Guidelines for the Debate Paper for Cognitive Psychology

It is important that you learn to use science to inform your life and make important decisions. Will you vaccinate your children? Should you limit your screen/phone time for a healthier life? At what age is social media use appropriate? I want you to be able to research topics that are of significance to you, to understand and analyze the experiments, and to discuss them critically and intelligently. To help you achieve these goals, you will research an issue of debate in the cognitive literature, and write a paper that outlines scientific arguments for and against each side of the debate. **The topics that you must select from are listed below:**

Topics from which to select for the research paper (choose one):
1. Eyewitness testimony is used throughout the US in all sorts of criminal cases, despite the fact that we know it has led to wrongful convictions in hundreds of cases. Can eyewitness testimony be reliable? Should be it used in the courtroom? Present two lines of evidence that demonstrate that eyewitness testimony is unreliable and often erroneous. Then present two lines of evidence that demonstrate that, under certain conditions, eyewitness testimony can be reliable and accurate. **Explain the methodology and data for each study in detail (see the paragraph on page 2 for strong examples of what do to).**

2. Most colleges use end-of-course evaluations to assess their faculty. Are these faculty evaluations fair and unbiased? Are they affected by course difficulty, course topic, gender of the instructor, or other factors? Present two lines of evidence that demonstrate that end-of-course evaluations are effective, unbiased measures of faculty performance and should be used for faculty tenure and promotion. Then present two lines of evidence that demonstrate that end-of-course evaluations are affected by factors other than instructor effectiveness, and should not be used for faculty assessment. **Explain the methodology and data for each study in detail (see the paragraph on page 2 for strong examples of what do to).**

3. Politicians often use negative ads during campaigns. Are these ads effective <u>in increasing votes and winning elections</u>? Imagine that you are the campaign manager and must advise your candidate. Provide two arguments (with empirical evidence) that negative ads *are effective in increasing votes*, and explain why. Then provide two arguments (with empirical evidence) that negative ads are not effective in increasing votes, and explain why. **Explain the methodology and data for each study in detail (see the paragraph on page 2 for strong examples of what do to).**

For your topic of your choice, you should construct two **empirically-supported** statements that argue in favor of the issue, AND two **empirically-supported** statements that argue against the issue (a total of **four** arguments in all).

Your arguments should **not** be based on speculation, personal opinion, or intuition.
All arguments must be supported by <u>published scientific research from peer-reviewed journals</u>.
For <u>each of the arguments</u> that you give to support each side of the issue, provide at least one empirical finding to support your claim. **<u>Do not use the internet or textbooks as sources, and do not use google, yahoo, etc. as your databases</u>.**

You must include a reference page in which you list all of your sources. All citations within the paper, and the references included on the reference page, should be written in APA format. See the Writing Lab for a helpful handout.

These research papers are intended to stimulate critical thinking, research skills, and writing proficiency. **DO NOT USE DIRECT QUOTES UNLESS ABSOLUTELY NECESSARY**. You should summarize the research from other scientists, giving them credit for their work, but using your own words to describe their methodology and findings. Do not copy sentence structure or paragraph structure. "Writing" your paper means reading, understanding, and relaying back what you have learned in your own words.

ALL PAPERS should be turned in via Dropbox on Oaks on the date assigned on the syllabus. Please be on time with your submission in order to receive full credit. Late papers will lose 10% of their value daily.

Use the following as an example for you to emulate as you write your paper: Consider the question of whether or not children should be used as eyewitnesses in the courtroom. Here is one argument against the use of child eyewitness testimony:

Children should not be used as eyewitnesses in the courtroom, because evidence shows that children can easily be misled about events in the past (e.g., Leichtman & Ceci, 1995). They often report erroneous information, not because they are intentionally lying, but because their memories can be distorted by activities after an event. Leichtman & Ceci (1995), for example, showed that a child's memory for an event or person can be distorted both by her expectations or stereotypes of that person, and by misleading suggestions made about that person. In their study, Leichtman and Ceci staged an event in which a person named Sam Stone visited preschoolers in their classroom. Before his visit, some children were given information about Sam Stone to create an impression or stereotype that Sam was clumsy (stereotype group). Other children were given no prior information about Sam (control group). After his visit, the children were asked questions about Sam. For some children, the questions were straightforward (control), but for others the questions were misleading and suggested things that never happened (suggestion group). Results indicated that children in both the stereotype and suggestion group reported significantly more false things about Sam than those in the control group. Their reports were videotaped, and were later examined by professional clinicians and researchers. Perhaps the most frightening finding was that the professionals could not distinguish the true reports from the false reports, in part because the children who gave false reports were not actually "lying" – they were reporting the events as they "remembered" them. Unfortunately their memories were quite inaccurate. Eyewitness reports from children should thus be considered suspect because even those who seem credible might not be reporting the true events.

Debate Paper Checklist

_____ Max paper length is 4 text pgs of *content*, double spaced, 12 pt font.

_____You should also include a cover page with your name and topic.

_____Finally, you should include a reference page that lists all sources in APA format.

_____Total paper length including cover page, content pages, and reference page is a max of 6 pages.

_____Papers must be turned in using Dropbox on Oaks by 9:25 am on March 8th.

_____Please save an electronic version of your paper until your final grade has been submitted at the end of the semester.

Tools that may be useful in researching and writing:
--PsychInfo (online database available at CofC Library website)
--PsychArticles (online database available at CofC Library website)
--Psychology and Behavioral Sciences (online database at CofC Library website)
--*Writing With Style: APA Style Made Easy,* by Szuchman
--The Psychology Student Writer's Manual – put out by APA in paperback
--handout from the Writing Lab at CofC
Psychological science is a discipline that values integrity, honestly, and the importance of independent work. In keeping with these values, all research and writing are to be done on your own. If you are struggling, come and see me. Please do not resort to using research, ideas, or writing of other students or sources.

Plagiarism is a serious offense that diminishes the value of your education, and the education of other students here. Students should be familiar with the College's policy on plagiarism and the Honor Code. Any suspected violations of the Honor Code may be brought before the Honor Board. You should summarize the research IN YOUR OWN WORDS, **giving credit** for other authors' ideas, theories, paradigms, data, and terminology.

If you have questions about plagiarism or are unsure what constitutes plagiarism, come and see me. Plagiarism includes, but is not limited to, the following examples:

- Plagiarism includes the literal repetition without acknowledgment of the writings of another author. All significant phrases, clauses, or passages taken directly from source material with quotation marks and acknowledgement are instances of plagiarism.
- Plagiarism includes borrowing without acknowledgment another writer's general plan in the creation of one's own plan.
- Plagiarism includes borrowing another's ideas and representing them as one's own. To paraphrase the thought of another writer without acknowledgment is to plagiarize.
- Plagiarism includes allowing any other person or organization to prepare work which one then submits as his or her own.

Beyond plagiarism, be careful and thoughtful in your writing. Below are some common problems that students have had in the past, and ways to avoid them. I will use these shorthand codes when evaluating your papers:

APA	APA format: You need to follow APA format – please check the manual.
C	Clarify: The point that you are trying to make here needs to be developed and clarified. I do not know what you are trying to saying here. Try reading it out loud to a friend, and have them repeat the main idea back to you. When they can articulate your point, you've nailed it.
CAS	Casual Writing: Your writing style here is too casual. This does not read like professional writing. Please don't use slang or phrases specific to conversation. Scientific writing is more formal.
K	Awkward: Read this sentence out loud and think of a better way to say this that is less awkward. Check your grammar.
N	Unnecessary: Think about the organizational structure of your paper and whether this material is necessary for the specific point you are making here.
SE	Scientific Evidence: The claim you have made is not common knowledge, and needs to be supported with a citation to a scientific report.
G	Grammatic error: You have made a grammatical error (e.g., wrong verb tense, incomplete sentence, etc).
SP	Spelling: You have misspelled a word.