Guidelines for Critical Thinking

Critical thinking can be defined as the evaluation of evidence in order to solve a problem. The following are widely accepted as key elements in critical thinking.

1. Ask **questions**
    - Why is this the way it is? How did it come to be that way?
    - You don't need to accept something just because (for example) you hear it in class
        - ➢ Critical thinking skills can often help you answer your own questions, and to know how likely it is that something is true (or false)

2. **Define** your terms
    - In order to be "answerable", questions must use concrete, precise terminology

3. Examine the **evidence**
    - What is the evidence to support or refute this claim? How reliable is the evidence?

4. Analyze the **assumptions and biases** behind the evidence
    - Everyone carries with them assumptions biases about human nature and the ways in which the world works — we need to be aware of this when evaluating evidence

5. Avoid **emotional** reasoning
    - Don't agree with something just because it goes along with what you feel strongly about, and be careful not to disagree with something simply because you feel strongly against it. Be aware of *why* you disagree

6. Don't **oversimplify**
    - Avoid easy generalizations and "black and white" thinking
    - The plural of anecdote is not "data"

7. Consider **other interpretations**
    - *Occam's razor*: the best explanation 1) contains the fewest assumptions, 2) is usually the simplest one

8. Tolerate **uncertainty**
    - It's OK to be unsure of something