



Book Review: Teaching Critical Thinking in the Context of Political Rhetoric: A Guide for Classroom Practice

Samet Coban



To cite this article:

Coban S. (2022). Book Review: Teaching Critical Thinking in the Context of Political Rhetoric: A Guide for Classroom Practice, *Horizon Insights*, 5(3), 27-28. <https://doi.org/10.31175/hi.2022.03.04>

Link to this issue of the journal: https://behorizon.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/03/Horizon-Insights_2022_3.pdf

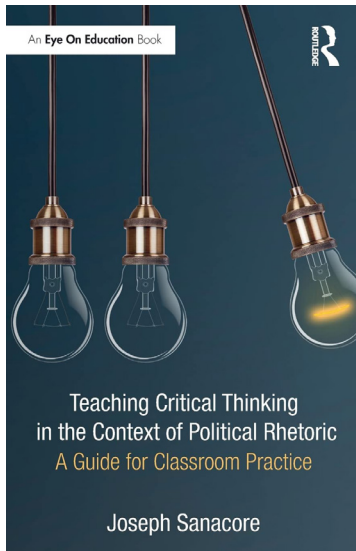
Horizon Insights Journal Homepage: <https://behorizon.org/horizon-insights/>

ISSN: 2593-3582 (printed), 2593-3590 (online)

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Book Review: Teaching Critical Thinking in the Context of Political Rhetoric: A Guide for Classroom Practice (Joseph Sanacore¹)



Samet Coban²

"Read not to contradict and refute; nor to believe and take for granted; nor to find talk and discourse; but to weigh and consider. Some books are to be tasted, others to be swallowed, and some few to be chewed and digested: that is, some books are to be read only in parts, others to be read, but not curiously, and some few to be read wholly, and with diligence and attention."

The Essays, Francis Bacon (1597)

In the last two decades, we witnessed a revolution in communication technologies, the rise of artificial intelligence (and related technologies such as big data, cloud computing, etc.), and the emergence of social media as an alternative to mainstream media. Never before has reaching information been that easy in the history of humankind. For example, as of 1 February 2023, Wikipedia has 6,611,028 English articles (the overall number of articles in all languages is 57,444,507). The number of social media users (creating content and/or consuming information) was 4.59 billion in 2022. This phenomenon is defined as

"blitz of information" or "knowledge explosion" by Joseph Sanacore, and the need to help "students who are struggling to distinguish true, fake, and terribly biased information, especially regarding political issues" is the starting point of this valuable book.

The goal of the author is to show the ends, ways, and means to the teachers who are responsible for guiding students in analyzing, synthesizing, applying, evaluating, and problem-solving skills (also called higher interactive thinking skills - HITS, alternatively higher-order thinking skills - HOTS) so that students can become "independent thinkers" or "critical thinkers." Moreover, the author takes it as a major responsibility to support critical thinking as an essential service in favor of the common good.

The author well articulates the need to teach critical thinking by referring to relevant literature and using examples from daily life challenges.

In promoting the (teaching) of critical thinking, the author argues that reflexively teaching critical thinking is way more effective than teaching it generically. To this end, he offers some valuable strategies and related activities and tools for teachers to ensure the transfer of learning and take into account the increasingly multimodal nature of literacy rather than didactic approaches. Special attention is given to vocabulary development, independent reading, creativity, problem-solving, humor, and propaganda tools and their use in teaching critical thinking.

A recently launched EU-funded project IMMUNE 2 INFODEMIC aims to immunize EU citizens against disinformation and misinformation on selected themes by empowering and equipping them with several methods using eye-catching material and easy-to-use tools. The project consortium formulates and co-produces 3 instruments (vaccines): digital literacy, media literacy, and critical thinking, and applies these instruments to 3 selected hot themes (boosters): elections, COVID-19, and migration. Vulnerable citizens/residents having limited/no knowledge about mis/disinformation activities but using social media extensively, the youth generation (18-25 y), and also seniors (+65 y) will be targeted. Resources like this study provide a sound practical base for meeting project objectives.

Endnotes

1 Dr. Joseph Sanacore is a journalist, researcher, and professor in the Department of Teaching and Learning at the Post Campus of Long Island University, Brookville, NY.

2 Samet Coban is a research fellow and project coordinator at Beyond the Horizon ISSG.