

Social Psychology, Spring 2003  
Professor Ito  
Application Papers

You will complete 3 papers in which you will apply aspects of social psychology to things you encounter in everyday life.

**Format:** All assignments must be typed, double-spaced, with 1 inch margins on all sides. Put your name and ID# in the upper right hand corner of each page. Staple the pages together (do not include folders or binders). **BE SURE TO STAPLE YOUR ASSIGNMENT** –we will have a lot of papers and things can easily get lost. All assignments require you to turn in clippings or photocopies of various kinds. Put these in as neat a format as possible (e.g., neatly staple or tape them to a piece of paper). A wad of crinkled and torn papers will not be accepted.

All assignments are due at the BEGINNING of their respective class periods. Any paper turned in after class begins but before 5 pm on the due date will receive a 10% deduction. No papers will be accepted after 5 pm on the due date. There will be absolutely no make-up papers or late papers accepted after the 5 pm deadline but papers can be turned in early. If there is even a remote possibility that you'll be ill, have car trouble, etc., on a day on which a paper is due, plan to turn it in early. Assignments must be turned in in hard-copy form (i.e., they cannot be emailed to me).

Make sure you are doing your work independent of any friends in the class. Make a copy of all your assignments before turning them in to guard against loss.

Be sure to address each point for each assignment. Each sub-question in each assignment can usually be answered in 1-5 sentences. Thus, for each article, ad, or story you are analyzing, you'll probably have about a 1-2 pages of text.

1. **Biases, Shortcuts, & Attributions: DUE 3/6.** The world is a complex place. In order to deal with this complexity, we try to understand what causes other people's behavior. We also often make use of a range of shortcuts and biases. In this assignment, you'll examine some of these attributional explanations and biases in action. Collect 2 newspaper or magazine articles that contain an example of a bias or shortcut that we discussed in Chapter 3 or an attributional strategy that we discussed in Chapter 4 from the list below. Letters to the editor, or articles containing direct quotes where people explain why something happened are often good sources. For each article, do the following:
  - a. Tape/staple/glue the article to a piece of paper
  - b. Highlight or circle all the parts of the article that illustrate the relevant concept.
  - c. Describe and define the bias or attributional process being illustrated. Use your own words. Do you quote me or the text.
  - d. Explain why this is an example of the concept you describe. Both parts c and d are very important, so make sure you are clear in your explanations.

NOTE: The 2 articles you find can illustrate the same bias or attributional process or they can illustrate 2 different ones.

Possible biases and attributional strategies to look for:

- a. Availability heuristic
- b. Counterfactual thinking
- c. Representativeness heuristic
  - i. Under-using base rate information
- d. Explaining the behavior of others using correspondent inference theory
  - i. Role of noncommon effects
- e. Explaining the behavior of others using Kelly's covariation model
- f. Fundamental attribution error
- g. Actor/observer difference
- h. Self-serving attributions

- i. Defensive attributions
  - j. Unrealistic optimism
  - k. Belief in a just world
2. Attitude change: **DUE 4/10**. The advertising industry spends phenomenal amounts of money each year trying to influence our attitudes. Do they make up ads willy-nilly or are they using principles from social psychology? Collect 3 ads from newspapers or magazines and analyze them in terms of the attitude change techniques discussed in Chapter 7. For each ad:
- a. Tape/staple/glue the ad to a piece of paper.
  - b. What route of persuasion do the advertisers appear to be using, central or peripheral? Explain your answer. In your explanation, be sure to identify what specific central or peripheral cues you think are being used.
  - c. Do you think this ad is effective? To assess this, consider its likely audience and the route of persuasion being used. Is this audience likely to engage in that type of processing?

NOTE: Keep in mind that some ads may be hybrids, containing aspects that would appeal to both central and peripheral route processing. You can use them in your assignment, but you need to discuss them appropriately.

3. Socialization of Gender and Ethnic Stereotypes: **DUE 5/1**. Beliefs that we have about men, women, and different ethnic groups may be based on subtle things we encounter as kids, such as the stories we are read when we are very small. To assess the potential impact of this, locate 1 children's story and analyze the use of either gender or ethnic stereotypes in it (the public library is likely to be a good source). For each story:
- a. Provide the complete citation for the story, in the format of "Title of Book," by Name of Author. Name of publisher (date of publication).
  - b. Examine how men and women, or how people of different ethnic groups are portrayed. Provide photocopies of passage(s) or picture(s) that portray characters in gender or ethnic stereotypical ways.
  - c. Verbally summarize the stereotypical depictions. Are they overt and explicit (e.g., someone telling a female character that she should start making dinner) or are they subtle (e.g., pictures showing boys playing with trucks and girls with dolls)? Overall, what message might be being sent to kids?
  - d. Are there any counterstereotypical portrayals in the story, such as a woman who is a construction worker? If so, provide a copy of relevant passages or pictures.