

PSY 224 - Social Psychology
Social Psychology Journal Assignment

Background: Because we (usually) interact with people on a daily basis, we are constantly immersed in social processes. Even when we are not in direct contact with others, the experiences we have may still be “social” in nature (e.g., the persuasive arguments you are exposed to everyday as you read magazines or watch TV; the beliefs you have about yourself or others). However, rarely do we attempt to critically examine ourselves and our surroundings from a social psychological perspective. The goal of this assignment is to step “out of your skin” so to speak, and try to see your daily experiences within the framework of the concepts you are learning in this class.

You are to keep a journal of experiences you have along with an analysis of those experiences from a social psychological perspective. In other words, keep note of things that happen to you, behaviors you see occurring in other individuals or among social groups, events in the media, and even storylines from books that you’re reading or TV shows you are watching (and including commercials). Basically, anything you notice in your daily life is fair game (assuming you can tie it into the course content). You should carefully explain the event or experience (so that I understand what is going on), and then give evidence to support why this illustrates a social psychological concept.

Due date: Your journal is to be turned in no later than **Friday, December 11th, 2009 by 5pm.**

Grading Criteria: Grading is based on the following factors:

- 1) Correct application of the social psychological concept
- 2) Depth of thought
- 3) Questions raised, critical thinking
- 4) Clarity of writing
- 5) Originality—these experiences and observations should be yours, not just a re-hashing of the examples given in lecture or your readings.
- 6) Points may be deducted if you do not have at **least 12 entries**, or if your entries do not sample across the range of topics covered during the semester.

Details:

You should have at least 12 entries in your journal (approximately 1 per week of the semester). Most likely a thorough entry will be about 2-3 double-spaced pages. You need to incorporate a wide range of concepts from the course. This means that you should draw from the many social psychological topics that are discussed throughout the semester. Don’t just pick one or two ideas and illustrate them over and over with different examples. I realize that towards the beginning of the semester, when we haven’t covered that much material, you’ll have fewer concepts to choose from. However, by the end of the semester you have a wide range of theories and ideas to draw from. One strategy to use to assure that you sample from a wide range of concepts is to try to connect the current topics being discussed in class to your journal entries. So for example, when we are discussing group identity in class, you could write about your experiences with group membership; when the topic is altruism, you could write about your observations of helping behavior. The one thing I would warn about in following this strategy too closely is that you may miss

opportunities for interesting entries; for example, when we're talking about interpersonal attraction in class and you have a great idea regarding stereotyping, go with your great idea.

The beginning of your entry should describe the situation/event in detail. A thoughtful application of one (or more) social psychological principle to that situation/event should follow, including an explanation of the principle. At the end of your entry you should brainstorm and describe other ideas that you've generated as a result of this entry. Your final journal that you hand in should be typed, double-spaced in a 10-12 point font, with 1" margins, and include the date, journal entry number, and the topic you are illustrating at the top of each entry. Please begin each entry on a new page.

Some questions to get you started:

(you need not address all of these in each entry, but do attempt to answer some of them if you're at a loss)

- How can the psychological phenomenon you have chosen be seen in this interaction, experience, or situation?
- How was this interaction inconsistent with the theory or phenomenon you have chosen?
- Why do you think the outcome of this interaction seems to be inconsistent with the phenomenon you chose?
- How does your current awareness of this psychological phenomenon change the way you interpret what happened during this event?
- If you (or others) had been aware of social psychological research about this phenomenon during the event, how might the outcome of the interaction have been changed?
- What aspects of the situation, if changed, would have resulted in a less surprising outcome?
- How will your learning about this phenomenon influence your attitudes/behavior/perceptions in the future?
- What questions do you now have after considering the event in light of psychological theory?
- What type of experiment(s) might help address these issues?

Other tips:

- A entry about a past event is fine. Suppose we get to a topic in class that can be applied to a past experience or event— feel free to write a journal entry that retrospectively examines that event.
- Try to keep up with your entries. Don't fall behind. This means you should try to do about one entry each week. I anticipate that the best results come when you just notice things as they are happening, rather than going out searching for things during the last week of class.
- If you're having a difficult time finding examples of social psychological phenomena around you, try looking in the media. You'll be able to find good examples in places like newspaper and magazine articles, advertisements, comic strips, photographs, and advice columns etc. Sitcoms (Seinfeld, The Simpsons, and the Office are especially good), reality shows (e.g., Survivor) talk shows, and news shows (e.g., 48 Hours, Dateline) also may be good sources for ideas. If you do choose things from TV, make sure to describe the show/segment in detail. Print media sources should be photocopied and included in your journal.