# Critical Thinking in Action: Sustainability

**Title:** Critical Thinking in Action

**For:** Freshman composition (Theme: Sustainability)

**Description:**

Students will be exposed to various entry points of a sustainability topic in various formats. They will take notes as they experience those expressions on the **Elements of Thought** evidenced throughout. This *in-class, two-part* lesson includes an independent guided activity and a Think-Pair-Share activity for further reflection on source/ claimant evaluation.

Prior to this lesson, instructor will have chosen a topic relevant to their subject area or course content – *Possible examples: food deserts, clean water in US, bee colony collapse.*

Instructor will also have selected (commenting on this topic directly):

* One short-form video product (I.e. TED Talk, video essay, documentary clip, recorded speech, or other topical video informational product)
* One published essay, opinion editorial, or commentary
* One informative (unbiased) article or reference entry.

The duration of the in-class activities for this lesson is approximately 60-75 minutes. Length and difficulty of content should be considered when selecting the examples.

**Materials:**

* **Elements of Thought Guide**
* Short-form video essay
* Published print/ electronic editorial (document 1)
* Published print/ electronic reference entry (document 2)

**Learning Outcomes:**

* Students will closely listen and/or read information in order to recognize elements of thought
* Students will identify key components of written/ oral arguments for point of view, purpose, question at issue, information, interpretation and inference, concepts, assumptions, and implications and consequences
* Students will determine their information need (next steps for research) based on notes

**Sequenced Instruction:**

Briefly introduce the Universal Intellectual Standards using the **Elements of Thought Guide.** Facilitate a short discussion with students about each standard they will be asked to examine in this lesson.

Introduce the activity by telling them that they will learn more about these standards as they take notes on a video that they're about to watch. Since they are only briefly learning what they standards each mean, they may be unsure or express doubt. Encourage them to consult the definitions of each standard as they view the video. State the purpose of the activity in the following way:

*The purpose of this activity is to figure out* how *the person delivering this message is making their point. It could be "right" or "wrong" or, likely, somewhere in between. You will find ways that the speakers or writers demonstrate elements of thought.*

Distribute document 1. Tell students that this is a different expression of the same topic that they will take notes as they did for the video. Give students five minutes to *skim* and take notes.

Students will then be grouped into small groups to discuss their findings of the video and document 1. They will be prompted to discuss the different *attributes* of the *types of sources.* Working together, they will receive document 2 (the more "unbiased" source). They will identify Elements of Thought criteria in the document. The groups will discuss their findings with the class.