

# PSY 13 – PERSONAL BLOG ASSIGNMENT

## SPRING 2015

### OVERVIEW

One of your course requirements is to keep a weekly (or more frequent) blog this semester. The purposes of this assignment are to stimulate thoughts about the material when you are not in class and to emphasize the relevance of social psychology to everyday life. Specifically, your objective should be to use this blog to analyze events from your own life or current events using a social psychological perspective. In other words, your task is to start looking at the world around you through a social psychological lens, and documenting this process through the words, links, photos, and videos you incorporate into your blog.

Note that this is your *personal blog*; you will set it up to be private so that only you, me, and the TAs can view it. It is different than the *class blog*, which is accessible to the entire class and on which I will post regularly in order to facilitate student/student and student/instructor interaction. You are encouraged to comment on and engage with the class blog; you are also encouraged to submit to me ideas for it (including any posts from your personal blog that you think would be useful to share). But the guidelines in this document refer to your personal blog assignment, which will be graded at the end of the semester.

### REQUIREMENTS

Starting Monday 1/26, you are required to blog a minimum of 300 words each week of the course, except those weeks when we have an exam (see final page of syllabus for schedule details). By way of reference, 300 words is about 1.5 pages of double-spaced text in a standard document. This means you will write at least 10 blog posts by the end of the semester. Other than the minimum word count, there is no required format for your blogs. Blogging is supposed to be creative: take the opportunity to explore your life and the world around you. You can either one post per week that is at least 300 words or you can write several posts per week that cumulatively add up to 300 + words. Here are some options to get you started:

- briefly describe an event/interaction from your life and then spend the bulk of your words conducting a social psychological analysis of what occurred;
- do the same as above, but instead focus on a particular news story/video/link you found and want to analyze from a social psychological viewpoint;
- post photos/videos you take that illustrate the issues about which you write;
- and much, much more... surprise us!

You are not limited, by any means, to just 300 words per week. If you get on a roll, keep going. In fact, having given this type of assignment in the past, I can assure you that there is a positive correlation between how regularly people post and how well they do in the course (not to mention how much they get out of the course, which is even more important). Of course, as you know from Chapter 2, correlation does *not* equal causation—perhaps regular posters just happen to be people who also do a conscientious job with other assignments as well. But I promise you that regular blogging provides ideal practice for the course exams, on which you also will be asked to generate your own examples of phenomena, explain concepts in your own words, and apply theoretical ideas to specific, real-life situations.

## **GUIDELINES**

Make sure that the majority of each post is devoted to your social psychological analysis, not to recounting the event/interaction/link/news story you have chosen. So if you write about an event from your own life, you might begin with a brief description of what happened in a few sentences. Two pages of text about how you spent your weekend is too long; one line reading, “I went out with my friends” is insufficient. Instead, pick a specific event and describe it in enough detail so that your subsequent discussion makes sense to someone who was not there. If you’re linking to a news story, photo, video, etc., you probably need even less in the way of summary. In short, focus on analysis, not summary.

Next, describe how a particular concept from social psychology is relevant to the event (or news story or link or video, etc.). What sort of questions might you raise in your posts? Again, you have flexibility here, so be creative. But some ideas to get you started:

- What social psychological concept can be seen in this interaction/story?

- How does your current awareness of this social psychological concept change the way you interpret what happened during this personal event or news story?
- If you (or others) had been aware of social psychological research about this concept during the events in question, how might the outcomes have changed?
- How will your learning about this concept influence your attitudes/behavior/perceptions regarding similar situations the future?
- What questions do you now have after considering things in light of social psychology?
- What type of experiment(s) might help examine these issues you have raised?

You can also discuss an event or story that seems to be *inconsistent* with a concept we have learned about. In such cases, you might want to consider the following questions:

- How was this interaction/story inconsistent with the concept you learned about?
- Why do you think the outcome of this interaction/story seems inconsistent with what social psychological theory would predict?
- What aspects of the situation, if changed, would have resulted in a less surprising outcome?
- What type of experiment(s) might help answer these questions?

There is no fixed schedule of topics you need to follow. One option would be to spend each week focusing on the issues raised in that week’s readings/lectures. But you can also write about a topic we discussed earlier in the course, compare and contrast topics from different parts of the course, or use a combination of these strategies. Again, it’s up to you. You should, however, identify by name in each post at least one specific concept, theory, or phenomenon from social psychology. This way you can make sure you are grounding your analysis in the specific terms of what we are reading and learning about in class. And don’t write about the exact same topic each week; exploring some diversity of topics from across the entire course is a good thing (and something we’ll look for in grading).

## FORMAT

This is a blog and your writing is expected to be informal—this is not a formal paper assignment in which you must use scientific language or APA format.

## LOGISTICS

Your blogging responsibilities start soon. So you need to start the process of registering and setting up your blog immediately! Step-by-step instructions (including how to set the privacy settings so that only your instructors can access your blog) here:

[https://docs.google.com/document/d/1uIiLJ7zE3TDugE0J\\_FhPqL3bQSfyMBJMldHQ21pYXg/edit?usp=sharing](https://docs.google.com/document/d/1uIiLJ7zE3TDugE0J_FhPqL3bQSfyMBJMldHQ21pYXg/edit?usp=sharing) If you run into technical difficulties, you can request assistance by emailing [edtech@tufts.edu](mailto:edtech@tufts.edu).

## GRADING

Your blog counts for 20% of your final course grade. Blogs with fewer than 10 weeks of entries meeting the requirements spelled out above will be penalized a full grade (e.g., from A- to B-) for each missing week. Your blog will be evaluated based on the following criteria:

- how well you demonstrate comprehension of the concepts you discuss;
- how wide a range of concepts you address over the course of the semester;
- your ability to analyze theories and concepts by answering the questions on this handout (or other relevant and interesting questions);
- the effort and creativity used in analyzing these events in your life and in putting together your blog more generally.

## FINAL REMARKS

“Nothing happened to me this week” is not an excuse. You can always blog about something that happened previously, something that happened to someone you know, or something that you read about online. Or go out and create your own material to write about! Take videos or photos to post. Stage your own pseudo-experiment to see how people react to the violation of a particular norm or any other topic that we discuss.

Just make sure to be safe and respectful of those with whom you interact—you should not be blogging about specific people by name without their permission. Remember that while social psychologists often study embarrassing or even anti-social tendencies, we do not do so to entertain ourselves or to poke fun, but rather to learn about human nature. You are expected to comply with our basic campus values of ethics, community, and mutual respect in completing this assignment. And while the Google Doc instructions walk you through the privacy setting process, keep in mind that like any other form of social media, your personal blog will only remain as private as your own steps to maintain its security permit.

Good luck and happy blogging!