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LINK: Quality Enhancement and Accreditation Update

CAPE FEAR COMMUNITY COLLEGE

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Thinking Critically About the Israeli/Palestinian Conflict

On Wednesday, November 2, English instructor Cheryl Saba is CFCC hosts a forum address- serving as moderator.

ing a topic that has dominated international affairs for decades, the ongoing disputes between Israel and the Pales-



LINK asked Professor Stern to share some of the highlights of her presentation and discuss how this topic relates

History instructors to critical thinking.

Susan Stern and Bob Brennan and political science instructor Greg Arey are the panelists for this forum;

1. What will be the focus of your presentation? *(continued on page 8)*

Cape Fear Community College's Quality Enhancement Plan is a five year initiative to achieve

- Measurable improvement of students' critical thinking skills at the course, program, and curricular levels
- Enhanced instructional practices that promote critical thinking and life-long learning
- Improved strategies for assessing student learning outcomes
- More effective professional development opportunities for faculty and support staff

Critical Thinking Assessment Results: Steady Improvement Continues

This summer a team of 16 instructors from CFCC's Arts & Sciences, Technical/Vocational, and Continuing Education divisions came together to evaluate the level of critical thinking students exhibited in samples of work taken from gen-

eral education core courses. The results of the 2011 assessment of critical thinking in randomly selected general education courses are generally consistent with results from previous years. The overall average *(continued on page 5)*

What Have We Done?

Putting Together the QEP Impact Report

This is the last year of the implementation of CFCC's quality enhancement plan (QEP). In September 2012 CFCC will submit to the Commission on Colleges of the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (COCSACS) an impact report describing the outcomes of our QEP. This report will indicate to what extent CFCC followed through with its plan to improve students' critical thinking skills. The impact report will also describe what we've learned from the implementation of our QEP.

SACS provides specific guidelines for the information that should be included in the QEP impact report. CFCC will be expected to provide the following information:

- The title and a brief description of the institution's Quality Enhancement Plan as initially presented;
- A succinct list of the initial goals and intended outcomes of the QEP;
- A discussion of significant changes made to the QEP and the reasons for making those changes; and
- A description of the QEP's direct impact on student learning—and/or the learning environment—including the achievement of goals and outcomes as outlined in item two above, and unanticipated outcomes of the QEP, if any.

BRAINTEASERS!!!

1. A woman was reading a book. She would read half of the remaining book each day. The book has 348 pages. How many days will it take to finish the book?
2. Four friends (Jay Leno, David Letterman, Jon Stewart and Stephen Colbert) must cross a narrow rickety bridge at night. You must use a flashlight to cross the bridge, and they only have 1 flashlight, so no more than 2 can cross at a time. Leno can cross in 1 minute. It takes Letterman 2 minutes. Jon Stewart can cross in 5 minutes but it takes Colbert 10 minutes. They only have 17 minutes for all of them to cross the bridge. How should they do it?

Check <http://cfcc.edu/SACS/QEP> for the answers.

The QEP Committee will begin drafting the impact report this January. This committee will also coordinate documentation efforts of the other committees that have been involved in implementing the QEP: the General Education, Students Success, and Professional Development committees.

More than anything, the QEP impact report will be an opportunity to document the hard work and contributions so many of you have given this initiative over the last five years. If you have any questions about the QEP impact report or have any data you feel should be included, please contact Jason Chaffin at jchaffin@cfcc.edu.

"The conventional view serves to protect us from the painful job of thinking."
J. K. Galbraith

Sharpening Critical Thinking in ACA Classes

By Meredith Merrill, Developmental English & ACA Coordinator

This fall a Common Final Assignment (CFA) has been implemented in all ACA (College Success) classes. ACA instructors in both ACA 111—College Student Success—and ACA 122—College Transfer Success—classes are assigning their students a common final assignment to count at least 20% towards the final grade in the course.

The ACA 111 CFA, catered to our Technical and Vocational students, is a Career Report to compare two career choices, while the ACA 122 assignment, a College Transfer Research Report to compare two transfer schools, caters to our College Transfer students. The two different assignments have been tailored specifically to meet the goals of the two courses in terms of what we want our ACA students to leave our classes knowing regarding where they are headed in terms of their academic and career goals. In fact, many ACA instructors were already requiring versions of these two assignments in their courses, but now there are common guidelines and a common grading rubric for instructors to use. However, there is still a lot of room for the instructors to put their own touches on these assignments.

The idea of a common final assignment is not new and is already used here and at other college campuses to ensure that students taking the same courses are given similar experiences and are required to meet uniform objectives and standards. Common final assign-

ments help achieve this consistency, and these ACA Common Final Assignments have been designed to promote and demonstrate critical thinking skills in our students.

In ACA 111 (College Student Success) students must complete a career report where they compare two careers or two specializations within a field by providing information on what is needed to obtain each job, such as degrees/licenses/certifications required, special skills needed, other desirable training.

They must also provide specific job description information for each career, such as the job outlook, salary, work conditions, and a description of a typical day. Additionally, they must articulate and compare the facts about the two jobs and ultimately state conclusions on which career is the better choice based on their findings. The assignment goals for the ACA 111 CFA are as follows:

ACA 111 Assignment Goals:

- Encourage critical thinking skills through the analysis, synthesis and evaluation of information regarding two careers (or two specializations within a career field), while making final conclusions about the two career paths
- Have students evaluate information about two careers and articulate conclusions about the two choices

(continued on page 4)

Critical Thinking in ACA Classes (cont. from page 3)

- Assist technical and vocational students in making decisions about their career of choice
- Assist our students in taking ownership of their educational journey and career goals

In ACA 122 (College Transfer Success), the CFA is to research and compare two potential four-year schools for transfer admission by providing information on each regarding the transfer process and general information about the two selected schools, such as application dates and fees, housing costs, tuition, financial aid. The students are required to provide specific program requirements on each school, such as GPA for their intended major, required courses, internships/clinicals/practicums.

Additionally, students must be able to articulate and compare facts about each school and then ultimately form a conclusion on what school is the better choice based on their findings. The specific assignment goals for the ACA 122 CFA are as follows:

ACA 122 Assignment Goals:

- Encourage the development of critical thinking skills through the analysis, synthesis and

evaluation of information regarding two potential transfer schools

- Have students evaluate information about the two schools and articulate conclusions about the two choices
- Assist college transfer students in making decisions about their academic planning
- Assist our students in taking ownership of their educational journey and goals

This initiative in ACA courses is just another example of the campus-wide efforts being made to foster, develop, and then evaluate the critical thinking skills of our students.

DID YOU KNOW?

Controlling for a number of variables, including enrollment in remedial courses, standardized test scores, gender, and race, researchers have found that students who enrolled in a college success course were **8% more likely to persist and receive a credential of some sort in a five year period than those students who did not enroll in a success course** (Zeidenberg et al., 2007).

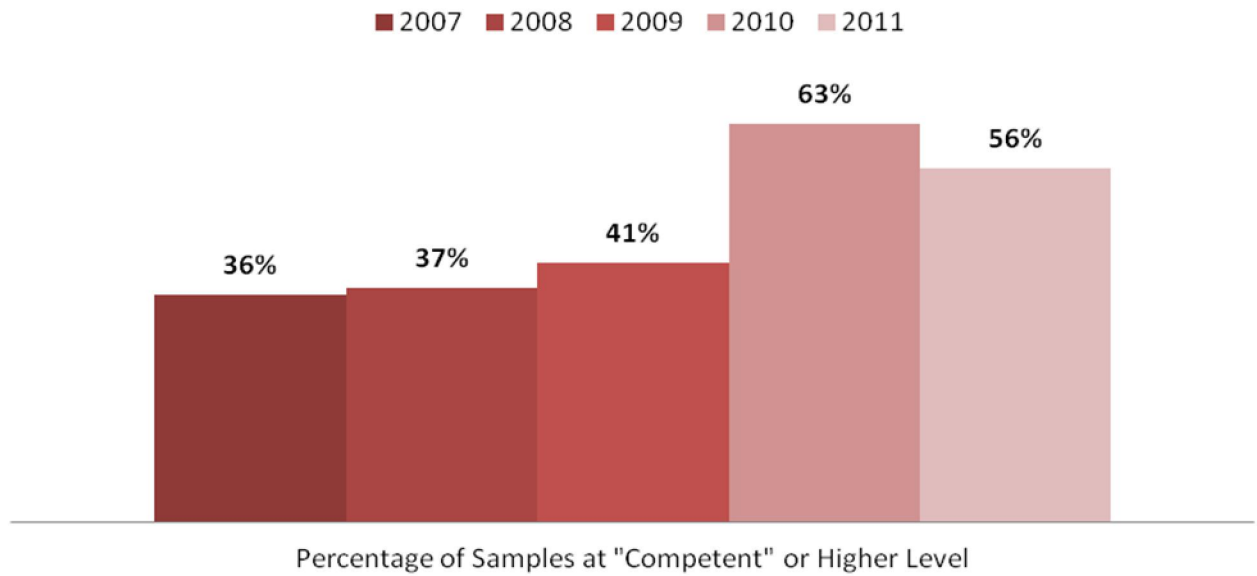
Critical Thinking Assessment Results (continued from page 1)

of students' critical thinking levels in randomly selected general education courses is generally consistent with results from previous years. The average score for 2011

ING level (2.0) and the *COMPETENT* level (3.0). This score is consistent with the cumulative means derived from prior assessments (2010 = 2.30; 2009

those artifacts that consist of essays, research projects, and other open-ended responses to assignments; and 2) those artifacts that consist of responses to mul-

Critical Thinking Assessment Results, General Education Core Courses, non-MCQ Samples



is **2.31** based on the four-point scale of CFCC's critical thinking rubric. This score describes the critical thinking skills of students enrolled in the selected general education courses as being located between the *DEVELOP-*

= 2.31; 2008 = 2.23; 2007 = 2.28).

An initial step in this assessment process is the separation of student artifacts into two groups: 1)

multiple-choice and short answer tests and exams. This year's batch of non-multiple choice/non-short answer student artifacts had an average score of 2.85, an insignificant change from the 2010 average (continued on page 6)



Critical Thinking Assessment Results (cont. from page 5)

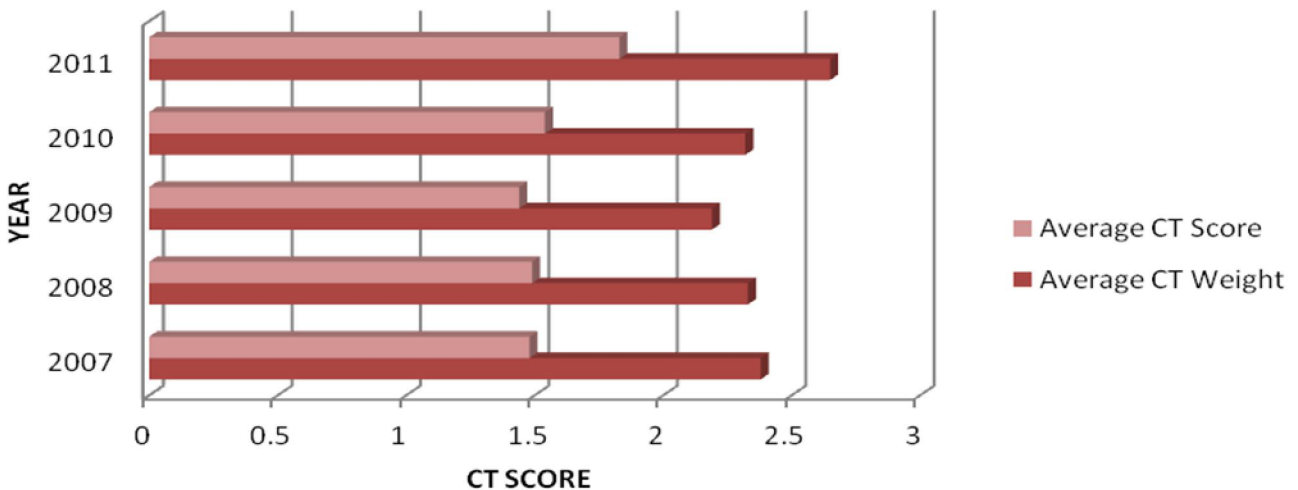
of 2.87. The percentage of non-multiple choice/non-short answer artifacts scoring at the competent level (3.0) for 2011 is 56%, an 11% decrease from 2010 (63% at 3.0 or higher).

In order to assess multiple-choice and short answer artifacts both test/exam items

rect answers receive no credit, although for certain items partial credit may be rewarded. The 2011 average for the level of critical thinking required for correctly answering multiple choice/short answer items is 2.65, a 33% improvement from the 2010 average of

ongoing emphasis on critical thinking in CFCC's general education courses, particularly in the noticeable improvement in both the instructional design of and student response to multiple choice and short answer items. Although the percentage of non-multiple choice

Critical Thinking Assessment Results, Multiple Choice & Short Answer Items



and student responses to test/exam items are assigned a critical thinking value. The assessment team estimates the level of critical thinking required to correctly answer a multiple-choice/short answer item, and then assigns this critical thinking score to students' correct answers. Incon-

2.32. The 2011 average for the level of critical thinking students demonstrated in response to multiple choice/short answer items is 1.83, a 19% improvement from the 2010 average of 1.54.

The 2011 assessment results for the selected general education courses indicate an

and short answer artifacts demonstrating critical thinking at a "competent" or higher level fell slightly from 2010 results, the cumulative average of critical thinking demonstrated in the selected general education courses is consistent with the results of the previous year.

WHAT WORKS:

Critical Thinking Lesson Plans

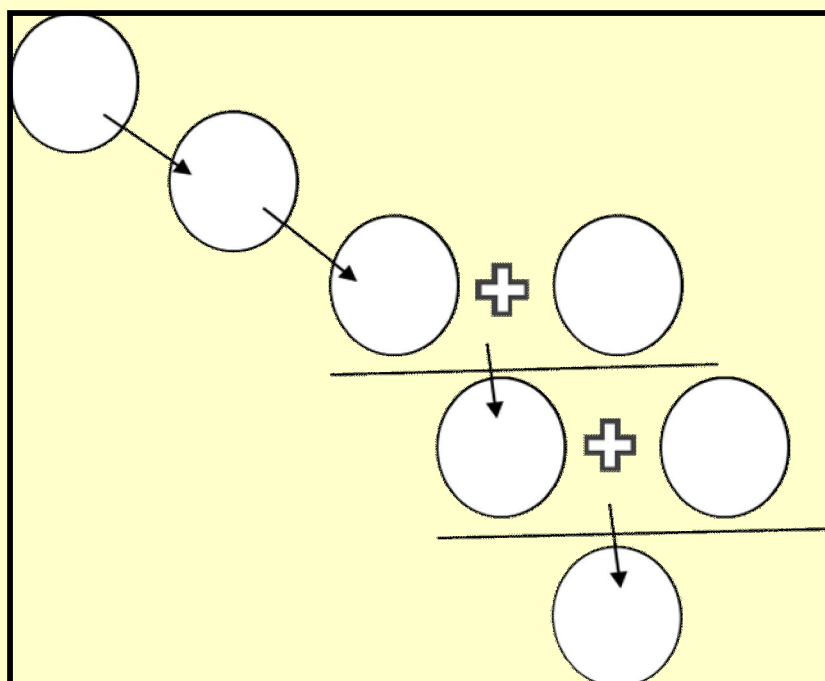
Instructor: John Metzger, English

One of the best assignments that I have found that encourages critical thinking, helps students read more effectively, and promotes skill building is argument mapping. Argument mapping takes a Mathematical/analytical view of argumentation, almost on the level of symbolic logic. For students taking English 112: Argumentative-based Research this is the best activity for getting them to break arguments down and effectively analyze the strengths and weaknesses of an argument.

Recently an online student had the following to say about his experiences with argument mapping: *"Thanks for all the help and encouragement. I hope I put these together correctly. I have come to enjoy these maps and now find them a little fun to try and figure out. This is a very intuitive way to consider the flow of an argument and how the reasons and objections support the thesis. It has forced me to look at the arguments in a different manner, and I hope it has improved my ability to read and create them . . . "*

Here's an example: Read the passage below and then fill in each circle in the argument map with the number of its corresponding claim.

(1) The two-parent family is the foundation of the social order because (2) two-parent families do the best job of raising children. (3) This follows from the fact that children from two-parent families have the best chance of doing well in school, avoiding drugs, finishing college, and being productive members of society. This means that (4) gay marriage should be allowed because (5) if gay marriage is allowed, then there will be even more two-parent families in our society. But this means that (6) gay marriage will actually strengthen the foundation of the social order rather than weakening it. Finally, (7) whatever strengthens the foundation of the social order should be allowed.



Israeli/Palestinian Conflict

(continued from page 1)

Susan Stern: My presentation will focus on references to Canaan and Jerusalem as discussed in the Torah, the Qur'an and the New Testament. This should include Abraham's covenant with God as well as Ishmael's relationship to Isaac. It should also describe the importance of Israel to Messianic Jews and Christians anticipating the return of Christ.

I will also be discussing several critical events in the struggle between Israel and the Palestinians from 1948- 2009. This includes the establishment of the Palestinian refugee camps and the Jewish settlements beyond the 1967 borders.

2. Are there any misconceptions about this topic that you hope to address in your presentation?

Stern: The biggest "misconception" that I might address is that the struggle between Israel and Palestine began in the twentieth century. I would like to touch on the tension between these groups as discussed in their early scriptures.

3. Why is this topic relevant for CFCC students?

Stern: This topic is relevant to CFCC stu-

dents because the conflict in the Middle East has not been resolved. The rebellions in North Africa are changing the dynamics of the area; the preaching in our temples, mosques and churches will undoubtedly contribute to more, not less violence in the area. Moreover, America's policies toward Israel and Palestine will be discussed in the 2012 elections. Our students vote and they should consider this issue.

4. How do you feel discussing this topic encourages critical thinking?

Stern: One must use critical thinking to identify how the scriptures are manipulated by world leaders to advance their own agendas.

5. What advice would you offer those leaders who seek a resolution to this conflict?

Stern: Leaders who seek a resolution to this conflict must accept that neither the Israelis or the Palestinians will be allowed to keep all of the land that the Bible and Qur'an suggest is their birthright. They will have to work out a compromise based on the political and economic survival of two nation-states, not their interpretation of God's will.



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