DEFINITION AND EXPLANATION OF TRIVIUM AND QUADRIVIUM

(From the first time I taught the course--my notes)
(Communication Education, Vol. 35,#2, April, 1986, 174, Teaching Critical Thinking Skills)

In the Middle Ages university courses were divided into two areas, the Arts and the Sciences.

These were a system of rules for generating knowledge.

The seven Liberal Arts of Languages (or Arts) and Sciences were complements, and obviously comprised a Liberal Arts education.

TRIVIUM

The Languages (ARTS), or Trivium were composed of:

- Grammar (Latin)
- Logic
- Rhetoric

These Arts were concerned with (and were to discover) the social significance of knowledge. These Arts were relatively subjective.

Completion of this study led to a bachelor's degree.

QUADRIVIUM

The Sciences, the Quadrivium, was composed of:

- Arithmetic
- Geometry
- Astronomy
- Music

The Sciences arranged knowledge into systematic bodies of information. The Sciences were relatively objective.

Completion of the Quadrivium led to a master's degree.
(Continued Explanation of Trivium and Quadrivium)

Rhetoric, chief among the courses of the Trivium, liberated students from a single view of a problem and led them to social autonomy.

The divisions of classical rhetoric provide directions for teaching critical thinking skills.

Peter Ramus, 1515-1572, redefined ancient disciplines: Beginning with the trivium, with the arts of discourse, Ramus defined grammar as the art of speaking well, that is of speaking correctly; dialectic as the art of reasoning well; and rhetoric as the art of the eloquent and ornate use of language.

Skills arising from Invention/inventio/heuristic were insights from researched information and discovery of arguments to support the point of view espoused.

Skills arising from Organization/Disposition were patterns and the organized information of a speech consistent with the image (ethos) of the speaker, and the receptivity (Disposition) of the audience.

Peter Ramus defined grammar as the art of speaking well, that is, of speaking correctly; dialectic as the art of reasoning well; and rhetoric as the art of eloquent and ornate use of language. (Rhetoric: Concepts Definitions, and Boundaries by Collino and Jolliffe, pg 437 --the above paragraph only)