

Psychology 209, Winter 2012
Critical Thinking assignment due Wednesday, January 11
Worth 10 points

- Find an article from a popular news source, magazine, or website that is related to a topic in psychology that interests you. The article should make a claim about behavior based on research.
- **As you read, think about the claim being made in the article and critically think about how well the evidence in the article backs up this claim.**
- Please put a header at the top right of your paper with your name, the course, and the date.
- **TYPE 2-3 pages** (12 pt font, double spaced, 1" margins) **in an essay format** addressing the following:
 - Give basic information about the article:
 - What is the article title, author, and source?
 - What is the claim made in the article?
 - Critically examine the article:
 - What are the strengths of the article?
 - Use the 8 guidelines we discussed in class (and described below) to critically examine the article. How well does the article hold up to the guidelines? Remember, critical thinking means identifying both strengths and weaknesses in the article, and the goal is not to ‘tear the article down’, though you may be tempted to do so. Remain as objective as possible as you use your critical thinking skills to determine whether the claim is well supported.

8 Guidelines for Critical Thinking:

- **Guideline 1: Ask questions.**
As you read the article, what questions are you provoked to ask? What is the theory underlying the claim? Does the article have a tone of inquiry- what questions is it asking?
- **Guideline 2: Define terms.**
Are the terms that are being used (e.g. what is being measured or claimed) operationally defined? Is jargon used? What is left vague or undefined?
- **Guideline 3: Examine the evidence.**
What is the evidence provided for the claim? Is it scientific or anecdotal? Based in research or opinion? What information is provided about any research that was done? Does the research described support the overall claim being made in the article? Is this evidence from a reliable source?
- **Guideline 4: Analyze assumptions and biases.**
Who funded the research? What is the source of the article? What assumptions are made about the audience reading the article? What is the goal of the source (e.g. to sell advertisements? To forward a political agenda?)? Do you find yourself making assumptions or having your own biases as you read the article? Acknowledge them and examine if they are interfering with your own acceptance/critical analysis of the claim.

- Guideline 5: Avoid emotional reasoning.
Does the article play on readers' emotions (including fear)? Does it use emotional terms or words that arouse emotion? Does it rely on emotional or logical explanations? Do you find yourself becoming emotional while reading the article? If so, ask yourself why.
- Guideline 6: Don't oversimplify.
Does the article gloss over important considerations? Does it base conclusions on anecdotal evidence? Does it omit relevant information?
- Guideline 7: Consider other interpretations.
Does the article provide alternate explanations for the findings? If this is a correlational study, is the claim making an inference about causation, and might there be another explanation for the correlation?
- Guideline 8: Tolerate uncertainty.
Does the article tolerate uncertainty about the claim it is making? For example, does the author speak in definitive terms such as "prove"? Does the article acknowledge that more research may contribute a different interpretation or explanation? Were you left with the feeling that more research will be done, or was this the final conclusion?