Psychology 370-02/Law 370-02
Professor Scullin
Fall 2021

Discuss and Explain a Psychology and Law Article
5-Page Writing Assignment (10% of final grade)

OPTIONAL 3-Sentence Topic Description and Citation Due Sunday, October 3rd on Blackboard if you wish to use PsycInfo to select an article of your choice
Paper Due Sunday, October 17th by Midnight on Blackboard

Whether or not you ultimately major in psychology or continue to graduate school, an important skill is being able to write about the key findings of a study **in your own words**. Many findings by legal psychology researchers may seem puzzling or counter-intuitive, and it is useful to be able to explain to a general audience how research sheds light on them. For this paper, you should find one empirical article on a topic that you think will be of interest to either legal professionals or the general public from a respectable legal psychology journal (e.g., *Law and Human Behavior, Psychology, Public Policy, and Law,* and *Criminal Justice and Behavior* are some of the leading journals in the field, though of course others are acceptable). If you are having technology issues, you also have the option of choosing from a pre-approved article from a folder in Blackboard. The assignment is to discuss a study's methodology, findings, and application in detail in your own words. For example, you could use an article by Elizabeth Caufmann on juvenile delinquents that discusses how adolescents have a different future orientation than adults. **If it helps, you could think of your assignment as being to write a 1250-word long brief that summarizes a study's findings in engaging way for a lay audience or legal professionals.**

NOTE. Many psychology articles contain more than one study. For this paper you need only discuss **one** of the studies in an article in detail, though you may briefly discuss findings from additional studies in your journal article in your Commentary/Critique section at the end of your paper.

OPTION 1: Find an empirical article on a psychology and law related topic of your choice using PSYCInfo or the references in your text and run it by your TA for approval. Submit a 3-sentence description of your topic and its citation to the Article Approval link in Blackboard by Sunday, October 3rd. Your TA will let you know if you have picked an appropriate journal article. If not, you will need to resubmit either a new topic, journal article, or both.

OPTION 2: Select one of the pre-approved empirical articles from the Writing Assignment 1 Articles folder in the Assignments link in Blackboard

Your paper should incorporate the information you have learned from your reading of the article, but it should be written in your own words. Note that the writing rubric requires you to discuss one study in detail. If you are writing about a multi-study paper, discuss the methodology of **one** of the studies in detail. You may then choose to discuss the methods and results of other

studies in the paper in a more cursory fashion. When the article you have chosen (or other material) is discussed, make sure to properly cite when needed (using APA format). Papers must adhere to APA format, be five pages long, typed, double-spaced, Times New Roman font size 12. Five pages is defined as having the body of the paper be 1250 words long, not counting title page info or references. **An abstract is not required.**

The final draft of the assignment will be due Sunday, October 17th by Midnight.

Assignment Details:

You will do much better on the assignment if you take the outline below seriously and follow that outline in your written assignment.

Your synopsis and critique should be written using the following sections and all questions within each section should be answered:

i) *Rationale and Research Question:* This is the introduction to your essay. What phenomenon are you examining? Why is this interesting? What is the main research question asked in the target study of the paper you are discussing? If your paper has more than one study, select ONE study as your target study for more in-depth discussion.

ii) *Introduction & Methodology Sections:* What is the purpose of the experiment and how did the authors study it? That is, what is compared to what, and exactly how and why does any difference between these conditions (or lack thereof) answer the question posed in (i). Don't focus on the trivial experimental details. Rather, emphasize the main idea behind the paper (e.g. the task the subjects performed is likely to be important, the exact nature of the stimuli likely is not.)

iii) *Results:* What were the main findings? How did they answer the question posed? Don't get bogged down in the minute details of the statistics. If you are having difficulty picking out the key findings from the results, they are summarized in the Discussion section.

iv) *Implications:* What can you conclude from the results—what are the broader implications of what the authors found?

v) *Critique/Discussion:* These are your summary and discussion sections. What do you want people to take away from this paper? Are there additional studies in the paper that shed further light on your topic? In a multiple study paper, this is the point where you may discuss the additional studies in less detail either together or sequentially. Does the design make sense, or do you see flaws and if so what are they? If you do not see any flaws, could you have answered the question with a different design? What further experiments would you want to try next, based on the results reported in this paper? How might the findings be applicable in a particular criminal or civil case?

Important Point: Please note that the definition of "critique" is *a detailed analysis and assessment of something*. Note that the definition does not imply that the critique must be negative. What I mean is, the word "critique" doesn't just mean "tear to shreds". What I am

interested in doing is developing your scientific minds … encouraging you to think about what should come next in the research program.

Psy 370/Law 370 Writing Assignment Grading Rubric

Students, please note that this writing assignment is designed to help you as you develop academically and begin to meet two of the learning objectives of the Forensic Psychology Major. Those objectives are below. I highlighted the specific objectives addressed in this assignment in purple font (and on the rubric on the following page).

#2. Learning Objective: Scientific Inquiry and Critical Thinking: Students will demonstrate scientific reasoning and problem-solving skills including effective research methods.

Specific Learning Objectives
Develop plausible behavioral explanations that rely on scientific reasoning and evidence rather than anecdotes or pseudoscience.
Read and summarize complex ideas accurately, including future directions, from psychological sources and research.
Describe problems operationally to study them empirically (e.g., identify research questions).
Evaluate the effectiveness of quantitative and/or qualitative research methods in addressing a research question.

#4. Learning Objective: Communication: Students will demonstrate competence in writing and in oral and interpersonal communication skills.

Specific Learning Objectives
Construct arguments clearly and concisely using evidence-based psychological concepts and theories.
Use grammar appropriate to professional standards and conventions.
Use APA style effectively.
Interpret quantitative data displayed in statistics, graphs and tables, including statistical symbols in research reports.

On the next page, you will see that I have included some of these specific learning objectives (in purple) within this grading rubric. Other learning objectives will appear as you move on to more advanced classes in the major.

Grading Category	*Unacceptable*	*Acceptable*	*Good*	*Excellent*	*Score (possible points)*
Critical Components of the Article Critique					
Research Question & Rationale Describe problems operationally to study them empirically (e.g., identify research questions).	Does not adequately convey research topic. Little or no rationale for study is presented.	Conveys topic but not key research question(s). Most rationale for study is presented.	Conveys topic and key research question(s) and terms. Rationale for study is provided.	Clearly introduces key research question(s). Demonstrates good understanding of question(s) and topic. Rationale for study is provided.	**(16)**
Methods	Methods are not clearly described and are missing many key components.	Methods may not be organized in coherent form, but most key components are described.	Methods are mostly organized in coherent form and all key components are described.	Methods are coherently organized, and all key components are described and related to research question(s).	**(16)**
Results Interpret quantitative data displayed in statistics, graphs and tables, including statistical symbols in research reports.	Few or no results for the study are presented and interpreted correctly. Results are missing key points.	Some results presented and interpreted correctly, including the key point(s) related to primary research question(s).	Most results presented and interpreted correctly, including key points related to majority of experimental manipulations.	All results are presented and interpreted correctly which includes the key points related to the experimental manipulations.	**(16)**
Critique Read and summarize complex ideas accurately, including future directions, from psychological sources and research. Evaluate the effectiveness of quantitative and/or qualitative research methods in addressing a research question.	Does not discuss appropriateness of methodology. Does not address own thoughts about the study validity.	Some discussion of appropriateness of methodology and/or personal thoughts about the study validity are included.	Summarizes the findings. Discusses appropriateness of methodology and includes some personal thoughts about validity.	Clearly summarizes the findings. Discusses appropriateness of methodology, addressing key manipulations and how they relate to results. Includes thoughts on validity. Shows good understanding of the real-world implications of the research.	**(16)**
Discussion of the Article's Relevance and Implications of its Findings	Few or no implications are presented. Missing the author's key points. Implications do not relate to research question(s).	Some implications and key points are presented. What is written relates to research question(s).	Most key implications are presented and are related to research question(s).	The author's key implications are clearly discussed and related to research question(s).	**(16)**
Grammar, mechanics and APA					
Use grammar appropriate to professional standards and conventions.	Grammatical errors, spelling and/or punctuation errors are common and detract significantly from the paper. Word choice is informal in tone.	Grammatical, spelling, and/or punctuations errors are present and interfere somewhat with reading the paper. Word choice occasionally informal in tone.	A few grammatical, spelling, and/or punctuation errors are present but they do not interfere with reading the paper. Mostly scholarly writing style.	Grammatical, spelling and/or punctuation errors are very rare and do not detract from the paper. Scholarly writing.	**(8)**
Use APA style effectively.	Errors in APA style (in text) detract substantially from the paper.	Errors in APA style (in text) are noticeable.	Some minor errors in APA style (in text) but they do not detract from the paper.	Very rare errors in APA style (in text).	**(8)**
Reference Page	References are missing key elements	All key elements are included but the order is incorrect	All key elements are included in the correct order; some formatting errors	Reference page is correctly written	**(2)**

Specific Assignment requirements		Page length requirement not followed (significantly too short or too long).	Page length requirement not followed but only minor fluctuation.	Page length requirement followed.	**(2)**
				Total	**(100)**