

## PSYC3830: Op-ed assignment

This assignment is worth 25 points.

Many of the psychological theories and research questions that we will discuss in class have real implications for internet use in everyday life. Legislative proposals to regulate online environments have been gaining steam, but rarely are those proposals rooted in rigorous understandings of psychology and human behavior. Furthermore, the motivation for these policies is not often effectively communicated to the public. **Your final assignment is to write an op-ed for a specific publication (your choice!) highlighting one aspect of the internet that encourages harmful or self-destructive behavior, and ideas for how to change/improve it.** I encourage you to think of this assignment as an opportunity to write something that you can actually try to get published in a general audience publication.

### *Op-ed assignment points breakdown*

- Pitch: 5 points, due 11/21
- Op-ed: 10 points, due 12/12
- Supplement: 10 points, due 12/12

### *The pitch (5 points, due by end of day on November 21st)*

Your pitch should be written in the form of an email to an editor at your intended publication. I will give you brief feedback on your pitch to ensure you are on the right track. Please include the following information in your submission:

- The subject line of your email. Make it concise, clear, and catchy.
- A summary of your proposed op-ed, including the aspect of the internet you are focusing on and your ideas for how to change or improve it. Mention the findings from two psychology research papers that you plan to discuss in the full article. 1-2 paragraphs.
- The relevance of your article. Be sure to discuss why general awareness about this issue is important, AND why this article would fit in with this particular publication. (Be sure to actually name the publication!). 1 paragraph.

### *The op-ed (10 points, due by end of day on December 12th)*

The op-ed should be between 1,200 and 1,500 words. You may structure it however you like, but be sure that your writing style aligns with the proposed publication. In addition, you should include findings from at least four different psychology papers to back up your argument. These can be papers we discussed in class, but they don't have to be. Below, you can find some examples of papers that would receive different grades.

- A 10-point paper will clearly lay out an aspect of the internet that impacts behavior and make a compelling case for why it is an urgent problem to solve. It will propose an implementable solution that is rooted in psychological theory and literature, and will explain how the literature begs the proposed solution. It will be interesting to

read and accessible by a broad audience. It has proper grammar, spelling, and word count.

- A 7-point paper will state the aspect of the internet to be discussed and may mention its broader relevance, but won't make a compelling case for its urgency. It will propose a solution with some connection to psychological theory and literature but the links between them might not be clear or consistent. It has mostly proper grammar and spelling, and is an appropriate word count.
- A 4-point paper will state the problem and solution but will not discuss the relevance or urgency of either one. It will include some references to psychology studies but the references won't tell a coherent story and won't fit in with the op-ed's argument. It has many grammar and spelling errors.

*The supplement (10 points, due by end of day on December 12th)*

The purpose of the supplement is to provide me with additional insight into your argument and the resources you used to construct it. The supplement should include the following elements:

- A justification for the publication you chose
- For each of your included studies/articles, a one-paragraph summary of the paper's questions, hypotheses, and findings
- For each of your included studies/articles, a one-paragraph discussion of how the paper's topic and findings relate to your argument

*A note on proposed publications*

I encourage you to pick a publication to pitch that isn't a major national newspaper, such as *The New York Times* or *The Washington Post*. Below, I list some science/society-focused publications that you may wish to use for this assignment. You are, of course, more than welcome to pick a publication that isn't listed here.

*Scientific American, Discover, Undark, Inverse, Psyche, The Verge, Wired, New Scientist, Popular Science, Psychology Today, Nautilus, Behavioral Scientist*