**Critical Thinking about Current Social Issues**

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Use any of the current social issues in the textbook to answer the questions below. Discuss the issues with a group of students in your class and then write your reasonable point of view. Be aware of fallacies in reasoning and cognitive bias as you discuss the issues.

1. Quickly review the following fallacies in reasoning.

We **appeal to authority** when we rely on experts or famous people to make decisions.

We **generalize and use prejudice** when we say that all members of a group are the same.

To distract from the issues, we often **attack the person**.

We **appeal to common belief** when we accept past ideas without questioning the truth of the belief or custom.

We **appeal to common practice** when we say that “everyone else is doing it.”

We **appeal to tradition** when we say that “we’ve always done it that way.”

In the **two wrongs fallacy**, it is assumed that it is acceptable to do something wrong because other people are doing something just as bad.

In the **slippery slope fallacy**, negative consequences of our actions are only remotely possible, but are assumed to be certain.

We appeal to **scare tactics** when we use fear to block rational thinking.

We **appeal to loyalty** when we adopt the ideas of a group whether they are right or wrong.

1. Quickly review the following cognitive biases.

The **Dunning-Kruger effect** states that the less you know, the more you think you know. Conversely the more you know, the less you think you know since you recognize the complexity of the issue.

**Confirmation bias** is the tendency for individuals to find evidence that confirms their own beliefs while ignoring evidence that conflicts with their beliefs.

**Self-serving bias** is the tendency to take responsibility for our successes and blame our failures on someone else, or factors beyond our control.

**Overconfidence bias** is the overestimation of credulity or knowledge based on one individual or source.

**Groupthink** happens when people strive for consensus with a group. People set aside their own personal beliefs to adopt the opinions of the group.

The **status quo bias** is the preference to keep things the same. It is resistance to change.

1. Read about the issue and discuss it with your group. Then state the problem as simply and clearly as you can.
2. In your discussion with others, did you discover any fallacies in reasoning? If so, what were these fallacies?
3. In your discussion with others, did you discover any cognitive biases? If so, what were the cognitive biases?
4. After listening to the group discussion, describe a point of view that is different from your own ideas.
5. Describe the values held by people who hold a different point of view. What is important to them?
6. After discussing the issues and looking at different points of view, did you discover some new ideas that are worth considering? What is your reasonable point of view based on looking at several different perspectives? How does your point of view match your values?