

9.00 - INTRODUCTION TO PSYCHOLOGY

Assignment Four: "Homeland Security"

Task 4.1 – What do we need to know?

We often hear that "everything has changed" since September 11th. One of the things that might have changed is the national research agenda. In light of the events of last year, there are a lot of questions that could use answers. As one concrete example, I now have some research funding to study aspects of the visual search problem faced by the folks looking for guns and bombs in carry-on luggage at the airport. Your first task for this assignment is to pick a question with psychological content that has become more pressing since 9/11. If you are drawing a blank, talk to your TA (or write about visual search for guns and bombs).

4.1 To complete this task, get your TA to approve a topic. Send the topic by email or hand in a piece of paper.

Task 4.2 – Research

What is known about this topic? Depending on your choice of topics, your sources may or may not be "primary sources" (see assignment2). A collection of tidbits from web news sources is not adequate. Aim for at least some material that is scholarly and in-depth. The librarians can help you if you have trouble.

4.2 To complete this task, give your TA a bibliography with at least 3 sources that you can actually find and read. (No point to citing some Brookings Institute study that you can't find in Boston.)

Task 4.3 – Write a grant proposal

If you were really going to do research on your topic, you would need resources. In order to get someone (usually the government) to send money, you have to write a request. For this assignment, you will use a version of the format that would be used for a proposal to the National Institutes of Health (other formats are similar). Write an approximately 8 page proposal with the following parts:

A) Specific Aims: In about one page, broadly describe the problem and what you want to study. Usually, you will have 2-4 very specific goals. This section should also make clear why this problem is worthy of study. Fanciful, Short Example: The overarching goal of this research project is to determine if terrorists have different brain structures than the rest of the population. There are two specific aims:

1) to use magnetic resonance imaging to quantify differences between the brains of non-terrorists and matched control subjects.

2) To determine the feasibility of scanning the brains of every person boarding an airplane. Successful completion of this research program will enhance airport security.

B) Background: In this section, (probably 3-4 pages) you tell us what is known about this problem. This section should contain citations of at least three sources.

C) Research Plan: In this section (again 3-4 pages), you should tell us what you would do with the money you are asking for. Be as specific as possible. What studies would you undertake? What outcomes might be expected? What problems might you encounter?

D) Bibliography: Be sure to accurately reference your sources. (You can use the format used by Gletiman or any other format that allows a reader to easily determine exactly where the information comes from.)

This section is not part of the page count of the paper.

E) Budget (OPTIONAL): If it amuses you, you can put in a budget telling us how much money you want and for how long. A real grant proposal would also have a "budget

justification" to explain why you really do need to go to Paris and Rio to study security issues. Strictly optional not part of the real paper.

4.3 To complete this task, you need to give your TA the grant proposal.