

Psy 562 Instructions for Assignments

General Instructions for Critiques

Length and format. Papers should be approximately 5 pages long, double-spaced, using 1" margins, with 10-to-12-point font. Each paper should not be less than 4 pages long nor more than 6 pages long. Please turn in a hard copy the day the assignment is due (please see due dates under "Schedule" in the syllabus). Use APA format style for writing style rules, citations, and references (include a list of all references cited at the end). The *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association, Sixth Edition*, or online sites, such as <https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/560/01/>, will provide most of what you need to know. Please do not include covers or bindings—just staple the pages. (Superficial appearances impact my grading much less than high quality content, so spend your time on the content). The paper should be all narrative text, without tables, figures, or bulleted points.

Social science approach. Write your paper in a scientific style, which includes objective/neutral treatment of topics with assertions of fact or hypotheses that are supported by evidence or theory rather than personal opinion. Use concise and precise wording; do not use of first- and second-person voice, and avoid poetic language (e.g., similes, alliterations, exaggerative or overly descriptive adjectives).

Academic integrity. All direct quotes should include quotation marks, reference citation, and page number. Any phrases or sentences copied from another source without these notations will be considered plagiarism.

Citations. For each paper, include academic citations in the text to back up assertions with empirical evidence from research studies or ideas from scientific theories. We will be writing in a professional academic style, so citations are nearly always to published research articles or books. Citing popular media sources (e.g., the New York Times, TIME magazine, blogs, websites) only occurs when making a point about popular media treatment of a topic. Not all statements in a paragraph need citations. In a typical paragraph from a journal article or chapter, there will only be two or three statements about evidence or theory that require supporting citations. For any particular statement, only one or two citations are usually needed. If you are unsure how often citations should be used, take a look at a couple of examples from academic journal articles. When citing a source in your written text, use APA conventions, such as "Newsom (2015) has demonstrated sophisticated methods of analyzing longitudinal data" or "negative social exchanges have been found to be associated with poorer health when they persist over a period of time (Newsom, Mahan, Rook, & Krause, 2008)."

Weekly Reading Commentaries (5 points each, 50 points total, 16.7% of final grade)

Each week you will be required to turn in a one-page commentary on the readings for that week on each Thurs by 10 am via email. Comments should be in the body of the email rather than attachments and should not exceed one page. The commentaries should be a brief summary of the topics covered in the assigned readings (both texts) as well as an informal set of questions and comments about the chapters. In addition, I expect you to participate in class with comments and questions about what you have read. As graduate students, this is an opportunity to gain experience helping to lead a discussion in class and to learn a little about college-level pedagogy.

Grading. Commentaries will be assigned 0-5 points based on my assessment of how much or well you read the articles and the effort in your summary and comments: 5 = complete and well-considered, 4 = complete, 3 = mostly complete/average effort, 2 = did not read some/lacking effort, 1 = did not read most/minimal effort, 0 = nothing/late. Comments can be informal in style and do not need to be immaculately edited. I will not grade these for grammatical correctness or quality of writing style.

Academic Journal Article Critiques (50 points each, 150 total, 50% of final grade)

Summarize and critique three peer-reviewed journal articles. Each critique should be approximately 5 pages (no less than 4 and no more than 6 pages). The purpose of these papers is for you to get very

familiar with one study that is mentioned in one of your readings from each section (either text) in order to better understand how the specific methods, measures, and analyses are used to address a particular research question. This assignment is valuable for understanding how to read scientific journal articles and learn more about how individual studies can contribute to theory and knowledge about psychology and aging.

Choose one article from a peer-reviewed journal (usually *The Gerontologist*, *Developmental Psychology*, *Human Development*, *Journals of Gerontology: Series B Psychological Sciences and Social Sciences*, *Psychology and Aging*, *International Journal of Aging and Human Development*), cited in either textbook, that reports findings from a study related to psychology and aging. Obtain a copy of the article and write a paper with the following sections (do not include the article with your paper, just the full reference citation): Summary, Research Design, Analyses, Results and Conclusions, Critique. *Summary*: use one paragraph to describe the main objectives of the article, being sure to describe how this article fits into the larger topic from the chapter. *Research Design*: describe the number of participants in the sample, how the data were collected, the design, using as many terms as are relevant from W&W Chapter 3 and W&S Chapter 4 of the textbooks and relevant class lectures (e.g., cross-sectional, laboratory, experimental), and the measures used (include the name of the measure and the theoretical constructs each measure is supposed to assess—you may briefly list the less central measures, like sociodemographic variables used for statistical controls). *Analyses*: describe the statistical analyses used and how they were used to evaluate the results, focusing on the most important research questions from the article. *Results and Conclusions*: describe the results and relate them back to the research questions that the authors intended to address, being sure to make clear how this article contributes to the larger topic discussed in the textbook chapter. *Critique*: provide an evaluation of strength of evidence provided by the article based on what you have learned in the class and what you know about psychological research methods from this class and elsewhere. What potential flaws were there in their methods? Did the evidence provided by the results match the research questions and their conclusions? How well the articles measures match the theoretical constructs they intended to measure? Remember, critiques are about noting strengths as well as weaknesses.

Grading. 10 points for each of the five sections. 10 points will only be given if the section is complete, accurate, carefully thought out, professional, and well-written. I will assign fewer points based on my evaluation of the material as, A (9 points), B (8 points), C (7 points), or less.

Oral Presentation (100 points. 33.3% of final grade)

Choose one topic from the Whitbourne and Swliwinski handbook and develop a 30-minute presentation. Let me know by January 17 via email which topic and date you choose (first come first serve). The purpose of this assignment is for you to obtain more in-depth knowledge of one topic, to gain additional experience with professional presentations, and to get some teaching experience. The presentation should include professional quality slides covering the points from the topic that you feel are the most important for the undergraduate students to know (turn in your slides to me the day of the presentation). Be sure to tie your presentation material to the content in the assigned reading for that topic from the Whitbourne and Whitbourne text that the undergraduate students are required to read. In addition, your presentation should include discussion of the methods and findings of two studies in some detail.

Grading. Presentations will be graded on the following five dimensions, worth 20 points each: overall content (represents careful selection of important main points from the topic area, coherent set of topics), theoretical depth (mentions of relevant theory, definitions and constructs), clarity (logical flow, clear and comprehensible explanation style, appropriate level for the students), detail (adequate discussion of details from two studies), and style and materials (slides well edited, useful graphics).