

Introduction to Psychology

APA IPI Tags: Theme 5,

Content Area Tags: Cognition, (reconstructive nature of) memory, cognition, perception

Estimated Time: ~15 minutes in class; longer if take-home

Malleable Memory

Activity Instructions

- Ask students to rate how accurate they think their memory is (can further specify “for events that they observe/witness” if you want to avoid them rating themselves low for not remembering names, etc.)
 - 1-10 scale, 1 is not very accurate, 10 is extremely accurate (photographic, even!)
 - Can do this with in-class polling, have them write it on a sheet of paper, etc. as you see fit
- Have students watch a false memory video of your choice (shorter better for in-class, longer better for take-home assignments or preparation for an in-class discussion)
 - [When Eyes Deceive](#) (4:34)
 - [Brain Games False Memory](#) (5:08)
 - [TED-Ed Are Your Memories Real?](#) (5:17)
 - [Elizabeth Loftus TED Talk](#) (17:36)
 - 60 Minutes Eyewitness Testimony: [Part 1](#) (13:00) & [Part 2](#) (13:06)
 - Best for a discussion of how bias may affect memory accuracy, which corresponds best to APA IPI Theme #5
- After watching the video, ask students to rate the accuracy of their memory on the same scale as before
 - If you collect data with an in-class polling device, you can show students in real time if their self-rating of memory accuracy decreased after watching the video

Student Learning Objectives

By completing this assignment, you will be able to...

- Explain what is meant by memory being “reconstructive.”
- Describe the ways in which memory is fallible with regard to individuals’ perceptions and biases.
- Explain why eyewitness testimony may not be the best form of evidence in a courtroom.

Post-Activity Discussion Questions

1. How do individuals’ biases influence their memories for events?
 2. What are some ways that you might be able to minimize the effect of your own biases on your memory for events you experience in the future?
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Activity Notes (for Instructors Only)

- Could work very well as an introduction to memory, before you teach anything about the malleability of memory
 - The [Brain Games](#) video is probably the best for this, since it involves students in the activity (instead of videos just discussing findings about false memories a la TED-Ed, which students could write off as not applicable to them)
 - Scalable to any class size since it's an individual response
 - Works with synchronous and asynchronous classes
 - Works in-class or at-home/online
 - If using this for discussion in class, might want to use the shorter videos to save class time
 - Longer videos like 60 Minutes ([Part 1](#), [Part 2](#)) work better for a take-home assignment
 - Can grade understanding of the content by reviewing responses to discussion questions & seeing a decrease in students' self-ratings of their memory accuracy
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