US/UK 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 lives of two British students attending Blackburn College. In turn, your life will be documented through the lens of a British student writing about you. You will be assigned your British partners during the last week in September or first week of October. During the month of October, you can use email, Facebook, Skype, Google Handout and other communication systems to interview your partners and gather information about their lives as pertains to the categories described in the guidelines below. Based on the information gathered during your interviews, you will write a 5-7 page memoir on EACH interviewee’s life highlighting themes of importance. The memoirs written by both the American and British students will be integrated into an iBook to share with others and may be integrated into a staged reading or documentary in the future. All identities will remain anonymous.

The project contains several different parts that will occur over the entire Fall 2014 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 was collected during the first week of class. The second packet will be distributed the last week of class.** 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: Interviews**

Each American student in Intro to Psychology will interview TWO British students attending Blackburn College during the month of October. The goal of your interviews is to gather information on the lives of your interviewees’ as it pertains to the following topics:

1. **Childhood experiences:** early childcare experiences (e.g., home, daycare, preschool), health problems, social and peer relationships, attachment style, activities/talents, temperament
2. **Family relationships:** family structure, relationships with siblings and parents and other family members, discipline, atmosphere, activities, values
3. **Academic experiences:** school experiences from early childhood through college, how educational system works in England (financially and academic/vocation pathways), academic performance, career goals
4. **Social relationships:** friendships (quantity, type, quality), romantic relationships, level of social interaction
5. **Health:** current status, changes over time, chronic conditions, health of family members
6. **Culture:** religion/faith, ethnic background, impact of gender, social class, sexual orientation, languages spoken
7. **Personality:** current personality features and changes over time, passions, dislikes, career goal, how personality affects other categories (e.g., school, friendships), life goals and wishes
8. **Stereotypes and discrimination:** assessment of how the person feels like they fit/don’t fit within the social norms of their society

**Part III: The Voices Project Paper: A Mini-Memoir**

Based on the information gathered from the interviews, each student will write one 5-7 page biographical narrative about each of your interviewees (two total) highlighting 3-5 main themes that emerge from your interviews. 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. Everyone will attend a memoir-writing workshop taught by Matt Hinton, Director of the Writing Center, on October 22 in the Alden Lab of the library. There will also be two class periods dedicated to writing in the library and a preparation class focused on interviewing strategies. Students will have the option of a draft meeting with the instructor before the portfolio deadline on December 5. 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.*

**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 won 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 papers.

**Part IV: Final Portfolio**

The final portfolio for the US/UK Voices Project will involve several parts. It is due to be uploaded to Blackboard by December 5.

1. **Memoir** **of British student #1:** please label this file **LastnameMemoir1** before uploading.
2. **Copy of correspondence** **for British student #1:** please include copies of your correspondence through email or facebook. Please copy and paste the correspondence into ONE file labeled **LastnameCorrespondance1** before uploading.
3. **Psychology concept essay #1**: please include a 2-3 page essay describing **4-5** principles, theories, or concepts from the Intro to Psychology course that are relevant to the memoir. These 4-5 principles cannot include stereotypes, prejudice, or discrimination and must be smoothly reflected in the story yet clearly apparent to the instructor. They can come from anywhere in the textbook, even sections that were not covered in class. Students should put APA style citations for these concepts in footnotes or endnotes, briefly explain the principle/theory/concept, and provide a brief description of how the concept is reflected in the memoir. Be sure to include a works cited page at the end. Please label this file **LastnameEssay1** before uploading.
4. **Memoir** **of British student #2:** please label this file **LastnameMemoir2** before uploading.
5. **Copy of correspondence** **for British student #2:** Please copy and paste the correspondence into ONE file labeled **LastnameCorrespondance2** before uploading.
6. **Psychology concept essay #2**: same as above. Please label this file **LastnameEssay2** before uploading.
7. **Reflection journals:** 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; 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 and overall experience with the project. 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 save in ONE file to be uploaded by the due date. Please label your file **Last name Reflectionjournal** before uploading.

**Part VI: 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’s real name in any document.
* Keep any documents related to the project on the Blackboard course server and ONE other computer source (e.g., personal computer hard drive, one flash-key). Be sure to back up your documents but do not keep more than two copies.