

Names: \_\_\_\_\_

**PHIL/PSYC 2100 Critical Thinking**  
**HW 5**  
**April 18, 2013**

1. A man tells us that he dreamed about his girlfriend at the exact same time that she got into a car accident 100 miles away. State at least 2 reasons why we shouldn't take this as conclusive evidence of ESP.
2. "I know there is something to precognition. Just the other day I got out of my bed and I had this gut feeling that it was going to be a bad day, and guess what? It was indeed a bad day!" State 2 reasons why this person really hasn't given us any good reason to believe that there is something like precognition.
3. In the Ainu culture, pregnant women are advised not to spin yarn or twist rope for at least two months before delivery, since they believe that otherwise, the umbilical cord of their unborn baby may become twisted around the baby's neck. Why do you think they believe this? What is the name of the cognitive heuristic/bias behind this?
4. Recently a local newspaper printed a story about a woman who choked in a restaurant, and was saved by a young teen who performed the Heimlich maneuver on her. The woman then recognized the teenager as the boy whose life she had saved as a nurse years earlier! The woman was certain that God had a hand in all this. What do you think? Raise some critical concerns and questions.

5. Near-death experiences include out-of-body experiences, experiences of going through a dark tunnel towards some light at the end, and experiences of talking to dead relatives and friends. Some people say that such near-death experiences prove the existence of an after-life: apparently, when you die, your soul survives, and it transfers to a different reality where other souls go as well. However, as a critical thinker, can you point out 2 things that would question this inference (as in: *inference*)?

6. About one third of all Americans believe that extraterrestrial aliens are visiting Earth. As evidence for this claim they often point to pictures and videos that they claim reveal UFO's. The video's often involve dots of light in the evening or night sky that move around in ways that they claim no human-made aircraft can. The pictures show something that looks like a space-ship, often of the 'flying saucer' type. Other people claim to have seen actual aliens, and these alien visitations apparently started to happen some 100 years ago. Interestingly, while the aliens reported 50 to 100 years ago varied widely in terms of appearance (they came in all kinds of sizes, shapes, and manifestations) and behavior (from friendly to evil, from cute to sinister, from stupid to infinitely intelligent), in more recent decades it seems like a race of 4 to 5 foot tall grey-ish humanoid creatures (i.e. standing upright, torso, two legs, two arms, head, nose, mouth, eyes all similar, and similarly located, as in humans) with an oversized head and big black eyes has 'outcompeted' all other alien races. Moreover, these creatures seem to predominantly engage in abductions, anal probes, and attempts to erase our memories before returning us to Earth.

What do you think? Are aliens really visiting us? Can you critically evaluate the above 'facts' in terms of perception, memory, and other psychological and social factors behind our beliefs?

7. Cops like donuts. I mean, you see those cop cars standing outside Dunkin Donuts all the time! Irrefutable evidence, right?

8. Frequently, when I look at the clock, it's some nice pattern, like 11:11, or 12:34. In fact, this whole last week I know I've seen 11:11 a number of times! What's going on?! (you should mention two things!)

9. Nostradamus, who lived in the 16<sup>th</sup> century, has become famous for prophetizing many subsequent events. For example, the following verses (he wrote 941 of these 'quatrains') have been said to predict the rise of Hitler and the assassination of John F. Kennedy:

From the deepest part of Western Europe  
A young child will be born to poor people  
Who will by his speech seduce a great multitude,  
His reputation will increase in the Kingdom of the East

The ancient work will be accomplished,  
And from the roof evil ruin will fall on the great man:  
They will accuse an innocent, being dead, of the deed:  
The guilty one is hidden in the misty copse.

Pretty impressive, isn't it?

10. Given the nice weather, I was putting away my snow shovel in the garage this week, but my neighbor, when she saw this, said that she would keep her snow shovel on the back porch: "You'll see: as soon as I put away my shovel, it'll snow! In fact, by keeping my shovel here on the porch, it'll be certain *not* to snow!" Why does my neighbor think that leaving out or putting away her snow shovel has this kind of effect on the weather?

## **Why sports (and sports commentators) provide great fodder for Critical Thinkers!**

1. A sports commentator tries to impress on the viewers that some team won “5 out of their last 7 games”. Can you guess how many games out of their last 6 this team won? And most likely how many out of their last 8 did they win? Why?
2. A sports buff points out that some baseball pitcher has struck out an “amazing 90% of all left-handed hitters he faced whose last name starts with an ‘S’” (ok, I’m making this up, but I’m sure you recognize these types of statistics!). How impressed should we be with statistics like this? Why?
3. During this past NCAA men’s basketball tournament semi-final game between Wichita State and Louisville, Wichita State led at the half by 26-25. The commentator pointed out that Wichita State has a season record of 24 to 1 of winning the game when leading at half-time. So, is it reasonable to conclude that Wichita State had a 96% chance of winning the game against Louisville? Why or why not?
4. When you are watching a football game, it looks as if every time you go to the bathroom, a touchdown is scored. Why is that?