

Psychology of Black Women: Final Project

The final assignment will be completed in two parts. First, you will write an op-ed (opinion-editorial). Second, you will make an Instagram PowerPoint slideshow based on the topic of your op-ed. See below for more detail.

Part 1: Op-ed Assignment¹

Take a position on a social, political, educational, cultural issue that relates to the psychology of Black women. Op-eds are not reportage or literature reviews. The goal of an op-ed is to make a persuasive argument for addressing a topical issue or problem. How can we best work toward solving the problem or achieving a related goal? Thus, the piece requires you both to take a stand on the issue and to offer practical suggestions that are grounded in research.

It may be helpful to review the [Resources page](#) of the [Op-Ed project](#) and read a few newspaper op-ed sections for examples and more background. I have also included a handout on Moodle with an example template for an op-ed. The format does not have to rigidly follow the structure described in this handout; think of it as a helpful formula for you to use or adapt.

Selecting a Topic

Begin by thinking of a topic based on what interests you. You can form a thesis based on (1) a topic this class has covered, or (2) your previous interests, on which theories/content from the class can shed light.

If you're having trouble thinking of a topic, feel free to set up a meeting with me so that we can brainstorm together. Another helpful starting place might be blackwomentoo.com. This website was created after the airing of Lifetime's "Surviving R. Kelly" (2019) to highlight a number of social systems within the United States in which Black women and girls face unjust circumstances. You can browse the website to read about various challenges that Black women encounter in the contexts of girlhood, education, media, healthcare, housing, law enforcement, the legal system, media, and social policy.

Assignment Guidelines

- Cite at least three peer-reviewed empirical research articles on your chosen topic (not listed on the syllabus). You may also draw on research presented in class or from other sources. The description of this research should be brief—you don't have much space!—and used to support your point (e.g., "As Tyler Okimoto and Victoria Brescoll showed in a recent study, women who were seeking power were less likely to receive votes..."). Also, be sure to link to your study when you first present it (e.g., in the example sentence above you can make the word "showed" a hyperlink to Okimoto and Brescoll's study.)

¹ Note: This assignment was adapted from an assignment used in Dr. Elizabeth Levy Paluck's *Psychology of Gender* course at Princeton University.

- Ground your opinion in social science by backing up your argument with at least three studies from psychological science. Your assignment is not to write a pure opinion piece; the thesis must be supported with strong evidence.
- Hook your piece to something that has happened in the world recently. The best hook is not necessarily a personal experience such as "I was harassed on the street," but rather, something that your reader can also relate to personally, such as: "On Black Friday, U.S. residents will hit the streets in large numbers in search of sales. How will they treat one another there?" Or more traditionally, your hook will be news on the global, national, or local level, or from within academia. For example, you could say, "Last week in a small town in North Dakota...", or you could say "Macalester students yesterday received a public safety email that said..." or finally "Last week, the Center for Women in Politics published a report showing that street harassment is a growing problem in the U.S."). The point is that your hook should be very recent.

Submission, Style, and Formatting

Length: 700-800 words (2-3 pages)

This assignment should be submitted twice—once to a publication of your choosing, and once to me (via Moodle):

- 1. Publication of your choosing:** You will actually submit your op-ed piece to a publication of your choosing. This could be a Mac-based publication (e.g., Mac Weekly), a Twin Cities publication (e.g., *Star Tribune*), a publication from your hometown, or various national publications (e.g., *Washington Post*, *New York Times*, *Huffington Post*, *Slate*, etc.). Before writing your op-ed, select the publication to which you'll be submitting; this will help you clarify the intended audience for your piece. Follow the submission conventions of your selected publication.
- 2. Moodle:**
 - a.** Please type your paper using 12-point font, double-spaced throughout, and 1-inch margins all around.
 - b.** Include an APA-formatted reference list for the articles you have selected.
 - c.** Save your file as a Word document using your last name and the name of the assignment (e.g., jerald_oped.docx).
 - d.** When uploading your op-ed assignment to Moodle, also be sure to include proof (e.g., copy of a confirmation email message, screenshot, etc.) that you submitted your op-ed to a publication.

Due Dates

9/17	Proposed Topic Due Submit a brief paragraph outlining the preliminary topic you have selected. If there are questions I can help with, please also submit these with the paragraph.
9/24	List of References Due You will provide a list of 3 peer-reviewed empirical journal articles, with brief summaries, that you're considering including in your op-ed. The sources should be listed as APA-style references. As much as possible, you should select relatively <u>recent sources</u> (published within the last 5 years). In addition, you should include only primary sources. Under each reference, write 2-3 sentences summarizing the main idea of the source <u>in your own words</u> . Write at least 1 sentence describing how each source is relevant to topic/solution you will propose in your op-ed.
10/8	Op-Ed Draft Due
10/22	Final Op-Ed Due (to the publication of your choosing and to me via Moodle)

Part 2: Make an Instagram PowerPoint Slideshow

In the summer of 2020, Instagram became flooded with "PowerPoint activism." As Terry Nguyen of Vox describes, "The 10-image carousel, which Instagram launched in 2017, has been repurposed by activists, independent artists, advocacy groups, and well-meaning individuals as a means to educate and inform the masses, one slide at a time. Consider it something like PowerPoint activism. Over the past few months, these slides have migrated their way into my Explore page or been reposted on Stories of my friends and followers; in fact, these posts became so popular that I encountered similar designs and sentiments across multiple Stories. The most striking graphics stood out in my feeds, almost like an advertisement."

For the second part of the Final Project, you will create your own, Instagram-appropriate PowerPoint slideshow on the same topic as your op-ed. Start by reading [How social justice slideshows took over Instagram](#) by Terry Nguyen for examples and more context on the rise of PowerPoint activism on Instagram.

In lieu of a virtual class presentation on your op-ed, you will post your slides to our class Instagram account (I will provide everyone with the account details). These posts will provide us with an awesome, permanent repository of some of the knowledge we gained during the module, and also give you some educational material to repost to your own Instagram Stories, should you choose to do so!

Assignment Guidelines

- You should create 6-10 slides.
- Feel free to copy and paste directly from your op-ed to create content for your slides, though I would recommend that you edit the text to ensure that your slides are aesthetically pleasing and not overly text-heavy.
- As sociologist Eve Ewing explains on her [Instagram account](#), "Graphics like this can be a helpful teaching tool, but some of the 'racial justice explainer' posts that go viral grossly oversimplify complex ideas in harmful or misleading ways or flat-out misstate facts... [They] are not attributed to any transparent person, people, or organization who can be held accountable for errors and draw on the work of scholars and activists who go uncredited."
 - In creating content for your slides, take care to avoid flattening or oversimplifying complex findings or statistics.
 - Avoid presenting misinformation. Since most of your content will be based on peer-reviewed journal articles, hopefully this won't be a huge issue, but it's definitely important to keep in mind.
 - Provide sources (perhaps at the bottom of your slides) for all the information/facts you present.
- These kinds of Instagram posts can be really valuable for educating individuals previously unfamiliar with a topic and for cultivating solidarity, but they should ultimately serve as a starting point for learning more. On your last slide, include a list of three suggested readings to provide additional resources, for those interested. At least one of these suggested readings should be a peer-reviewed journal article (different from the three you have already included in your op-ed).

Some Helpful Tips

- Make your slideshow appealing and eye-catching (e.g., colorful, whimsical, using fun fonts, including images/pictures, etc.). Create content that will make someone want to stop scrolling to read more. Try to make the first slide engaging enough that users will click through to the next slide.
- Graphic design apps, such as [Canva](#), may be useful for finding ready-made Instagram post templates to work with. You can also use Google to find other apps and videos with guides to creating appealing content.
- The [Idea Lab](#) may also be a helpful resource.
- I'm available to answer any questions or give you feedback on your work-in-progress.

- Finally, avoid "memeifying" or trivializing social justice issues (which, unfortunately, occurred with [Breonna Taylor's death](#) on social media over the summer). Your PowerPoint slideshow should serve as a call to action for viewers that spotlights an important topic—not a viral joke, catchphrase, or gimmick.

Slideshow Formatting

You may submit the slideshow to Moodle using the formatting of your choosing (.pptx, .pdf, etc.), but please be sure to save the file using your last name and the name of the assignment (e.g., jerald_powerpoint.docx).

Assignment Submission

You will submit your slideshow twice: once to the class Instagram account, and once to me via Moodle (I will post the Instagram account details on Moodle). If run into technical problems posting on Instagram or would prefer me to do it, I can post your slides for you—just let me know.

Due Date

Please submit your slides to the class Instagram account and to Moodle by 10/23/20 at 11:59 pm.