotypical thinking by focusing on the attributes of humans individually. Avoid making general comments about pretty much everything. Focus on specific details and work to eliminate stereotypical ideas through the continual questioning of presuppositions. It is difficult to fight against this mode of thought. However, in the long run the person who avoids stereotypical thinking will come into more knowledge of the truth and refuse general answers that over-simplify the human experience.

## Innuendo

Innuendo is a rhetorical technique whereby someone implies something without directly stating what is being implied. The person speaking leaves something out but is still able to get his or her point across. Innuendo is often used to liven up written works and it often adds humor to situations. However, it is also a subtle way to manipulate people. Here are some examples of saying things without stating them directly.

“At least one person here is not a liar.”

If you were mediating between Daniel and Celeste, and Daniel made this statement in the course of the mediation, it would be evident that Daniel was implying that Celeste was a liar and that he was telling the truth. However, notice that the statement does not say who the liar is. It also does not claim that anyone is telling the truth. In fact, if both people were lying the statement would still be true.

“You should choose another pair of jeans.”

We often use innuendo to round off the harsh edges of statements. For example, you might say this rather than, “those jeans do not look good on you” so as to avoid hurting the feelings of the person who is trying on the jeans.

“Whoever ‘borrowed’ my DVD collection last week, please feel free to return it as soon as possible.”

Signs like these are regular occurrences in dorms around the U.S. Here the person is using the word “borrowed” to represent the fact that the collection was stolen. The person is also implying that there is a certain standard for proper motives when it comes to taking someone else’s DVD collection.

### **Loaded Questions**

A loaded question is one that has certain presuppositions that lie underneath it. Loaded questions force a person into a corner by assuming certain things about the person or the subject that is being discussed. Here are some examples of loaded questions.

Lawyer to defendant on the stand: “Mrs. Rose, why did you lie to the police?”

Lawyer to defendant on the stand: “Mrs. Rose, what did you do after you killed your husband?”

In the first example, the question is worded in such a way that it assumes that Mrs. Rose lied to the police. It seeks the motivation for the lying. In the second example, the question assumes that Mrs. Rose killed her husband. If Mrs. Rose is not quick on her feet she might respond to the question in such a way that it makes her appear guilty. For example, if Mrs. Rose were to say, “I went to church...I mean, wait a minute...I did not kill my husband!” the uncritical jurors would begin to wonder about Mrs. Rose.

Bully to other student: “Do your parents know you are an idiot?”

In this example, if the second student says “no” that would mean that his parents were unaware that he is an idiot. If he were to say “yes” then that would mean that they knew that their son was an idiot.

Another form of loaded question is based on the circumstances in which you find yourself. These questions are usually created as attention grabbers for people who are trying to solicit others. For example, in Chicago you might be walking down a narrow sidewalk and see someone in the distance smiling and waving. As you get closer the person says, “Do you have five minutes for women’s rights (or animal abuse, or starving children)?” If you respond by saying “yes” then you are forced to stop and listen to the little spiel that ultimately is about you giving money to the cause. However, if you say “no” to this question, then you appear heartless as if you cannot give five minutes of your time to abused women, starving children, or abused animals.

In order to escape a loaded question, you must not respond to the question, but to the assumptions that underlie the question. For example, Mrs. Rose should say, “I did not lie to the police” and “I did not kill my husband.” In the example with the bully, the other student should respond by saying, “I am not an idiot.” The last example is harder to get out of. You could say to the other person, “that is a loaded question” and then try to explain the assumptions that underlie the question. However, that would take your time anyway. Perhaps you could say, “women’s rights is an extremely important issue, but I do not have time right now.” A final, more cynical response involves the use of innuendo. You might retort, “how much are they paying you to ask these questions.”

## **Suggested Reading**

After reading the articles, use some of the skills that you have learned in the class readings. What questions should you ask about the topic that use the elements of thought?

## **Learning Activities (Non-Graded)**

To gain further knowledge of the material, including key terms, please view this HTML presentation. This will summarize and reinforce the information from these chapters in your textbook.

Click [here](#) to access the lesson presentation for Unit IV.

Non-Graded Learning Activities are provided to aid students in their course of study. You do not have to submit them. If you have questions contact your instructor for further guidance and information.