Article Critique Instructions

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Article Critique Instructions

Each student is required to write an article critique paper based on one of the research articles present on Canvas (only those articles listed on Canvas can be critiqued – if you critique a different article, it will not be graded). The article critique paper will account for 50 points. In addition to deepening your understanding of conceptual issues discussed in lectures, this article critique assignment is designed to improve critical thinking and writing skills. Please follow the instructions and guidelines below. If you are unclear about any of this information, please ask.

**What is an article critique paper?**

An article critique is a written communication that conveys your understanding of a research article and how it relates to the conceptual issues of interest to this course. There are five elements emphasized in this critique: The title page (in APA formatting), summary of the article, critique of the article, brief (one paragraph) summary of the article, and appropriate referencing for the article.

**Psychological Purpose**

This paper serves several purposes, the first of which is helping you gain insight into research papers in psychology. As this may be your first time reading and writing papers in psychology, one goal of this Article Critique is to give you insight into what goes into such papers. This article critique paper will help you learn about the various sections of an empirical research report by reading at least one peer-reviewed article (articles that have a Title Page, Abstract\*, Literature Review, Methods Section, Results Section, and References Page—I have already selected some articles for you to critique, so make sure you only critique one in the folder provided on Canvas). This paper will also give you some insights into how the results sections are written in APA formatted research articles. Pay close attention to those sections, as throughout this course you’ll be writing up some results of your own!

In this relatively short paper, you will read one of the articles posted on Canvas and summarize what the authors did and what they found. The first part of the paper should focus on summarizing the design the authors used for their project. That is, you will identify the independent and dependent variables, talk about how the authors carried out their study, and then summarize the results (you don’t need to fully understand the statistics in the results, but try to get a sense of what the authors did in their analyses). In the second part of the paper, you will critique the article for its methodological strengths and weaknesses. Finally, in part three, you will provide your references for the Article Critique Paper in APA format.

**APA Formatting Purpose**

The second purpose of the Article Critique paper is to provide an opportunity to use American Psychological Association (APA) formatting. Below, I reference the APA Publication Manual sections in brackets (i.e., [7.02]) to indicate where in the manual you can find APA rules. There are a lot of very specific requirements in APA papers, so pay attention to the instructions below as well as referring to the APA6 Publication Manual. There is an example paper in the APA Publication Manual that starts on page 41 [Figure 2.1]

**Writing Purpose**

Finally, this paper is intended to help you grow as a writer. Few psychology classes give you the chance to write papers and receive feedback on your work. This class will! We will give you feedback on this paper in terms of content, flow, and mechanics (i.e., spelling and grammar).

**Article Critique Paper (50 points possible)**

**This article critique paper will include 5 things:**

1. **Title page [2.01]: 1 page**

* Use APA style to present the appropriate information:
  + A Running head must be included and formatted APA style [8.03]
    - The phrase “Running head” is at the top of the title page followed by a short title of your creation (no more than 50 characters) that is in ALL CAPS. This running head is left-justified (flush left on the page). Note that the “h” in head is all lower case! Look at the first page of these instructions, and you will see how to set up your Running head.
    - There must be a page number on the title page that is right justified. It is included in the header and is also in Times New Roman font (size 12) [8.03].
  + Your paper title appears on the title page. This is usually 12 words or less, in title case. It should be descriptive of the paper (For this paper, you should use the title of the article you are critiquing)
  + Your name will appear on the title page
  + Your institution will appear on the title page as well

1. **Summary of the Article: 1 page minimum,**

An article critique should briefly summarize, in your own words, the article research question and how it was addressed in the article. Below are some things to include in your summary.

* Note: the SHORT TITLE in ALL CAPS portion of your running head should also appear on the first page of your paper, but it will NOT include the phrase “Running head:”. Again, see the example paper in the APA6 Manual [Figure 2.1 on page 41]. There are numerous YouTube and Google resources to figure out how to have a different header on the title page (where “Running head:” is present) and other pages in the paper (where “Running head:” is NOT present).
* The same title used on your title page should be at the top of the page on the first actual line of the paper, centered [2.05, and Figure 2.1].
* For this paper, add the word “Summary” below the title as a Level 2 heading [3.03].
* Your summary itself will follow, including the following:
  + 1. Type of study (Was it experimental or correlational? How do you know?)
    2. Variables (What were the independent and dependent variables? Be specific with these. Define the terms independent and dependent variable and make sure to identify how they are operationally defined in the article)
    3. Method (Was there a random sample of participants? Was there random assignment to groups? What did the participants do in the study?). How was data collected (online, in person, archival data, etc.)
    4. Summary of findings (What were their findings?)
    5. Note – if the article involved more than one experiment, you can either choose to focus on one of the studies specifically or summarize the general design for all of the studies.

1. **Critique of the study: 1 ½ pages minimum**

* This portion of the article critique assignment focuses on your own thoughts about the content of the article (i.e. your own ideas in your own words). For this section, place a Level 2 heading of, “Critique”.
* This section is a bit harder, but there are a number of ways to demonstrate critical thinking in your writing. Address **at least** four of the following elements. You can address more than four, but four is the minimum.
  1. In your opinion, how valid and reliable is the study? Why?
     1. Make sure to define what reliable and valid mean, and apply these definitions to the study you are critiquing. Merely mentioning that it is valid and reliable is not enough – you have to apply those terms to the article.
  2. Did the study authors correctly interpret their findings, or are there any alternative interpretations you can think of?
  3. Did the authors of the study employ appropriate ethical safeguards?
  4. Briefly describe a follow-up study you might design that builds on the findings of the study you read how the research presented in the article relates to research, articles or material covered in other sections of the course
  5. Describe whether you feel the results presented in the article are weaker or stronger than the authors claim (and why); or discuss alternative interpretations of the results (i.e. something not mentioned by the authors) and/or what research might provide a test between the proposed and alternate interpretations
  6. Mention additional implications of the findings not mentioned in the article (either theoretical or practical/applied)
  7. Identify specific problems in the theory, discussion or empirical research presented in the article and how these problems could be corrected. If the problems you discuss are methodological in nature, then they must be issues that are substantial enough to affect the interpretations of the findings or arguments presented in the article. Furthermore, for methodological problems, you must justify not only why something is problematic but also how it could be resolved and why your proposed solution would be preferable.
  8. Describe how/why the method used in the article is either better or worse for addressing a particular issue than other methods

1. **Brief summary of the article: One or two paragraphs**

* Begin with a Level 2 heading “Brief Summary”, and then begin the brief summary below this [3.03].
* In ONE or TWO paragraphs maximum, summarize the article again, but this time I want it to be very short. In other words, take all of the information that you talked about in the summary portion of this assignment and write it again, but this time in only a few sentences.
* The reason for this section is that I want to make sure you can understand the whole study but that you can also write about it in a shorter paragraph that still emphasizes the main points of the article. Pretend that you are writing your own literature review for a research study, and you need to get the gist of an article that you read that helps support your own research across to your reader. Make sure to cite the original study (the article you are critiquing).

1. **References – 1 page**

* Provide the reference for the critiqued article in proper APA format [6.25-6.30, and Section 7]
* If you cited other sources during either your critique or summary, reference them as well [Section 6, ‘Citing References in Text’]

1. **Grammar and Writing Quality**
   * Few psychology courses are as writing intensive as Research Methods (especially Research Methods Two next semester!). As such, I want to make sure that you develop writing skills early. This is something that needs special attention; so make sure to proofread your papers carefully.
   * Avoid run-on sentences, sentence fragments, spelling errors, and grammar errors. Writing quality will become more important in future papers, but this is where you should start to hone your writing skills.
   * We will give you feedback on your papers, but I recommend seeking some help from the FIU writing center to make sure your paper is clear, precise, and covers all needed material. I also recommend asking a few of your group members to read over your paper and make suggestions. You can do the same for them!

The key point is that your critique should describe a “position” that you have taken with respect to the content of the article. Please note that you do not need to refer to any other sources other than the article on which you have chosen to write your paper. However, you are welcome to refer to additional sources if you choose (just be sure to reference what you cite!). Extra resources for tips on writing a Summary and/or Critique are in your Canvas Resources folder.