Week 9
Master the thinking, master the content

- The three basic functions of the human mind: thinking, feeling, wanting
- Because we spend most of our time thinking about what we personally want or value, we need to question our personal values.

Go beyond superficial memorization to deep thinking

- As a student, it is important that you think seriously about what you want to accomplish in each of your classes and in college in general. If you simply want to get by, to do no more than pass your courses, you know the logic of how to do so: You go to class. You find out the minimal requirements of the course. You fulfill those requirements with the least effort possible. You get the grade. You move on to the next semester. After four years and a certain number of course hours, you get a degree. Using this kind of thinking, you think of college merely as a vehicle to get a job. → You graduate but you do not become a lifelong learner.
- If, however, you look at college as an opportunity to learn how to learn, to develop your mind, to seek out new ways to look at things, to expand your knowledge, to learn ideas that will help you figure out the problems of your life, you must seek to internalize a set of intellectual skills that will enable you to learn more deeply and more permanently in every one of your courses.

Practice
What are you trying to accomplish in college? Are you committed to developing your thinking in a deep way? Or are you going to college simply to get a job that requires a degree? Are you going to college just because your friends are going? Are you after the social life that college offers?
Or are you not sure what your real motivation is? If you had to complete the following statements, what would you say? My fundamental purpose in going to college is. . . I am committed to. . . . Write out your answer or explain orally.

- All subjects you study are generated by thinking, evaluated by thinking, organized by thinking, restructured by thinking, analyzed by thinking, maintained by thinking, synthesized by thinking, transformed by thinking, expressed by thinking.
- They are learned by thinking, understood by thinking, applied by thinking.

Understanding content as something to be thought through

- Everything covered in college lectures, and written in college textbooks, is, in the last analysis, nothing more or less than a special way of thinking about a special set of things.

Practice
Select a subject that is the topic of a class you are now taking or have taken in the past. Make a list of the questions that professionals within the discipline pursue, questions they try to think through to figure out important matters in the field.

All content is organized by concepts

- To learn any body of content, it is necessary to learn to think accurately and reasonably with the concepts that define the content.
- For example, to learn the concept of a novel is to learn how to distinguish a novel from a play or a short story. To learn the concept of a family is to learn how to distinguish a family from a gang or a club.

Practice
Choose a concept, the most basic concept, that is the focus of one of your classes. Write out in your own words your understanding of the concept. Write it out in such a way that you can readily see the significance of the concept in your life. (For example, if in your understanding your past, you were always poor in writing or math, you probably would now seek to avoid writing or math classes.)
All of your plans for the future are a result of what seems possible and probable to you—given your understanding of your past. Now, can you see the study of history in a new light?

All content is logically interdependent

- To understand one part of some content requires that we figure out its relation to other parts of that content. To learn any body of content is to figure out the connections between the parts of that content.
- We understand what a scientific experiment is only when we understand what a scientific theory is. We understand what a scientific theory is only when we understand what a scientific hypothesis is. We understand what a scientific hypothesis is only when we understand what a scientific prediction is. What understand what a scientific prediction is only when we understand what it is to

scientifically test a view. . . .

Practice
Select a subject you are taking currently (or have taken) and draw a diagram showing the links between the most basic concepts within the subject. Then state in your own words how each idea is linked to every other idea. (For example, to understand “a,” you must understand “b,” and to understand “b,” you must understand “c,” and to understand “c,” you must understand “d,” and so on.

Think through your classes using your knowledge of thinking

- If learning any content well involves understanding it as a mode of thinking, everything you can discover about thinking offers potential insight into how you should approach college classes.

All thinking
1. Has a purpose.
2. Raises at least one question.
3. Requires information.
4. Requires concepts.
5. Involves inferences.
6. Involves assumptions.
7. Involves implications.
8. Involves a point of view.

Practice
Choose a subject in a class you are taking.
The purpose of this subject is. . .
The main types of information that professionals in this field of study use are. . .
Some of the main questions that professionals within this discipline ask are. . .
What can you do as a student to deepen your learning in every class you take?
What can you learn by taking initiative in all your classes? Or do you think the teacher determines how much you learn and you have little to do with it?