

# THE VOICES PROJECT

## ASSIGNMENT DIRECTIONS

The purpose of this assignment is to experience and share the life stories of people from “groups of difference” within the framework of psychological theories and principles. The assignment is called *The Voices Project* because it allows students to hear the “voices” and life stories of people from cultural groups with which they may be unfamiliar. By getting to know people of different cultures and hearing their stories, students in the class will be able to identify and critically analyze the stereotypes and the roots of prejudice and discrimination that are prevalent in social norms and how they affect people’s lives.

Your task in this assignment is to document the life of a person considered part of a “group of difference” in society focusing on themes related to this Intro to Psychology course. You and a partner will be assigned a person to interview (your “interviewee”). You will have three, one-hour meetings with your interviewees to gather information about his/her life. In addition to the interview meetings, you are required to attend one “cultural event” that reflects important aspects of the groups’ cultural values, rituals, or community. Based on the information gathered during these events, you and your partner will collaborate to write a mini-memoir of your interviewee’s life as it relates to themes of difference. These memoirs will be shared in class and during a campus-wide program called *The Voices Project* held on November 5, 2009 in the Lemmond Auditorium at Misericordia University.

This project contains several different parts that will occur over the entire Fall 2009 semester. The guidelines and grading criteria for each part are presented in this handout.

### Part I: Attitude Survey #1

As part of this project, students will complete two survey packets asking about your attitudes towards groups of differences: one at the beginning of the semester and one at the end. These surveys will help you evaluate the impact of the assignment on your attitudes across the semester. The surveys are not graded but are required as part of the experience of the assignment and can be referred to in the essays. **The first survey packet will be distributed in class on Wednesday, September 2 and collected in class on Friday, September 4.** Students who are absent on these days are responsible for contacting the instructor to arrange alternative pickup and drop off times. *Students who do not turn in their surveys will receive half credit for their papers.*

### Part II: Paper #1

Students will write three papers over the course of the semester: one at the beginning, one in the middle, and one at the end. The purpose of the first paper is to help you identify a baseline from which to guide any changes in your knowledge and beliefs of groups of difference over the course of the semester. **The first and third papers should be approximately 5 pages long and worth 14% of your final grade.** The papers should reflect well-developed and clearly expressed content (e.g., ideas, thoughts, and arguments), logical organization, appropriate grammar and spelling. Students are encouraged to visit the Writing Center and will receive

extra credit for each meaningful visit that focuses on improving their papers. *Students who turn in papers after the indicated deadline will have 1 point deducted for each late "day" (defined as a 24-hour period). Paper #1 is due to be uploaded to the Blackboard Assignment Dropbox by the start of class on Friday, September 18.*

### **PAPER #1 (PRE) TOPICS:**

1. Introduce the group that you were assigned to interview in your own words. Explain exactly what makes this a group of "difference" in society. [Note: if you decide to use outside sources, they must be academically reputable and cited in the style of your choice (e.g., MLA, APA, etc.)].
2. Interview at least 5 people of different ages and characteristics to learn about their ideas of, and beliefs towards, the members of your group.
  - a. What were the common themes in the beliefs that were *similar* across people you interviewed?
  - b. What *differences* in beliefs did you hear across the people you interviewed? How might you explain these differences in beliefs?
  - c. What stereotypes, prejudice, and/or discrimination were present in the beliefs that you heard?
  - d. How do these beliefs match up with yours?
3. Describe how your group is portrayed by the media. Refer to at least 5 examples in your responses including a combination of media sources (e.g., movies, music, television, newspapers, magazines, and/or books):
  - a. How is the group portrayed by the media in general, averaging across all your sources? Is the group portrayed differently depending on the type of media source?
  - b. What stereotypes, prejudice, and/or discrimination did you find?
  - c. How *accurate* are these portrayals of the group and its members?
  - d. How do these media portrayals match up with your beliefs, knowledge, and/or experience with this group?
4. Think about why people hold such beliefs (including beliefs that reflect stereotypes and/or prejudice) towards this group.
  - a. Where do these beliefs come from?
  - b. What maintains or encourages these beliefs?
  - c. What are the possible psychological reasons or motivations for people to hold these beliefs?
  - d. How might these beliefs negatively impact a person who holds them?

### **Part II: Interviews**

Students will work in pairs to interview a person from a "group of difference" in the community. The "groups" represent a wide range of aspects of diversity including race, religion, ethnicity, language, nationality, gender, social class, health conditions, and sexual orientation. The guidelines for interviews include:

- Pairs must meet 3 times (for one-hour each time) with their interviewee. The purpose of the first meeting is for students and interviewees to get to know and become comfortable talking with each other. During the second and third meetings, the student pairs should gather information about how being a member of that group has affected his/her life. Each student pair will develop their own set of interview questions based on the directions for the mini-memoir. Pairs should ensure that their questions are broad and specific enough to gather the information required to write an effective mini-memoir (see guidelines in Part IV for topics to cover in interview).
- The second and third interviews will be tape recorded so students can focus on listening instead of writing everything down during the interview. The tapes will be kept in a locked place and erased immediately after students are done listening to them. Students will listen to the tapes in a private room in the library (see Part VIII section on *confidentiality*).

### **Part III: Cultural Event**

Each student pair must attend one event that illustrates what it is like to be a member of their assigned group of difference. Your interviewee will help you select an event and attend the event with you to help you understand its significance. The event should be directly related to your interviewee's "group of difference" and invite you to take an active role in participating.

### **Part IV: The Voices Project Paper: A Mini-Memoir**

Based on the information gathered from the interviews and cultural event, each student pair will write a 5-page biographical narrative about how being a part of this cultural group has influenced the life of their interviewee. Students should write the mini-biography from the first person perspective as if *you* are the person (using the word "I" instead of the person's name) using your own words. These papers are due to be uploaded to the Blackboard Assignment Dropbox by the start of class on Wednesday, October 14. The essays should reflect well-developed and clearly expressed content (e.g., ideas, thoughts, and arguments), logical organization, appropriate grammar and spelling. *Students who turn in papers after this deadline will have 1 point deducted for each late "day" (defined as a 24-hour period). Papers turned in more than a week after the deadline will not be accepted.*

**A) Memoir content: the mini-memoirs should address ALL of the following topics somewhere in the narrative:**

#### **1) Childhood experiences of difference:**

- first experience of recognizing or realizing your "difference"
- how school experiences (academically and socially) were affected by your "difference"
  - changes over time from preschool through college
  - consider interactions with adults (e.g., teachers, principles) and peers
- first moment when being "different" affected you in a negative way
- first moment when being "different" affected you in a positive way

## **2) Family experience of difference**

- how parents initially reacted to your “difference” (if applicable) and any changes in their response over time
- how family experiences (e.g., parents, nuclear family, extended family, grandparents) have been affected by your “difference”
- how family experiences (e.g., parents, nuclear family, extended family, grandparents) have affected *your* feelings, thoughts, and behaviors regarding your “difference” and yourself in general

## **3) Experience of difference with outside community**

- first moment when being “different” affected you in a negative way
- first moment when being “different” affected you in a positive way
- assumptions, stereotypes, attitudes, and beliefs that you have encountered about your group of “difference”
- experiences of prejudice and/or discrimination you have encountered because of your “difference”
- how portrayals of your group or “difference” in the media and/or popular culture have impacted how others view or treat you
- how portrayals of your group or “difference” in the media and/or popular culture have impacted how the person view’s or feels about himself/herself

## **4) Experience of difference within your community**

- level of connection or disengagement with group’s culture and norms
- conflicts that exist within the community and how they relate to you (e.g., also consider generational differences within the group)
- any values, practices, rituals, beliefs, and/or activities that you feel are important to maintaining and preserving the group’s culture
- any ways in which you wish to distance or disconnect yourself from identification with the group and the rationale

## **5) Your experience of your difference**

- how different does this person feel they are compared to others and what effect do these perceptions have on his/her life (e.g., job, school, relationships, health, psychological happiness, etc.)
- has the person’s perceptions and emotions regarding their difference changed over time, and if so, in what ways?
- best or most enjoyable aspect of being “different” in this way
- worst or most difficult aspect of being “different” in this way
- would the person change anything about themselves if they could
- would the person change anything about society if they could
- 3 wishes the person has for improving the quality of their life or the lives of others who share their “difference”

**B) Memoir content:** students must also incorporate and integrate 3 principles, theories, or concepts from the Intro to Psychology course into the paper. These 3 principles cannot include stereotypes, prejudice, or discrimination and must be smoothly reflected in the story yet clearly apparent to the instructor. Students should put APA style citations to these three concepts in footnotes or endnotes and can provide a brief description of why the concept is being used in the memoir.

**C) Memoir style and mechanics:** students will write the memoir from the FIRST PERSON perspective using the word "I" to adopt the identity of their interviewee. Students should express the person's story in their (students') own words instead of using the actual words of the participant. If essential, students can insert brief direct quotations for accentuation purposes; however, 98% of the words should be in the authors' (students') voice. This transformation of expression from participant to student will "fictionalize" the story and give students' their own venue to express the ideas and meaning of their interviewee's story. Students must strike a balance between maintaining *accuracy* of the information shared by their interviewees and demonstrating *creativity* in their unique communication of the person's life as it relates to the themes of the memoir.

Although the memoir is a fictionalized story based on true events, the paper should reflect well-developed and clearly expressed content (e.g., ideas, thoughts, and arguments), logical organization, appropriate grammar and spelling. Students are highly encouraged to have their papers reviewed by a member of the Writing Center (x6191) and can earn points for extra credit to be added to their paper.

### **Part V: Reflection Journals**

As a Service Learning course, this class emphasizes the development of student writing, reading, speaking, and listening skills through reflection. As defined by the Service Leadership Center,

"Reflection is a guided process of exploring and clarifying values identified during service learning experiences. Reflection provides the student and faculty with the opportunity to state ideas; hypotheses and feelings that develop based on the service learning experience. According to Dewey (1933) reflective thought has five stages: 1) perplexity, confusion, doubt; 2) attentive interpretation of the given elements; 3) examination, exploration, and analysis to define and clarify the problem; 4) elaboration of the tentative hypothesis; and, 5) testing the hypothesis by doing something overtly to bring about anticipated results." (p. 7)

Students will keep an electronic reflection journal throughout the semester as a means of enhancing self-awareness of emotions and thoughts related to their interviews, cultural event, in-class and out-of-class diversity programs, and their overall experience with the project. **You will have 10 journal entries in total and the journal is worth 10% of the final grade in the course. Journals are due to the Blackboard Assignment Dropbox on November 23 by the start of class.** Student journals will be evaluated based upon their level of self-insight, critical thinking, integration of psychology knowledge and course material, and clarity of expression.

Templates for each journal entry will be available on Blackboard and should be downloaded and saved in ONE file to be uploaded by the due date. Please label your file **LastName Reflectionjournal** before uploading. See the "Project Overview and Timeline" for the list of dates and activities to journal.

### **Part VI: Attitude Survey #2**

**The second round of surveys will be distributed in class on Monday, December 7 and collected in class on Wednesday, December 9.** Students who are absent on these days are responsible for contacting the instructor to arrange alternative pickup and drop off times. *Students who do not turn in their surveys will receive half credit for their papers.*

### **Part VII: Paper #2**

The last paper asks students to reflect on their learning and experiences over the course of the semester and develop conclusions about the implications of this project on their own individual lives and society in general. **The third papers should be approximately 5 pages long and worth 14% of your final grade.** The paper should reflect well-developed and clearly expressed content (e.g., ideas, thoughts, and arguments), logical organization, appropriate grammar and spelling. Students are encouraged to visit the Writing Center and will receive extra credit for each meaningful visit that focuses on improving their papers. *Students who turn in papers after the indicated deadline will have 1 point deducted for each late "day" (defined as a 24-hour period).*

#### **PAPER #2 (POST) TOPICS:**

1. Based on your experience with this project and during the semester, explain why people in general hold stereotypical or prejudicial beliefs about and towards individuals that are considered "different"? What factors start and maintain stereotypes and prejudice towards groups of difference?
2. You are made the leader of a task force whose goal is to encourage the appreciation and acceptance of groups of difference in society.
  - a. What needs to happen on a *societal* level for this group to be valued and accepted by society?
  - b. What needs to happen on an *individual* level for this group to be valued and accepted by you?
  - c. What will be the future consequences to this group if these things don't happen?
3. How would your life have been different if you were in this group or had this characteristic?
4. In what way do you have or show a characteristic of "difference" (as defined by you)? How has this affected your life?
5. To what extent has this assignment and the diversity activities during the semester changed your views towards people considered "different," if any? What part(s) of the assignment and/or diversity activities have had the biggest impact on you and in what ways? Explain your answers.

6. What did you learn from this project...
  - a. about your group?
  - b. about yourself?
  - c. about society?

### **Part VIII: Related Issues**

**Confidentiality:** the participants in this project will be sharing personal information with you, so it is important for everyone in the class to keep all documents, notes, audiotapes, and materials related to this project *private* and *confidential*. In order to ensure privacy, please keep all materials in a private place that cannot be easily accessed by other students, parents, coworkers, etc. Here are recommendations to ensure privacy and confidentiality:

- Do not leave notes or documents related to this project in public places that are easily visible to others (e.g., library tables, computer labs).
- To protect the identity of your interviewee, give the person an alternate name and refer to that person by that name throughout the interview, discussions in class, and the memoir paper. Please do not use the person real name in any documents.
- Audiotapes will be kept by the Psychology department secretary, Rose Hometchko, and can be signed out for reviewing in a private room in the library. Tapes should be returned to Rose immediately after reviewing is completed. Once tapes are reviewed, please rewind the tape and record over it for the next interview.
- Keep any documents related to the project on the Blackboard course server and ONE other computer source (e.g., personal computer hard drive, one flashkey). Be sure to back up your documents but do not keep more than two copies.

**Diversity workshops:** students will attend several diversity workshops and activities to provide additional information and enhance skills related to this project. Attendance at these workshops and activities is mandatory as part of the course:

Fri., Sept. 25	Diversity workshop #1
Wed., Sept. 30	Diversity activity in class
Thu., Nov. 5	The Voices Project Program
Wed., Nov. 18	Diversity workshop #3

# Psychology 123: Intro to Psychology Grading Sheet

## SERVICE LEARNING PAPERS #1 AND 2

Student name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date received: \_\_\_\_\_

Total # points: \_\_\_\_\_/20 = \_\_\_\_\_%      Paper #1      Paper #2

### Editorial comments:

SP/GR = a spelling and/or grammatical error

SV = subject/verb agreement problem

ROS = run on sentence

AWK = awkward sentence; need to rework sentence

INCOR = information presented is incorrect or inaccurate

CONF = confusing

EXP = concept or idea should be expanded upon

CIT = citation needed

REP = repetitive

### **Content (12 points)**

- Essay completely answers and addresses all questions and issues.
- Student clearly states a thesis and articulates an argument, opinion, perspective or position.
- Body of essay provides appropriate clarification and explanation of main argument, opinion, perspective, or position.
- Student articulates and develops own unique ideas effectively.
- Student effectively incorporates sound research to support argument and ideas.

### **Style (4 points)**

- Essay is well-organized.
- Sentences vary in length and flow nicely.
- Tone of paper is formal, not conversational.

### **Mechanics (4 points)**

- Proper spelling and punctuation.
- Proper grammar (e.g., verb tense & subject-verb agreement, no run-on sentences or sentence fragments).
- Student gives citations and references using APA style (or style of choice for Paper #1).
- Paper is typed with 1" margins, 10-12 point font, is an appropriate length and stapled.

### Project Overview and Timeline

<u>Date</u>	<u>Project chapter</u>	<u>Points</u>	<u>% of total grade</u>
Wed., Sept. 2	Survey #1 distributed		
Fri., Sept. 4	Survey #2 collected***		
Fri., Sept. 18	<b>Paper #1 due</b> Interview day #1***	<b>20</b>	<b>14%</b>
Fri., Sept. 25	Diversity workshop #1***		
Mon., Sept. 28	Interview day #2***		
Wed., Sept. 30	Diversity activity in class ***		
 [The third interview and cultural event are set a time of your choosing – please do a journal for each of these activities]***			
Wed., Oct. 7	Mini-memoir work in class		
Fri., Oct. 9	Mini-memoir work in class		
Mon., Oct. 12	Mini-memoir work in class		
<b>Wed., Oct. 14</b>	<b>Mini-memoir due***</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>22%</b>
Thu., Nov. 5	The Voices Project Program***		
Wed., Nov. 18	Diversity workshop #3 (10:00-11:00; extra credit for 10:00-12:30)***		
<b>Mon. Nov. 23</b>	<b>Reflection Journals Due</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>8%</b>
Mon., Dec. 7	Survey #2 distributed		
Wed., Dec. 9	Survey #2 collected		
<b>Fri., Dec. 11</b>	<b>Paper #2 due</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>14%</b>

\*\*\* indicates events calling for a reflection journal entry