BOOK DISCUSSION GUIDE
The Life-Changing Science of Detecting Bullshit

KNOWLEDGE	COMPREHENSION	APPLICATION	ANALYSIS	SYNTHESIS	EVALUATION

Introduction: What is Bullshit?

What is bullshit?
How is bullshitting different from lying?
Can you think of bullshit you've produced on your own/been exposed to?
Is today's world any more or less full of bullshit?
Can toothbrushing really be considered bullshit? Are there really conditions that make it so? Explain.
Is bullshit any more/less harmful than lies? Why or why not?

Chapter 1: Costs of Bullshit: Wine, Bullshit Markups, and the Myers-Briggs

What is a bullshit markup?
Why do people pay good money for bullshit markups?
How can you use truth-default theory to get another person to believe something that is false?
Why does the way we think often lead to tunnel-vision (i.e., viewing things in very narrow ways)?
Where do the costs of too much bullshit occur?
Bullshit may be influential, but do the costs to society outweigh the benefits to the bullshitter?

Chapter 2: Bullibility: Bernard and His Bullible Gang

Who was Bernard L. Madoff?
Why were investors' investments in Fairfield Sentry Limited a result of bullshit?
Do you think you could use bullshit to operate a successful Ponzi scheme? Explain.
Are you, or is anyone you know, especially bullible? Explain why it is so.
What methods can be used to reduce bullibility?
What do you believe is the primary source of bullibility?

Chapter 3: When and Why People Bullshit: Learning the Conditions and Spotting the Signs

According to the empirical research, what are the two major reasons why people bullshit?
How can understanding the conditions under which we're likely to encounter bullshit help us to detect it?
What might you say to someone who just read Andrew Wakefield's retracted paper on autism and vaccines?
Which situation and person factors are most influential to when and/or why people bullshit us the most?
What leads people to bullshit—is it who they are (i.e., personality) or where they are (i.e., context)? Explain.
Is the author's model of when and why people bullshit sufficient? What might be missing?

Chapter 4: Bullshit Artists: Douglas, Donald, and Deepak

What is a bullshit artist? Do you know of any?
Explain what this means: "Hidden meaning transforms unparalleled abstract beauty."
How might you show someone who believes they can detect water with a stick (i.e., dowsing) they're wrong?
Explain how your thinking is more/less better than that of Deepak Chopra's.
What do all bullshit artists seem to have in common?
If you could save one bullshit artist from this chapter, in the event of a disaster, who would it be? Why?

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Chapter 5: Bullshit Detection Wheelhouse: TED Talks and Fifteen Minutes of Bullshit

Why might an "informative" TED/TEDx Talk be classified as bullshit?

Explain why "common sense" might be insufficient for detecting bullshit.

Explain how a question, contained within the Bullshit Detection Wheelhouse, can be used to detect bullshit?

Is the Bullshit Detection Wheelhouse a viable method to detect bullshit—will it work? Why?

Create your own personal Bullshit Detection Wheelhouse memory verse.

Who do you think the author intended to read this book? Why?

Chapter 6: Expert Bullshit Detectors: Used Cars, Diamonds, and Real Estate

What makes a someone an "expert" bullshit detector?

Why is what we believe about consumer products (e.g., cars, diamonds, real estates) bullshit?

What things do you buy that might very well be a product of bullshit reasoning?

Why should or shouldn't Lieutenant Frank Columbo be considered an expert bullshit detector.

Which critical-thinking skill (interpretation, analysis, evaluation, inference, self-regulation) is most critical?

Who would you nominate as the best, expert bullshit detector? Explain.

Conclusion: Life Without Bullshit: Better Detection, Better Disposal, Better Decisions

How is evidence distinct from explanation?

Why do people find themselves victims of bullshit?

How might you best call bullshit when you see or hear it?

How well-positioned is your very own intellectual humility to prevent producing bullshit?

How might the world be a better place without bullshit?

Why might the author's suggested rules for calling bullshit work/not work in practice?

CREATE
Where/when do you encounter bullshit, and how will you respond to it?