TIPS ON JOURNAL ENTRIES

(1) When completing journal entries (and other assignments), be sure to carefully read the syllabus before, during, and after you've written your paper, just to make sure that your work:

- Is formatted properly (e.g., includes a thematic title, page numbers, springboards for discussion, and so on).
- Observes any stated limits (e.g., page length, 12-point font size, 1" margins, etc.)
- Fulfills the main goals of the assignment (e.g., to write an essay that moves beyond descriptive accounts and offers your own unique perspectives and psychological analyses, connecting the course material with daily life).

(2) Given the 3-page limit, the best journal entries usually:

- Dive right into the topic, rather than spending 1-2 pages describing studies or summarizing course material. In most cases, a paragraph or two is sufficient to set the context and move into your own insights, observations, and analyses.
- Focus on one central topic, thesis, or take-home message. If you can't articulate in a sentence or two what the main point of your essay is -- or if the main point isn't especially original or insightful -- you should probably keep working on it.
- Form a coherent narrative. After you've completed a full draft, take a break and then reread it. When you reread the draft, ask yourself whether every paragraph advances your central point or whether the essay wanders. You might also try reading each paragraph's opening sentence (sequentially, in the order they appear) to see whether these topic sentences form an interesting, coherent journal entry or whether they meander without making a central point.

(3) Don't raise key questions and simply move on. Instead, try to answer them as best you can by drawing upon psychological research findings, theories, and analyses. If your answers are only tentative, partial, or speculative, you can qualify them as such, but at least you will leave the essay reader knowing what you think.

(4) Try to write as you would speak if giving a public talk on the topic, rather than adopting an overly academic style. One way to ensure that your prose is clear and direct is to read it out loud. If the sentences sound unnatural to your ear, try rephrasing them more simply.

(5) Don't regard this assignment as "homework" -- treat it as "lifework." Be bold! Be daring! Make your intellectual work count for something! The more you're able to take your ideas beyond the realm of textbook learning -- testing them in the marketplace of experience and articulating them clearly -- the more effective you will be at understanding prejudice and advancing social justice.

(6) Reread this sheet before and after drafting each journal entry, and revise your work if necessary.