**UNE L&T Symposium 2025 – Presentation Synopsis**

**1. Title of Presentation:**

The Reflective Detective: A Mindset for Purposeful Learning

**2. Presenter(s) Name(s) and Affiliation(s):**

[*Dr Belinda Beattie, Public Policy Lecturer, HASS, UNE*]

**3. Main Takeaways:**

Takeaway 1: Students adopt a detective-like mindset to build their critical thinking skills. This metaphor encourages learners to channel the mindset of their favourite sleuth(s) -curious, clue-centric, analytical, and reflective - as they examine social and public policy problems.

Takeaway 2: The detective mindset shows how a playful teaching tool can lead to gains in critical thinking–in critical pedagogy–interpretive acuity and reflective practice.

**4. Application in Educational Contexts:** In SOCY 313/513 (Australian Social and Public Policy) students think like a detective to build their critical thinking skills. The detective metaphor requires learners to channel the mindset of their favourite sleuth(s) when investigating social and public policy problems. This framing supports active student engagement with course content and case studies, encouraging students to question norms and practices. Promotional titles symbolize intellectual growth, reflecting narrative alignment. For example, at key milestones, the cohort moves up through the ranks from “Detective” to “Detective Superintendent”. Finally, this teaching approach is adaptable to many teaching situations.

***Teaching Methods:***

* **Conceptual Framing**: The “Detective” metaphor fosters critical inquiry by encouraging learners to draw upon observed investigative traits, for example, discerning valuable information, following leads, solving problems and exercising rational judgement.
* **Pedagogical Alignment**: The sleuth mindset scaffolds purposeful learning by linking critical pedagogy, interpretive acuity, and reflective practice across cognitive levels. It foregrounds learning outcome action verbs such as interpret and examine, ensuring they are visible, understood and demonstrated.

**Student Engagement:**

1. **Role-Based Intellectual Framing: Student adoption of a favourite sleuth’s mindset engages** imagination and fosters sustained commitment to learning. Intellectual curiosity drives identity-based inquiry and active processing, as learners connect clues and ideas to deepen motivation and advance agency.
2. **Reflective Positionality and Societal Analysis:** Inviting learners to interrogate social policy structures through reflective practice fosters deeper engagement with course content and learning outcomes. By articulating their own positionality, students develop a deeper awareness of ‘where they stand’ - and why.

**5.Conceptual Valuable Sources and References:** (1) Tiruneh, D T, Verburg, A and Elen, J (2014) ‘Effectiveness of Critical Thinking Instruction in Higher Education: A Systematic Review of Intervention Studies,’ *Higher Education Studies,* 4(1):1-17, doi: 10.5539/hes.v4n1p1. Provides a strong overview of the literature and affirms the importance of instructional strategies to enhance critical thinking. (2).Golden, B (2023) ‘Enabling critical thinking development in higher education through the use of a structure planning tool’, *Irish Educational Studies*, 42 (4): 949-969, doi: 10.1080/03323315.2023.2258497. Reviews recent literature and provides a tool to support explicit critical thinking.

**6. Weakness and Area for Future Research:**

**Weakness**: Replication across units is required to measure consistency and identify tweaking.

**Future Research**: Deepen my understanding of how narrative framing supports critical thinking and extend the detective mindset across more teaching units.