<u>*QUESTIONS: The Good, The Bad, and the Ugly*</u>

Discussion Questions: A good question is typically a minimum of 5 lines of thoughts in reaction to the readings **that includes at least one question** (can be multiple questions about multiple aspects) about the content of the chapter or article, its implications, its assumptions, methodology, alternative explanations, future directions, etc. Good thought questions are typically NOT questions about individual differences, psychopathology, and challenges to convenience samples (***unless*** you have a theory-grounded rationale for why any of these would matter). You are expected to think critically about the issues you read, and, as such, your questions should reflect as much. Each question should serve to foster discussion and debate.

    Sample Bad Question: I thought this study was interesting but I wonder if there are any personality variables that would make a difference in this study. Maybe people high in self-esteem would respond differently than people low in self-esteem?

> *Why is this a bad question?:* Well, not only is it too short and vague, but why should we care about self-esteem? Why is self-esteem relevant? Make an argument. How would things be any different based on self-esteem? Don't just say that it could be, discuss how self-esteem would matter. Do you have any evidence to suggest why self-esteem would even be worthwhile to examine in general as well as with regard to this specific finding? Does the absence of an examination of self-esteem actually threaten the validity of the findings? If so, how? And what were the findings that you allegedly found so interesting to begin with?

    Better question: Crocker argues that racism and other social stigmas can serve a self-protective purpose in that people can blame the bias instead of themselves for a negative outcome, thereby protecting their self-esteem. She bases her conclusion on studies showing that certain groups, like African-Americans, actually score higher than whites on self-esteem measures despite the prevalence of racism. But I wonder is there another explanation for why African-Americans might show higher self-esteem on self-report measures? After all, women, as a group, don't show higher self-esteem than men, yet they face sexism. And Crocker's conclusion really runs contrary to research showing that attributing outcomes to bias threatens one's basic need to feel in control (e.g., if you feel like you can't get a job because of your race, gender, or some other characteristic over which you have no control, it is threatening to oneself)?

    Sample Ugly Question: I think this study was boring and worthless. Everyone knows priming is b.s. What do you think?

> *Why is this an ugly question?:* Well, if you are basically being a troll that is an ugly question. If your question is insulting, grounded only in opinion with no evidence to back it up I would actually be tempted to give you negative points.

    Better question: Given the recent concerns raised regarding the replicability of studies involving priming (i.e., Open Science Collaboration, 2015) I really wonder if the findings in this study – which relied primarily on priming ageist constructs – would extend beyond the walls of the authors' lab. Further, given additional concerns about the limitations of the research on subconscious biases predicting actual behavior, I have to ask whether even the activation of subconscious attitudes via priming has any consequences in the real world? If so, what examples are there or evidence?

    When you bring a question to class, make sure you have actually thought about what the answer is so that you have more to contribute than just the question. Remember the goal is to trigger discussion. So at least do a Google or Scopus search or something…