

Psy 462 Instructions for Assignments

General Instructions

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 "Readings and Requirement 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 both papers, 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)."

Popular Media Article Critique

Find one article from a printed or online popular media source that concerns aging or psychology of adult development that is related to topics covered in the course. The purpose of the assignment is to show that you understand the concepts, research, and theories discussed in class and in the text and be able to apply your knowledge to statements made outside of academia. Read the article and write a critique based on the scientific evidence about the psychology of aging from class. The article may have some statements that are consistent with the evidence, it may have statements that are inconsistent with the evidence, or it may have some of both. Remember, critiques are about noting strengths as well as weaknesses. Your paper should have the following sections: *Article Summary* (about two paragraphs, describe the topic and the main thesis or theses that the author makes), *Critique* (discuss the specific points, facts and/or opinions, made by the author, and discuss how each is supported or not supported by the evidence), *Summary and Conclusions* (about two paragraphs, provide overall assessment of the accuracy of the article with respect to what we know about the psychology of aging and provide your own summary of what is known about the topic and what needs to be studied). Be sure to include citations (use the sources cited in your text or class material) throughout to back up your points. Provide the direct webpage URL for the article or include a hardcopy with your paper.

The article can be anything from a column in a mainstream newspaper to a blog, but it should be more than a few paragraphs long. It should not be a scientific article or a popular media article that reports on the results of just one scientific study. Include the title of the article, the author, and a link to online source of the article (if not online, include a hardcopy with your paper). Any topic is allowable, but the critique must draw from research-based information that you have learned about in the class to this point (or future material if you are willing to read ahead) to evaluate its accuracy and completeness. Examples of sources include (but are in no way limited to) Paula Span's *New York Times New Old Age Blog*, TIME magazine articles (<http://time.com/tag/aging/>), Huffington Post's Post 50 section (<http://www.huffingtonpost.com/section/fifty>), Helen Dennis' Successful Aging columns (http://www.helenmdennis.com/Newspaper_Columns.html), or the Changing Aging blog (<https://changingaging.org/blog/>).

Academic Journal Article Summary

The purpose of this paper to get very familiar with one study that is mentioned in the textbook to better understand about how the specific methods, measures, and analyses are used to address a particular research question. This assignment is valuable for understanding the basis of the web of knowledge about the topic of psychology and aging is formed from many individual research studies. I do not expect you to understand all of the technical details of the research article you pick, but you will learn much more about the study purpose, methods, and findings after writing this paper than you would if you were briefly summarizing one article's findings as part of a larger research review paper.

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 your 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 a copy of 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 Chapter 3 of the textbook 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 (I know you may not know a lot about the technical details of the analyses, but you should be able to get the gist of what comparisons or associations the analyses were used for). *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 a brief 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. Remember, critiques are about noting strengths as well as weaknesses.

All of the above material needs to be in **your own words**. It can be tricky business summarizing an article, but it is just as easy, you will learn more, and it is less risky than trying to string together a bunch of mindlessly paraphrased sentences extracted from the article. I will check to make sure you are not just stealing sentences and phrases (and it is more obvious than you know anyway). I recommend you read the article at least twice through on two different occasions and wait to refer back to it until after writing your summary. First attempt to write each of the sections in your own words leaving out details you cannot remember or did not quite understand, even if it what you wind up with initially is very incomplete and rough. When you have an initial draft, then refer back to the article and improve what you have written adding in details and fixing the terminology.

Grading

Late papers will only be accepted without penalty if there is an extenuating circumstance, such as a family emergency (e.g., death in the family), you have a serious health issue (e.g., hospitalization, you break a bone that day), or the birth of your child. Otherwise 5 points (10%) will be deducted from the grade for the paper for each day it is late.

Popular Media Article Critique (50 points). 10 points for the Article Summary section, 30 points for the Critique section, and 10 points for the Summary and Conclusions section. For the 10 point 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 poorer work. For the Critique section, 30 points will only be given if the section is complete, accurate, carefully thought out, professional, and well-written, and fewer points will be based on my evaluation of the material as A (27 points), B (24-26 points), C (21-25 points), or fewer points for poorer work.

Academic Journal Article Summary (50 points). 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 poorer work.