

Introductory Psychology: Extra Credit Options

As stated in the syllabus optional extra credit projects may be accepted provided attendance, classroom conduct and class participation requirements are satisfied. In this course extra credit is intended to aid you in one or more of the following ways: Either to make up for a missed quiz, to compensate for a less than stellar performance on a quiz or an exam, or to provide enough points to cross you over to the next highest grade level if your score is bordering between two grade levels. It is not intended to replace a research paper since those can be turned in late, though five points will be deducted. So extra credit will not be accepted if you are missing one of the two required research papers. Overall you can earn up to a maximum of 25 points extra credit. The options provided are worth varying amounts of credit depending upon how thoroughly you carry out the assignment(s). As listed here the options begin with those worth a few points and end with those that could be done for up to the maximum 25 points. See the research paper formatting guidelines for typing instructions.

Suggest a new research paper experiment or topic. Indicate which unit it would apply to as well as what future students might learn from performing the experiment or researching the topic?

Provide instructions for a new and different 'bar trick' along the lines of those discussed in the Unit 2 lecture on problem solving. Then discuss what makes it interesting. Does it comply with some of the prerequisites mentioned in lecture, such as having to 'think outside the box?'

Create a figure or diagram illustrating some psychological concept, experimental procedure, neurological structure or illusion that might be included in future lectures. Alternatively, search the internet for relevant figures or diagrams. Keep in mind these have to be relatively large to serve as lecture material and that I regularly search for these as well (minimal extra credit if I already have the figure or diagram).

Shoot a video to illustrate some psychological concept. The 'Marshmallow Experiment' video from Unit 2 was a student video. Animals and children often make good subjects for videos, as they aren't particularly self-conscious and they have fun doing it. You might consider filming animal behavior such as the process of teaching one of your pets a trick. And many aspects of a child's cognitive or moral development that could be demonstrated with a video such as object permanence, self-control, conservation, the ability to see things from another's perspective, the application of logical principles, how they think things work, and the reasons why they believe certain behaviors are either right or wrong. Another possibility would be to conduct an experiment along the lines of the Unit 1 research papers, shooting a video of the results. If you want to shoot a video consult with me so we can work out the details to make the video maximally effective.

Watch and review for accuracy a movie that deals with a psychological topic. Review it in terms of the psychological concepts presented, how they were presented and the accuracy of that presentation. Consider that this can be the only exposure to some of these concepts that the

average person ever receives. So if erroneously presented a good deal of misconceptions can be generated. For example, most people from the 1930s through the 1990s believed multiple personalities were a manifestation of schizophrenia because early films presented it as such. Only recently have most people become aware of the fact that they are two very different disorders. In general, modern movies are much better at handling these topics than those past as the sophistication of the audiences have improved. You might want to compare how two different movies dealing with the same issue, especially an older one versus a more recent one.

Online articles, magazine articles and self-help books are the means by which a great many get psychological information. There are often problems concerning inaccuracy and oversimplification. Review one of these for accuracy and detail. Compare it to what your text and other accredited sources say on the topic. If the article is summarizing current research findings try to find the original research articles cited and make comparisons.

Interview someone that may provide you with insights on some aspect of psychology. This could be an instructor or researcher. But of far greater interest would be an interview with an individual who has a unique perspective due to his or her own personal situation. A few examples: Discuss with a small child what his or her conception of the world is like. Ask an elderly person for insights on the effects of aging on his or her perceptual and cognitive capacities. Talk with someone who has a perceptual deficit (blind, deaf, loss of smell, loss of taste) in order to learn what his or her life is like. Ask someone with a neurological condition (CP, ALS, MS, MD, Alzheimer's) what life is like with that condition. Talk to someone with a mental illness (How do they perceive it? Do they think they are mentally ill? What is their experience like?). In addition to asking about your subject's general experience, during the course of your interview you should also inquire about how your subject manages to cope with his or her condition. If you want, you could also submit a video of the interview.

Do some basic research on a psychological topic of interest as if you were going to write a paper on it. So obtain, briefly summarize and review copies of relevant journal articles. Also discuss how and where you found the article(s). Include an electronic file version of each article (.txt, .rft, .htm, .pdf, or scanned image files).

Write a paper on any of the previously assigned research paper options, except those you've already done. You have the option of writing the paper as you would an actual 25 point research paper (3-5 pages with a minimum of 3 references) or submitting a shorter version that's not intended to garner the full 25 points.

Any other project you're interested in may also be acceptable. But discuss it and obtain approval from me before you begin. I will help you to choose a relevant project as well as narrow your focus so the project will be doable by semester's end. If you do not get advanced approval your project may not be accepted.