Critical Thinking

Model 1: Step-by-Step

1. Identify **key choices** which have been made
2. Look for **alternatives** to those choices
3. Develop a **point of view** on those alternatives
4. Find **evidence** for your point of view

For example

1. **What are some key choices made by the author?**
   - The methodology is quantitative
   - The theoretical framework is by Smith
2. **What are some alternatives to these choices?**
   - Methodology could have been qualitative
   - Jones’ theoretical framework could have been used instead
3. **What is my point of view?** *(List both positives and negatives for the alternatives and choices).*
   - Qualitative questionnaires would allow for more depth of informative.
   - Quantitative surveys can be a bit impersonal (although anonymous)
   - Jones’ theoretical framework is beneficial, although more controversial
4. **Where can I find evidence to support my point of view?**
   - ? Find articles where authors critique quantitative methodology.
   - ? Find studies that use Jones’ framework.

The steps do not need to be carried out in this order. These are general guidelines to simplify the process.

Model 2: Using Key Elements

*These are the key elements:*

- Purpose (of research, of article, of theory)
- Information / data collected
- Concepts / theoretical framework
- Point of view / position / interpretation / evaluation / recommendations
- Implications / consequences
- Assumptions

There may be other key elements depending on your focus (e.g. sample size, method of analysis, text structure, etc).

*Critical questions you can ask about key elements:*

- **What is it like?** *(e.g. What is the purpose? What information was collected? What are the concepts used? etc)*
- **Why is it like that?** *(e.g. Why is that their purpose? Why do they assume that?)*
- **How good is it?** *(e.g. How useful / relevant / innovative / fair / logical / up-to-date / cost effective… etc. is the purpose / theory / interpretation)*
• Whose choice is it? (e.g. the author’s, other researchers who are reported, everyone in the discipline)