

**(LESS TRANSPARENT)**

**PSYCHOLOGY 101, David Copeland**

**PAPER INSTRUCTIONS**

Your task is to explore a psychological topic in relation to your life, in a 3-4 page paper. Papers should be (a) double-spaced, (b) 12 pt Times New Roman font, (c) include your name in the header, and (d) a title at the top of the first page. Papers will be graded on the following criteria: (a) addressing the question / topic, (b) writing quality, (c) integrating outside sources (at least one quality source; if you are not sure whether something is a good source, ask me), and (d) following instructions.

**TOPIC:**

One of my goals in this course is to introduce students to ideas that can potentially change the way that they view the world. This can relate to any topic in psychology (e.g., how people learn, disorders of the brain, how memory functions, intelligence, what happens when we sleep, personality, how people interact with others, etc.), because psychological research is applicable to so many aspects of human life. Pick something that you have learned in this course that has changed the way you view the world. For example, imagine if on the first day of class I had asked you something like “how does short-term memory work?” and your answer then was very different than what you learned later in the semester from lecture/textbook. Think about the idea more deeply (especially in the context of your life), and apply it to your philosophy of life.

Once you have an idea, describe how you used to think about the topic, discuss the topic itself (i.e., what you learned about it), and then explain how your view has changed going forward. Please be as specific as possible when writing.

**(MORE TRANSPARENT)**

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**CHANGING BELIEFS: IN-CLASS ACTIVITY (beginning of term)**

**PURPOSE:** The purpose of this activity is to help you monitor how your beliefs change throughout the semester. To do this, you will do a metacognitive activity (thinking about your own thinking) by answering some questions to document your current beliefs. These questions relate to some of the important topics we will study in this class. Later in the semester, we will look again at your views on these same questions.

**TASK:** Your task is to answer the following questions based on what you truly think (do not look them up online or in your textbook). After you answer each question, please note, using a scale from 1 to 5, how confident you are in your answer (1 = not at all confident, 3 = somewhat confident, 5 = extremely confident).

- (1) What percent of the brain do people use?
- (2) When we look at an object, do we always see that object? If yes, why? If not, why not?
- (3) Why do we dream? What is happening in our minds / brains?
- (4) Do abilities such as extra-sensory perception (ESP), including reading people's minds or seeing the future, exist?
- (5) Briefly, how does memory work?
- (6) Is intelligence an easily measured construct that is stable throughout one's life?
- (7) Do most people use stereotypes? Do you?
- (8) Can humans and animals be trained using similar methods? Why or why not?
- (9) Are most people generally good or generally bad?
- (10) How can we measure a person's personality? Is it possible?

Your completed assignment should include two or three sentences in response to each question. Bring this write-up with you to the next class and you will pair up with a classmate. When paired up, you will swap papers and read through each other's answers to determine whether you can understand each other's views.

**CRITERIA:** You will be successful in this activity if you can: (a) Provide an answer to all of the questions with descriptions that are clear to another reader, and (b) Provide feedback to a classmate about how clearly you can understand their answers.

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**CHANGING BELIEFS: TAKE-HOME ASSIGNMENT (end of term)**

**PURPOSE:** One of my goals in this course is to introduce students to ideas that can potentially change the way that they view the world. This can relate to any major topic area in psychology (e.g., how the brain functions, how we perceive, how people learn, sleep and dreams, how memory functions, intelligence, personality, how people interact with others socially, or disorders). The purpose is to identify a topic for which your prior view of it has changed as a result of what you learned in this course. You should be able to compare and analyze how your thinking / beliefs are different now than before.

**TASK:** Your task is to: (1) Select a topic that you have learned about in this course that has changed the way you view the world. You are encouraged to refer back to your answers to the questions in the Changing Beliefs Activity from the beginning of the semester. (2) Once you have an idea, describe in a paragraph or two how you used to think about the topic. (Refer back to your

responses to the Changing Beliefs activity from the beginning of term.) (3) Then, discuss the topic itself (i.e., what you learned about it). Please use the library to find an outside source – a peer reviewed psychology research article – to help you write a more thorough description of the selected concept. (4) Finally, explain how your view has changed going forward. Please be as specific as possible and please apply this to your own life and way of thinking (i.e., please do not generalize or write about how most people think).

Your completed assignment should be between 3 to 4 pages (typed, double-spaced). Include your name and a title in the header. Include a reference for your outside source at the end, using APA style formatting rules.

**CRITERIA:** Your assignment will be graded based on the following criteria: (a) Did you select a topic discussed in this course? (b) Can I clearly understand your prior way of thinking about that concept? (c) Do you provide a clear description of the topic that demonstrates that you can summarize the important aspects of it? Is information from the outside source nicely integrated into this description? (d) Can I clearly understand your current way of thinking about that concept? Did you contrast this to your prior view? (e) Finally, following instructions and quality of writing will be evaluated as well (e.g., proper grammar, spelling, etc.).