

# Book Abstracts

Missimer, Connie (1994). *Good Arguments: An Introduction to Critical Thinking, 3rd ed.* Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall. ISBN 0-13360322-9.

Although simple in approach, this text enables the reader to deal with complex arguments. Critical thinking is defined as the comparison of alternative arguments, theories, or solutions in light of their evidence. The language of analysis appears throughout in boldface type; argument is represented visually as a house. The first three chapters show how to identify the parts of an argument. The next four chapters explain the major types of evidence: single observation, speculation, correlation, controlled experiment. The final chapters deal with complex arguments, and problem-solving as critical thinking. Readings offer unusual theories across disciplines, from a historian's argument why we use forks rather than our fingers, to controlled experiments suggesting that smiling creates a good mood. The book is a lively, practical guide.

Moore, Brooke N. & Parker, Richard (1992). *Critical Thinking, 3rd ed.* Mountain View, CA: Mayfield. ISBN 1-55934-072-X.

*Critical Thinking*, now in its third edition, is a textbook designed for introductory courses in critical thinking, practical reasoning, and elementary logic. The major division in the book is between claims (five chapters) and arguments (seven chapters), with attention given to understanding and evaluation in both areas. A sample from the wide variety of material covered might include issue-clarification, slanted language, assessing credibility, pseudoreasoning (including informal fallacies), categorical and truth-functional logic, inductive and causal arguments, and reasoning about moral, legal, and aesthetic matters. The book uses "real world" examples and includes over 1,100 exercises. The importance of (and guidance in) writing is emphasized throughout. The book is designed to be flexible in both teaching method and content coverage.

Waller, Bruce N. (1994). *Critical Thinking: Consider the Verdict, 2nd ed.* Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall. ISBN 0-13-177635-5.

*Critical Thinking: Consider the Verdict, 2nd ed.* mines a rich lode of fascinating court cases, and challenges students to take the role of jurors and analyze, evaluate and construct arguments. Students learn to appreciate cogent arguments – "What is the District Attorney's strongest argument for conviction?" – while developing the necessary skills of fallacy detection. The jury room lessons are extended and reinforced through extensive real life exercises from advertising, contemporary social and political issues, appeals court cases, science and pseudoscience, and bioethics. The courtroom setting is ideal for examining *ad hominem* arguments, legitimate and fallacious appeal to authority, and the burden of proof; and the obvious importance and inherent interest of criminal trials eliminates student doubts about the relevance of critical thinking to their lives.

Wright, Larry (1989). *Practical Reasoning.* San Diego, CA: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich. ISBN 0-15-571041-9.

This text treats basic critical thinking themes as systematic features of the way we exploit our general understanding of things in our reasoning. It begins with the very general notion of argument as "reasons offered in support of a statement", and develops the following apparatus: a) the schematic argument *paraphrase*, b) the *question* it implicitly addresses, c) the different answers we need to consider (*rival conclusions*), d) slightly technical notions of *relevance* and *plausibility*, and e) the distinction between two different *kinds of support* (what gets explained and what merely helps) when what we infer are explanations. Specific topics thus addressed include: cause, testimony, sampling, enumeration, theorizing and experiment in science, prediction, good-consequence arguments, the induction/deduction distinction, some conversational fallacies, and a number of reasoning issues related to the practical use of language.

Book abstracts as provided by authors.