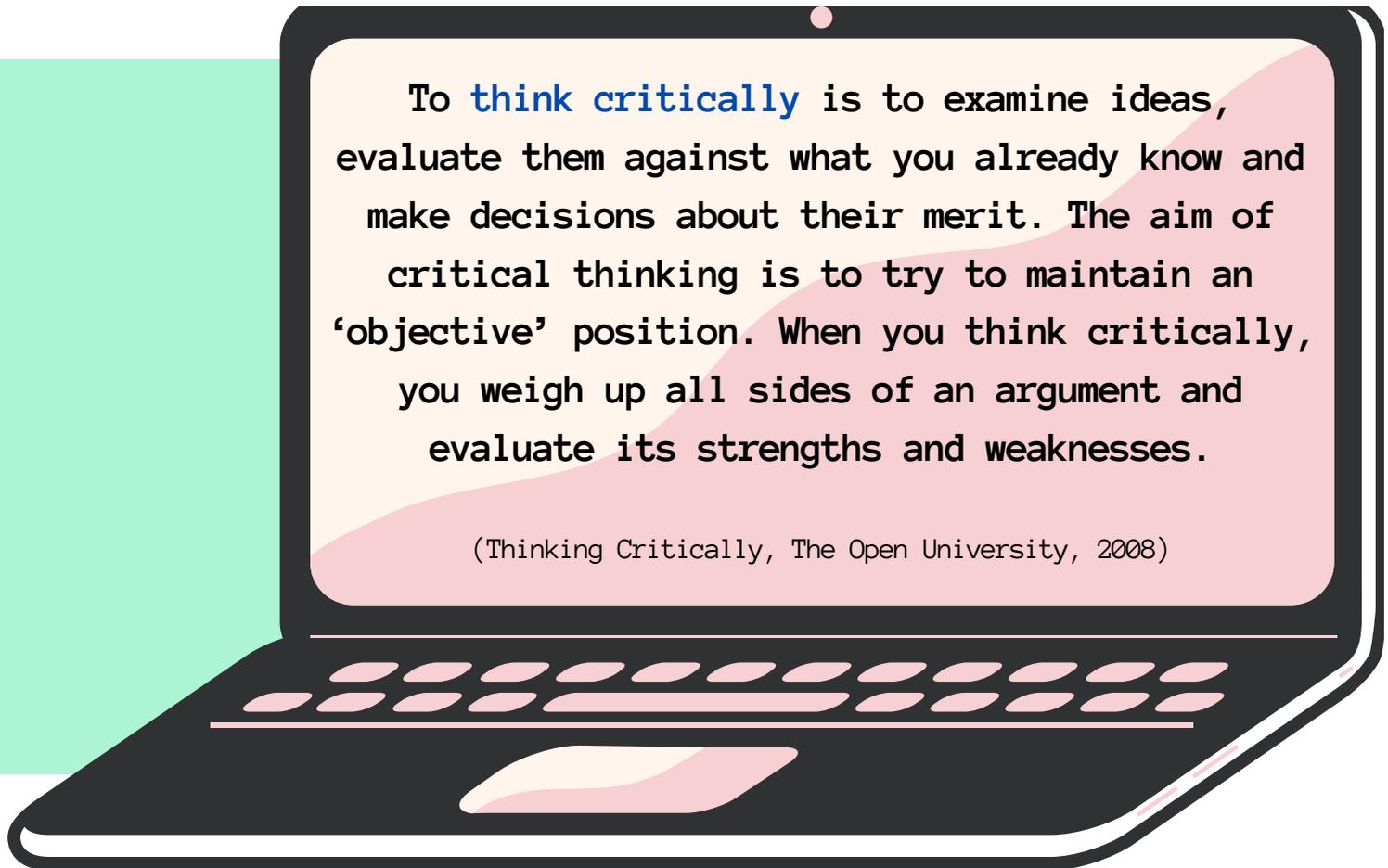


# THE ART OF THINKING IT THROUGH: CRITICAL THINKING+

To **think critically** is to examine ideas, evaluate them against what you already know and make decisions about their merit. The aim of critical thinking is to try to maintain an 'objective' position. When you think critically, you weigh up all sides of an argument and evaluate its strengths and weaknesses.

(Thinking Critically, The Open University, 2008)



# THE ART OF THINKING IT THROUGH: CRITICAL THINKING+ COURSE PROGRAMME



Welcome to *The art of thinking it through: critical thinking+* brought to you by the Real Democracy Movement (RDM). Designed specifically to stimulate discussion and reflection about how we arrive at our conclusions about the world and to do some thinking about thinking itself.



# WHY DOES CRITICAL THINKING(+) MATTER?

Good (critical) question!

The answer is simple - too many citizens accept the information they're presented with at face value. Official sources promote a powerful 'authorised version' of reality and we're trained from childhood, to base our ideas on that. Education is about accumulating facts about this reality. We are not trained to look critically at the world. We are told what to think, not how to think.

In the 'authorised version', society as it is, represents the natural existence of human beings. It's just the way things are. History is nothing more than a path to this present. When we are taught anything about 'thinking', it's that we are isolated individuals, just making up our own minds.

In periods of crisis, aspects of these beliefs break down. People see that the version they're being sold can't be right. Some try to find a hidden logic to explain what's going on and the conspiracy theory is born. The ruling élite try to counter the breakdown in the official story with ideas about nation, patriotism and empire. And...they're not above promoting conspiracy theories too, if it helps them maintain their power.

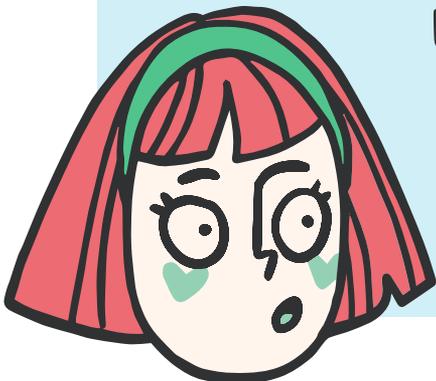


# WHY DOES CRITICAL THINKING(+) MATTER?

This cognitive dissonance between the 'authorised version' and what people actually experience in their lives, is damaging. We're told we live in a democracy and that everyone can get ahead. Forced to blame ourselves for our situation, we increasingly turn inward.



How can we think critically about this world, both challenging the authorised version and resisting the pull of the secret imaginary logic of conspiracy theories? Can we work together to develop a new approach to understanding our continuously changing world, in order to transform it? And can this help to improve our own wellbeing?





Righty ho! So how does the course work?

Everyone's a student,  
everyone's a teacher!

Respectful, curious and flexible -  
qualities for learners and facilitators  
alike.

The online (zoom) sessions will take  
place each Thursday evening  
(6:30-8pm) for 5 weeks

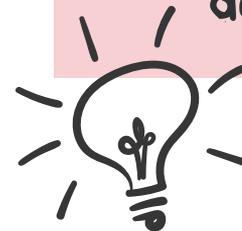
Basic course  
requirements:

Open mind

Respectful  
behaviour

Access to a zoom  
compatible device

Ability to view PDF  
documents



To read more about the RDM Education Working Group and why we decided to develop this course, you can read our 'sort of manifesto' [here](#)



## Just some of the issues we'll cover...

Critical thinking - what does it mean and how do you do it? Is it such an extraordinary skill or do you do it every day? Can it be taught? If it can, why isn't it?

'Authorised thinking' - what is it and who benefits from it?

Getting 'behind the scenes' - how do you get past initial appearances? To what extent does culture/history affect our trust of sources of information?

Conspiracy theories - where are they based and how do they gain traction?

Open mindedness - how do we open our minds? How can we appreciate where others are coming from and does it matter?

How do we make thinking critically 'sexy'?

Whether you're a seasoned cynic or just 'truth-curious', join us for what we hope to be an engaging and enlightening programme!

## Week 1: Introductory session

June 3, 18:30 – 20:00



Thinking critically is a crucial cognitive skill requiring you to think about information, assess arguments, who's presenting this data, where they're coming from and which direction they're taking you. Select a question (below) and introduce yourself saying how you'd answer it (time limited!)

What is 'critical thinking' and can it be taught?

What is 'authorised thinking'?

Is it possible to get behind the appearance of things to some inner truth?

What is the source of conspiracy theories – how do they gain traction?

### Suggested pre-reading/viewing:

[www.collegeinfo geek.com/improve-critical-thinking-skills/](http://www.collegeinfo geek.com/improve-critical-thinking-skills/)

[www.criticalthinking.org/resources/articles/thinking-some-purpose.shtml](http://www.criticalthinking.org/resources/articles/thinking-some-purpose.shtml)

OU Critical Thinking pamphlet (attached)

plus any reading you find for yourself



## Week 2: Thinking about thinking

June 10, 18:30 – 20:00

We're not taught to think – it just comes naturally. Or that's what we're told.

Apart from WHAT we think, does the prevailing education system, media, state propaganda try to influence HOW we think?

Presentation: A starting point for a different approach

Discussion: If we start 'thinking about thinking' we have to ask what ideas are – what are they made of and where do they come from? Can thinking be taught? Is there any point to working on your thinking skills. What could you get out of that?

### Suggested pre-reading/viewing:

[www.marxists.org/archive/ilyenkov/works/articles/school-learn.pdf](http://www.marxists.org/archive/ilyenkov/works/articles/school-learn.pdf)  
plus any reading you find for yourself

## Week 3: Challenging 'authorised thinking'

June 17, 18:30 – 20:00



'Authorised thinking' is a way of describing the views and policies of the dominant ruling groups classes in society. At the end of this session, you'll be able to identify 'authorised thinking' or hegemony, how it's transmitted across society and the role it plays in sustaining the status quo of capitalist power.

Following the presentation 'Authorised thinking – the dead hand of the state', you'll be invited to give examples of 'authorised thinking'. Working together, can you identify the components which make up this process? What is its purpose and how to can we challenge it?

### Suggested pre-reading/viewing:

[www.powercube.net/other-forms-of-power/gramsci-and-hegemony/  
internationalfriendsofilyenkov.files.wordpress.com/2018/06/deconstructing-  
neoliberal-hegemony2.pdf](http://www.powercube.net/other-forms-of-power/gramsci-and-hegemony/internationalfriendsofilyenkov.files.wordpress.com/2018/06/deconstructing-neoliberal-hegemony2.pdf)

[www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1845/german-ideology/ch01b.htm#p53](http://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1845/german-ideology/ch01b.htm#p53)



## Week 4: The Conspiracy Club

June 24, 18:30 – 20:00

We hear a lot about conspiracy theories but how and why do they come about? This session will look at how these theories arise, develop, gain traction and attract 'believers'.

Using given material, can you turn it into a credible conspiracy theory? How do you make it believable? Who is your audience? How will you build your 'movement'?

### Suggested pre-reading/viewing:

[www.ec.europa.eu/info/live-work-travel-eu/health/coronavirus-response/fighting-disinformation/identifying-conspiracy-theories\\_en](http://www.ec.europa.eu/info/live-work-travel-eu/health/coronavirus-response/fighting-disinformation/identifying-conspiracy-theories_en)

[www.theatlantic.com/health/archive/2020/04/what-can-coronavirus-tell-us-about-conspiracy-theories/610894/](http://www.theatlantic.com/health/archive/2020/04/what-can-coronavirus-tell-us-about-conspiracy-theories/610894/)

[hbr.org/2020/07/how-to-inoculate-your-team-against-conspiracy-theories](http://hbr.org/2020/07/how-to-inoculate-your-team-against-conspiracy-theories)

[www.technologyreview.com/2020/07/15/1004950/how-to-talk-to-conspiracy-theorists-and-still-be-kind/](http://www.technologyreview.com/2020/07/15/1004950/how-to-talk-to-conspiracy-theorists-and-still-be-kind/)

[www.youtube.com/watch?v=0b\\_eHBZLM6U](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0b_eHBZLM6U)

## Week 5: Graduation Day

July 1, 18:30 - 20:00



Summary session to refresh your memory!

How can this course help?

What did you learn and what could you do with it?

Will it help frame your activity in the world?

What are the practical ways we can take this work to the next level?

How can we make thinking critically attractive to more people?

How can we make thinking critically 'sexy'?

What will it say on your graduation certificate? Write your own!

Next steps?

RDM's next course...

# Congratulations!

You've  
graduated!  
Well done!

Enjoyed this course?  
Why not join us for:  
Applying Critical  
Thinking to positive  
citizenship.

Our real history,  
the state and  
democracy - a  
fresh ideal of real  
democracy.

More information [here](#)

