Principles of Psychology
Short Papers

Each week, you will have the opportunity to apply your newfound knowledge of psychology to current issues in psychology and popular culture. Each Friday, you may submit a short paper of 2-3 pages in length (double-spaced) that addresses a given theme. Some weeks, the theme will be a current issue in the psychological community. Other weeks, the theme will be a popular portrayal of some aspect of human psychology. These papers should be reflections of what you have learned about a topic through the textbook and lecture and how it relates to the week’s theme.

For the weeks when the topic is a current issue in psychology, you will read one or two papers on the topic. In this assignment, you should (a) describe what the issue is and discuss why it is important, (b) give a brief overview of the evidence in the article(s), (c) give your opinion of the issue and the reading(s), and (d) provide support for your opinion from lecture, the textbook or other readings.

Portrayals of psychology in popular culture will take the form of films. In the past few years, several renowned films have been based heavily on psychological principles (e.g., Memento, A Beautiful Mind). As an expert in the field of psychology, (a) describe the aspects of the film that rely (correctly or incorrectly) on psychological theories, (b) hypothesize whether or not the portrayal of psychology is accurate or not, and (c) provide evidence from lectures or the readings to support your opinion.

In neither case should you simply summarize (either the arguments or the film plot). We are looking for evidence that you spent time thinking about each of the issues.

Over the course of the term, you must submit at least four (4) of these papers. Everyone must do the first paper on Observation. You can, of course, submit more than four, if you like. Attached is the list of the short paper topics, the readings for each paper and their due dates. No late papers will be accepted. You will be graded both on the justification of your argument and on the clarity of your writing.
Readings for Short Paper Assignments

1. Observation (due: April 4) – Required

2. Sleep and Dreaming (due: April 11)

3. Sensation and Perception (due: April 16)
   a. Movie: At First Sight

4. Language (due: April 25)

5. Memory (due: May 2)
   a. Movie: Memento

6. Decision Making (due: May 9)

7. Bystander Intervention (due: May 16)

8. Obedience (due: May 23)

9. Psychopathology (due: May 30)
   a. Movie: A Beautiful Mind
   b. Textbook: Schizophrenia (pp. 768-779).

10. Treatment (due: June 4)