1. **Critical Thinking**

For powerful online collaboration and critical thinking to take place, students must be engaged in productive inquiry and analysis. Dr. Levine, Dean of Humanities at Southwestern College states, “The school that fails to teach critical thinking fails at everything” (Interview, October of 2010). If we are to create and facilitate empowering critical thinking discussions in a virtual environment we must know how to ask great questions. To explore this concept further let’s take a look at the following case:

Mrs. Jones assigned his senior students in her online History class to read the following article:

[*No End in Sight: Germany Has Paid Out More Than $61.8 Billion in Third Reich Reparations*](http://www.ihr.org/jhr/v17/v17n6p19_reparations.html)

Then, she asked her students this question in the discussion forum:
-Who or what is the JCC?
-In the 1990’s, how much did the JCC pay out to individual claimants?

What do you think might happen in the discussion thread when you ask this type of question?

Now, imagine instead she asked this question:

The article states that “most of those who were alive during the Second World War are now dead”—that is,
the perpetrators of war crimes are themselves long gone from Germany—and that further, the process of
reparation may be “bottomless.”

Should Germany be required to make good on damages for the past, and should there be a limit to the
reparations? Use what you have learned from this unit to support your position. Read and respond to the posts
of two other students.

What do you think would happen now in the forum?

Now that you have experienced a little bit on the art of asking good questions, please select an article from the web about online learning strategies and post it in this forum. Then, provide a few examples of good and bad questions. Respond to at least two of your peers with comments on how their questions can be improved to promote critical thinking.

For more specific information on critical thinking, please explore the website [The Critical Thinking Community](http://www.criticalthinking.org/).

Bloom’s Taxonomy is a great resource when crafting questions for the discussion forum: [Major Categories in the Taxonomy of Educational Objectives](http://faculty.washington.edu/krumme/guides/bloom.html).