

Psychology 270: Community Psychology

Spring 2005

Critical Analysis Paper Assignments

Overview of the Paper Assignments

In this class, you are required to write two short papers, each 5-7 pages long. In these papers you will be asked to think and reflect about topics discussed in class and in the assigned readings. The topics for these papers can be found on page 5 of this handout:

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| Paper 1 | Topic: Understanding Oppression and Diversity (<u>There Are No Children Here</u>)
Due: At the beginning of class Tuesday February 22, 2005 |
| Paper 2 | Topic: Prevention Programs for HIV/STDs
Due: At the beginning of class Thursday April 7, 2005 |

YOU MUST WRITE YOUR PAPER ON THE ASSIGNED TOPIC. PAPERS WRITTEN ON OTHER TOPICS WILL NOT BE ACCEPTED AND WILL RECEIVE A GRADE OF ZERO.

All papers are due at the beginning of the class period. You will lose points for late work, and no papers will be accepted one week past their due date. In other words, if a paper is handed in one week past its due date or later, it will automatically receive a grade of zero. Computer and printer problems are not acceptable excuses for late work. Plan ahead.

Format to Use for the Papers

You will be asked to write a formal essay for these two papers. A formal essay is a non-fiction piece of writing that follows this format:

- I. An Introductory Paragraph
- II. 5-7 Supporting Paragraphs
- III. A Concluding Paragraph

The *Introductory Paragraph* should follow this format:

- 1) Start with a re-statement of the topic that will be explored in this essay. Often this will require simply re-stating the topic that I assigned.

For example, for Paper 1 the opening of the Introductory Paragraph may start with: "The children who live in urban housing projects face many day-to-day problems" . . . (continue to bring in the idea that some may wonder why it is so difficult to leave such living conditions).

- 2) Once you have set the stage for your reader by introducing the topic, you will finish the Introductory Paragraph with your paper’s thesis—your statement about what will be argued, what will be covered, what will be discussed in your paper. Your thesis should state specifically what will be examined in your paper.

The *5-7 Supporting Paragraphs* should follow this format:

- 1) Every Supporting Paragraph should describe one and only one key point that was mentioned in the thesis of the Introductory paragraph. In other words, in your thesis, you will outline what is to be covered in the paper; then, in the supporting paragraphs you will devote one paragraph to each of the main points listed in the thesis. Don’t mix multiple topics in the same paragraph; one topic, one paragraph.

For example, for Paper 1, I would have one supporting paragraph for each level of analysis to be discussed: one paragraph for individual-level reasons, one-to-two paragraphs for microsystems (note—there are many different kinds of microsystems [e.g., family, friends], so it may take more than one paragraph to cover the microsystem level), one paragraph for the organizational/localities level (note—it is ok to combine these levels), and one paragraph for the macrosystems.

- 2) Start each Supporting Paragraph with a Topic Sentence. A Topic Sentence gives the reader an overview of what will be discussed in that paragraph. It is not necessary to write something like: “This paragraph will discuss the individual-level analysis reasons for why LaJoe stays in housing projects.” Good writing is more subtle. Instead, consider something like this as a model for your topic sentence: “There are many reasons why people may not be able to move out of conditions of poverty and violence, one of which may be their individual resources and characteristics.”
- 3) After your Topic Sentence, develop your ideas in several more sentences. Explain your ideas and provide sufficient evidence to support your argument. You must justify what you argue—back up what you say with evidence. Examples are often helpful to illustrate points to your reader. If you will be using an example to make a point, it is typical in formal essay writing to note that by writing “for example . . .” or “for instance . . .”
- 4) Wrap-up each Supporting Paragraph with a Concluding Sentence. The Concluding Sentence should highlight the key points made in the paragraph.

The *Conclusion Paragraph* should follow this format:

- 1) Start with a re-statement of the topic that was explored in this essay. Often this will require simply re-stating the topic that I assigned. This will be similar to, but not the same as, the start of your Introductory Paragraph. The goal of the sentences of the Conclusion is to restate the Introductory Paragraph.

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- 2) Then provide a summary of the key points of your essay. It is often helpful to refer to the Topic Sentences of each Supporting Paragraph to write this section.
- 3) Finish the paper with a closing sentence. This is your final chance to communicate with your reader—what is the final thought you want to leave him/her with? To write the closing sentence, it is often helpful to think about what the most important thing you want your reader to take away from your essay.

Paper Length, Font, and Other Layout Issues

Each paper must be at least five pages long, and no longer than 7 pages. By “at least five pages long” I mean that the text should extend to the **bottom of the fifth page**—this is the *minimum* length. It will take at least this much space to fully develop your ideas. We want you to practice how to write concisely, so keep your thoughts within seven full pages.

All papers must be typed. You must use a 12-point font. Fonts larger or smaller than 12 will not be accepted (i.e., will be given a grade of zero). You should have one inch margins on all pages (one inch top, bottom, right, and left). Papers with margins larger or smaller than one inch will not be accepted (i.e., will be given a grade of zero). The typing on all pages should be double-spaced. Papers that are more than double-spaced (e.g., triple-spaced) or less than double-spaced (e.g., single-spaced or space-and-a-half) will not be accepted (i.e., they will be given a grade of zero).

Include a title page with the following information: the title of your essay, your name and MSU ID number, the name of this class (Psychology 270: Community Psychology), my name (Dr. Campbell), and the date.

Number all pages consecutively from the first page of text (i.e., do NOT number the title page, and the title page does NOT count toward your five page minimum).

A Note About APA Format

Some of you may be familiar with APA Format, which is a set of guidelines for written papers developed by the American Psychological Association. In this class, the focus will be on writing good, solid essays, so it is not necessary to follow APA format. It is not necessary to provide citations or references. Instead, you should follow the format guidelines discussed previously and focus on developing a solid, well-written essay.

Comments About Writing Style

You will be graded not only for the content of your papers, but also your ability to write clearly and correctly. Two excellent resources for strengthening writing skills are:

The Elements of Style (3rd edition) (1979) by William Strunk & E.B. White. New York: Macmillan.

Revising Prose (3rd edition) (1992) by Richard A. Lanham. New York: Macmillan.

Grading the Papers

The papers will be graded by the Teaching Assistants with input and final review by the professor (Dr. Campbell). We will be using a standardized scoring sheet to grade each paper (see below). If you have any questions about the scoring, please see the Teaching Assistant who graded your paper, then Dr. Campbell if you have further questions.

Psychology 270 - SCORING SHEET FOR PAPERS

STUDENT NAME _____

NAME OF SCORER _____

CONTENT

Introductory Paragraph Maximum 10 pts.

• Statement of the topic _____ (5 pts.)

• Clear Thesis _____ (5 pts.)

Supporting Paragraphs Maximum 20 pts.

• Clear Topic Sentences _____ (4 pts.)

• Sufficient evidence presented in supporting paragraphs _____ (8 pts.)

• Accurate information presented in supporting paragraphs _____ (8 pts.)

Conclusion Paragraph Maximum 10 pts.

• Re-statement of topic _____ (5 pts.)

• Summarized key points of paper _____ (5 pts.)

ADDITIONAL CONSIDERATIONS

Writing quality and clarity _____ (5 pts.)

Organization of paper _____ (5 pts.)

Failure to adhere to page length guidelines _____ (-5 pts.)

Lateness _____ (-2 pts. per day)

TOTAL POINTS _____ (50 maximum)

Paper Topics

PAPER 1 TOPIC: Understanding Oppression and Diversity (There Are No Children Here)

In the book There Are No Children Here author Alex Kotlowitz chronicles the lives of two African American boys, Lafayette and Pharoah living in a Chicago housing project. This book describes many of the day-to-day problems these children face living in poverty and violence. Many people who read the book wonder why the children's mother, LaJoe, doesn't leave the projects to build a better life for her sons—what are the barriers that prevent her from leaving? Write an essay exploring this issue from a multiple levels of analysis perspective. As you develop your essay, it will be important to review Ryan's arguments about blaming the victim. Review the Bronfenbrenner Model described on pp. 10-13 of the Dalton textbook. In other words, consider what makes it difficult for LaJoe to leave the projects from an individual level of analysis, microsystem level of analysis, organizational/localities level of analysis (it is ok to combine these levels), and macrosystem level of analysis. Be sure to clarify for your reader what each of these terms (e.g., individual level of analysis) means. Be sure to follow the essay format previously described in this handout.

PAPER 2 TOPIC: Prevention Programs for HIV/STDs

In this class, we discussed the challenges of preventing HIV and other STDs in various populations (refer to the film "The Lost Children of Rockdale County" and/or the recommended reading On the Down Low). For this essay, pick a target population and develop a comprehensive prevention program to address the problem of HIV and other STDs in that population. By "comprehensive" I mean that the overall program should include primary, secondary, and tertiary approaches—this may mean that your overall program has multiple components that focus on different aspects of the problem and/or different subgroups within your target population. It is not necessary to identify an already-developed prevention program and describe that program in your paper. It is acceptable to "create your own program" that you believe would be effective. In your essay, provide some background information about the scope of the problem of HIV/STDs in your target population. Also, be sure to define and describe each of the three main types of prevention for your reader. Then, describe a tertiary prevention program that could be developed to address this problem with your target population. Then, provide a description of a secondary prevention program to address this problem. Then, describe a primary prevention program to address HIV/STDs in your target population. Finally, discuss which of these three prevention approaches you would recommend and why. Be sure to follow the essay format previously described in this handout.