Class Activities

# Chapter 11: Thinking and Problem Solving

## 1. Setting Goals

The text describes that many decisions we make are goal-oriented. For this exercise, ask students to identify three goals (one immediate, one short-term, one long-term). Then, have students identify steps they need to take to reach each goal, as well as decisions they may be faced with at each step. Lastly, ask students to identify how the decisions they make could affect them reaching their goals.

For example, students must select the appropriate coursework for their major to matriculate on time and without having to take unnecessary courses. Let’s say there is a freshman who plans to major in psychology. He/she has the option of taking Intro to Criminal Justice of Intro to Psychology for his/her Social Sciences general education requirements. If he/she chooses the CJ course, which he’s/she’s heard is easier, he/she would need to put in less work now, but would have to still take the psych course later because it is a prerequisite for many upper-division psych classes. The decision of which course to take would impact his/her short-term goal of earning her B.S. in psychology.

## 2. Create Categorical Syllogisms

The goal of this exercise is for students to work on their reasoning skills by creating and solving categorical syllogisms. First, after having discussed the various types of reasoning, have students work independently to create three unique categorical syllogisms. Explain that each syllogism must have at least two premises and be solvable. For example:

Premise: Some florists are women.

Premise: All women play softball.

Conclusion: Some florists play softball.

Then, have students exchange syllogisms with one another with the conclusions omitted and have them work on solving them.

## 3. Confirmation Bias and Politics

The purpose of this activity is to demonstrate how vulnerable we are to confirmation bias on a daily basis. I like to begin this discussion by asking my students to raise their hand if they identify as a republican. I then ask these students to raise their hand if they prefer 1) MSNBC or 2) Fox News. After I record the results on the board I do the same for my students who identify as a democrat (see contingency table below). You should find that the republican students overwhelmingly prefer Fox News and the democrats overwhelmingly prefer MSNBC. Once you establish, news preference is based upon political party affiliation, discuss why this may be. Are the students able to recognize their own confirmation bias?

You may even want to bring several headlines from each news organization and ask students to guess which organization published the headline. This can be a way to demonstrate confirmation bias in the supposedly “fair and balanced” and “without fear or favor” journalism organizations.

Fox News MSNBC

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Republican |  |  |
| Democrat |  |  |