

OBEDIENCE TO AUTHORITY SYNTHESIS ESSAY
ENGL 102.2
WRITING AND RESEARCH

Choose ONE of the following writing situations and write a fully thought out, well organized and properly supported synthesis essay responding to the assignment. Since this is a SYNTHESIS essay, you will be expected to synthesize **at least three sources** from the WARAC to support your claims and opinions. Remember that your knowledge and experiences also count as potential sources, just not as your only sources. There is no outside research beyond the textbook required or expected for this assignment.

1. Given that communities, cultures and societies require a certain amount of obedience to authority in order to exist, where can we draw the line between blind, dangerous obedience and proper, acceptable obedience? When does obedience to an authority become a problem rather than the proper way to live one's life? (Remember that obeying the speed limit, sending your children to school, paying taxes, accepting elected leaders, etc. are all elements of authority that we accept (?) without question) .Where is the proper place for or what is the proper amount of disobedience in one's life? How does one determine the difference between rational and irrational authority in one's personal life?
Be absolutely sure in this essay to use the experiments and critics to explain exactly what you mean by obedience and how common it is in society in general.
2. Education is one of the primary learning experiences that people have in terms of group think and obedience to authority. Students are taught in groups using group exercises in order to use peer pressure and groupthink to encourage the learning of "proper" information in "proper" ways. Students are treated similarly, but not as clearly in a negative fashion, as the subjects in several of the experiments you read about.
For this essay, assess the role of groupthink in education. Explain how and where it is used, and whether or not the reader should be concerned. Is this making little Emily into a zombie, or a good citizen, or both? How should education use the concepts of groupthink and obedience, and at what levels? Should middle or high school students have the same techniques and expectations used on them as are used on grade school children? Where do Fromm's and Lessing's ideas of disobedience training fit?
3. Show how the knowledge of Obedience to Authority, and the theory of appropriate disobedience , can affect the workplace. You can argue this from the perspective of the boss or the workers, or both. How does this information explain the common issues and problems that arise in workplace settings. What sort of solutions can be determined by using this information? Be as specific as you can, and remember that while your audience is educated, they may not know about these theories.
4. Write an essay in which you are explaining to the court why the individuals involved in the McDonald's strip-search incident should or should not be held responsible for their actions. Be sure to use what has been learned about human behavior from the experiments in your argument. Could the individuals involved have been expected to act differently, or is it understandable, explainable human behavior? This is an opinion based answer, but remember that you are writing for the court, so your credibility and the strength of your supporting evidence is incredibly important.
5. Write an essay explaining to the people in Boston how the bullying of Phoebe Prince could have gotten so bad and what, if anything, could have been done (and by whom) to change the situation. Use what you've learned from the experiments and essays in the class to explain how and why this behavior happens and what can be done about it. You can use the Phoebe Prince sources listed on the class webpage, but you must also use at least three of the articles assigned in class as readings.
6. Explain the recent events at Abu Ghraib prison in terms of what we have learned about obedience, power, authority, and conformity. Remember that most people are NOT familiar with these terms or concepts, and will assume that it's just the work of some sadistic, evil individuals. Is it? Or can using what we've learned from these articles help us better understand and explain what probably happened, and how to make it not happen again?

Be sure to review the back of this page for specific hints/assignment objectives.

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The successful synthesis essay will contain:

- Clear thesis/purpose
- Multi-paragraph organization that supports and reinforces the main thesis
- Appropriate use of Logos/Ethos/Pathos
- Fully explained background/history/definitions of key terms
- Properly integrated information from at least three outside sources
- Synthesis of multiple outside sources to support individual claims/arguments
- Analysis of the main ideas and information, not just repetition of the sources
- Use of credible academic/professional sources
- Proper use of APA citation form (both in-text and full citations at the end)
- Proper grammar and sentence structure

Don't assume that your readers are familiar with the issue or the experiments that you have been reading about. Make proper references and summaries of those ideas if necessary. Be sure to explain the basic background of obedience to authority and groupthink to your audience in your essay, as they will most likely NOT be aware of these theories anymore than you were before reading these sources.

Don't just jump into the "good stuff," either. Students have a tendency to want to start arguing their main arguments right from the first sentence or two. Wait a bit. Use the intro to set up the topic—grab our attention. Then slowly work your way into the specifics of the topic, making sure that you have explained the ideas and points as clearly as you can. THEN, after everything is set-up and the reader understands the big picture, THEN you can start getting into the specific argument(s) that you want to present to us.

Because this is a psych/soc paper, it would be best to use APA style citation.

Here are the APA style citations for the videos that we may have watched in class:

Borge, C. (director). (2007, January 3). *Basic instincts: The science of evil*. New York: ABC Primetime.

Gibney, A. (director). (2006, June 1). *The human behavior experiments*. New York: Court TV and The Sundance Channel.

Kennedy, Rory (director). (2007). *The ghosts of Abu Ghraib*. [DVD]. New York: HBO Video.

Zimbardo, P. & Musen, K. (producers/writers). (1992). *Quiet rage: The Stanford prison experiment*. [videotape]. Stanford, CA: Stanford University.

You may use these videos as sources, but the MAJORITY of the references on your References page need to be written essays, not videos.