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Overview

In this module you will choose an important psychological research paper and write an unsupervised essay reviewing the paper’s importance, historical antecedents, its impact on academic psychology and related fields, and its impact on society. This will allow you to read in depth in a given domain of psychology in which you are interested, integrate research from multiple areas of psychology, and explore how academic research is translated into social outcomes.
**Approach**

Although this is an *unsupervised* essay, we do not intend for you to undertake this module without some background and training with regard to writing reviews. Thus there will be 6 1-hour sessions distributed throughout semester 1 to assist you in choosing the focus of your review, defining its scope, developing a formal argument about the state of the relevant scientific literature, understanding the process of meta-analysis, and using computer software in technical writing. Additionally, Dr. Bowman will be available for one hour each week (4-5 PM Mondays in room 1.66) for a ‘drop-in’ clinic in which you can discuss any technical or general issues relevant to planning and writing the review essay. Please be aware that we cannot advise you *what* to write, but we can give you limited guidance and tips on *how* to write the review essay.

**Module aims**

The aims of this module are:

1. To provide students with experience of examining the origins and impacts of a given research paper, thereby giving experience in putting psychological research into its scientific and social context.
2. To provide experience of using a structured outline to generate a full scientific review.
3. To provide guidance on the mechanics of technical writing.
4. To familiarise students with systematic reviews of scientific literature, including meta-analysis.
5. To provide experience of writing a structured argument regarding a chosen domain of psychological research.

**Objectives**

By the end of the module, each student should be able to:

1. Understand how good reviews differ from mere summaries of scientific studies.
2. Conduct a systematic bibliographic search for information relevant to a given area in psychology.
3. Organise the material obtained from multiple scientific studies so that patterns across studies can be observed.
4. Be familiar with the word-processing techniques used to write a structured technical document.

5. Be familiar with the fundamental principles of meta-analysis.

6. Be able to plan and write a review of focused on a specific domain of research literature.

Lecture sessions

1. Introduction
   a. History of psychology at St. Andrews
   b. Module requirements
   c. What are the potential purposes of a review of the scientific literature?

2. Selecting articles to include in a review
   a. Selecting an important paper to review
   b. Defining the focus and scope of the review
   c. Performing a bibliographic search
   d. What makes a psychological study important?

3. Structuring an argument for a review
   a. Defining a structure that creates added utility beyond simple summarisation
   b. Using word processing software with headings, styles, and tables of contents
   c. Using word processing to create an outline of a review
   d. How do we draw connections among psychological studies?

4. The systematic review of scientific literature
   a. Inclusion and exclusion criteria
   b. Meta-analysis
   c. Should all psychology data be made available for public review and meta-analysis?

5. The impact of psychology
   a. Impacts, stakeholders, and the importance of psychology to society
   b. Why is psychology funded?

6. The ethical dimensions of psychology
   a. Preparing and submitting the proposed title and outline for your review.
   b. The ethical implications of human, animal, and machine research in psychology
   c. Does psychology pose a threat to society?
**Review topic**

You are to select an important primary research paper from the psychological research literature, describe its scientific antecedents, report on its impact for the understanding of psychology, and assess its impact on society at large. You must select a paper published 5-10 years ago and must not be selected by any other student. You will be given limited feedback about your plan for the review after you submit the proposed title and outline in December.

**Submission of work**

As noted above there are two pieces of work that you must submit:

1. You must indicate you choice of paper in the relevant Moodle forum, where Dr. Bowman will indicate whether your choice is acceptable. Since no two students are allowed to select the same paper, this will be done on a first-come-first serve basis. Thus, please check the approved papers in the forum to make sure the paper you have chosen has not been selected by another student. Again, please remember that the paper you select must have been published 5-10 years ago. You must obtain approval for the paper you select before feedback will be given on any title and outline you submit.

2. A proposed title and outline of your review: This is due by 20 December 2013 by 5PM in MMS. This will not be marked, but it forms an essential part of formative feedback. It is your only opportunity to receive general guidance about the focus, scope, and approach of your review. The outline must be in a structured format of section and subsection titles only. It must not contain passages of text. A document template will be posted in Moodle that you must use. Failure to submit the title and outline will result in an academic alert for the module.

3. The review: The review must be submitted by 10 March 2014 at 5PM in MMS. Like the title and outline, a compulsory document template will be posted in Moodle. The regulations regarding appropriate scholarly conduct can be found on the University’s web site (http://www.st-andrews.ac.uk/staff/policy/goodacademicpractice/) and in the Honours Handbook (http://www.st-andrews.ac.uk/media/school-of-psychology/handbooks/Psychology_Honours_Handbook.pdf).
Assessment

A marking sheet can be found on the module’s Moodle site. The marking sheet is general, but the markers will be specifically using the following questions to assess your review essay:

1. Is the importance of the selected research article well described?
2. Is the historical context (empirical and theoretical antecedents) in which the selected research article was produced well described?
3. Has the academic impact of the selected article been well described in terms of theoretical advances, citations, stimulation of further research, and possible influence on academic fields related to psychology?
4. How well has the evidence that has been used to trace chain of events between the publication of the selected paper and the relevant social outcomes been presented?