

me293 – Project Management & Social Responsibility

Independent Thinking and Skepticism (Critical Thinking)

Sheep say ... 'bleet', 'bleet', 'bleet' ... do you?
Do you blindly follow?

It is important to develop an independent mind. Why? So that you can make your own decisions and, even in stressful, pressurized situations make good choices.

There are some very good examples where going along with the crowd, as seen in retrospect, was a very bad idea – blindly following political or religious leaders, following the crowd to create destructive riots after sporting events (where your team lost or, oddly, won), lining up to buy the latest expensive cell phone (that in reality is only marginally different/better than the perfectly good one you already own), waiting in a long line of halting traffic on the main roads while the side streets are clear and available, doing anything your boss or 'more experienced' co-workers or parent says is what to do, etc, etc, etc.

Why do you do these things? You don't have to you know.

With a little extra conscious effort, you could think and act more independently.

What is it that, often so strongly, makes you feel as though you should go along with the crowd?

People are crowd-sourced beings. Our intuition naturally tends us toward doing what the crowd is doing (or thinking about or talking about). You take strength from the people around you. They are your community. If you reject some of their ideas, you may be at risk of being rejected by them. To be a truly independent thinker you have to realize that this risk exists.

To develop skills as an independent thinker you will need to be observant, conscious, aware, vigilant and somewhat skeptical. Test what other tell you with a practiced skepticism. Come to your own conclusions.

The trouble with many influential people is that they realize this feature of humanity and take advantage of it. Also they are bias (a little or a lot) and they use you to get what they want.

A healthy skepticism will help you assess whether an idea you hear is a 'right' idea or one that is somehow suspect.

Your task is to:

- a. Choose a commonly held belief or myth and debunk it.
- b. Give a short presentation of what you have found in next week's class. (about 5 minutes)

Note: Your entire mark, for this assignment, will come from your presentation.

In your presentation highlight:

- What is the commonly held belief?
- Why did people start to believe this thing?
- What is the truth of the situation?
- How do you know what the truth is?

Possible Sources or Inspiration:

- [Adam Ruins Everything](#)
- [Mythbusters](#)
- Etc.

Possible Topics (These are just to get you thinking. You choose/find your own.)

Do vitamins make you healthier, does Red Wine really ward off cancer, is the US less safe than it used to be, was replacing the Blue Bridge in downtown Victoria really a bad idea, is doing sewage treatment in Victoria a waste of money, did people really land on the moon, why are they covering up UFO landings on earth, why will tomatoes kill you, why should we all stop eating meat, gluten, sugar, salt, etc.,