

## Topic Discussion Guidelines

This introductory psychology course will cover a lot of topics in psychology that are relevant to our everyday lives. Just about every day I read an article in the newspaper or on a website that presents some practical application of a psychological concept or theory. This semester you are expected to regularly discover these connections and discuss them with your classmates.

## Course Requirement

You are required to participate in at least 5 topic discussions at any time during this semester, each worth up to 10 points based on the quality of your participation (see rubric on the last page). You are welcome to participate in as many discussions as you want, but cannot exceed a total of 50 points. That means if you participate in 5 discussions but have only earned 30 points, then participate in more and your points will accumulate! There are two ways to “participate” in these discussions:

1. Post an analysis of an article as it relates to the class concepts and/or theories (must include a full APA citation directing readers to the exact location of the article).
2. Discussion of another student’s posted analysis.

## Finding Topics

Fortunately with the Internet there are endless places to find the news so you are not limited to finding them in one specific place. You can read printed articles from a newspaper or magazines; you can read online from periodical websites or blogs. To help you I have created a Psychology News Widget in D2L which will give you direct links to articles that relate to the concepts in this class; in addition here are some direct links that I like:

- [Slate.com](#)
- [Pacific Standard](#)
- [Time Magazine](#)
- [Scientific American Mind](#)

Our ARC Library has a subscription to many magazines that would also be an interesting source of information for these topic discussions. Here are a couple of my favorites:

- Psychology Today
- Scientific American Mind

Remember that you are not limited to using these sources.

DO NOT use scholarly journal articles.

## Topic Discussion Guidelines

### Discussing Topics

You will be evaluated based on the quality of your discussions on each topic. I will not give each individual post a score, but I will give each student a score for their overall quality of discussion on a topic (up to 10 points). These discussions are focused on quality not quantity, and the emphasis is on “discussing” topics. Imagine you are with friends or family and enter into a discussion about a current event. If you simply say your opinion and walk away, that is not a discussion; a discussion is listening to others perspectives and responding to those perspectives. This is what you are expected to do in these online discussions. Below are some questions you can use to guide the quality of your topic discussions and maximize points:

When posting an initial analysis of an article, ask yourself...

- *Did I summarize the article?*
- *Did I explain how the article relates to the concepts and/or theories from this class?*
- *Why did I find this article interesting?*

When replying to another student’s analysis of an article, ask yourself...

- *Should I read the article before responding? If so, then read the article!*
- *Do I agree with the student’s analysis? Why or why not?*
- *Do I have something I want to add to the discussion that will contribute to a better understanding of the topic?*
- *Is there any inherent bias in the article or student’s analysis?*

To help you maximize the value of these discussions, below are some more tips.

1. **DO** participate in discussions that interest you and compel you to come back to them.  
**DON’T** post one time to a discussion.
2. **DO** make sure that your analysis/discussion is thoughtful and clearly written.  
**DON’T** post make statements like “I agree” or “That’s interesting” and use complete sentences (do not use texting language).
3. **DO** provide a clear connection between the articles and the concept and/or theories.  
**DON’T** repeat facts or figures from the lessons that are not relevant to the article.
4. **DO** start a discussion thread of a unique article.  
**DON’T** post an analysis of an article that has already been posted for discussion.

## Topic Discussion Guidelines

### Grading Rubric

Each student will receive an automatic 10 points for participating in a topic discussion, however failure to engage in a thoughtful discussion will result in the point deductions below. Those students who follow the guidelines on the previous page will maximize their points.

Point Deductions	
<b>- 2 points</b>	Citation is not in APA format
<b>-5 points</b>	Student's discussion is difficult to understand (e.g. grammar, complete sentences).
<b>-5 points</b>	Student is not actively engaged in the discussion (e.g. only one post)
<b>-6 points</b>	Student did not relate the article to the concepts and/or theories from class.
<b>-10 points</b>	Student posted an initial analysis of an article that has already been posted!
<b>-10 points</b>	Student submitted plagiarized work!
<b>-10 points</b>	APA citation is missing!