# Required Task: Political Psychology

Write a book review or a review of an allocated academic article; memo format, **800** words (+/- 10%). Graded as pass/fail.

# Choose Your Book

Haidt, J. (2013). *The Righteous Mind: Why Good People are Divided by Politics and Religion.*

Klein, E. (2021). *Why We're Polarized.*Avid Reader Press.

Duffy, B. (2019). *The Perils of Perception: Why We're Wrong About Nearly Everything.* Atlantic Books.

Henrich, J. (2020). *The WEIRDest People in the World: How the West became Psychologically Peculiar and Particularly Prosperous.* Farrar, Straus and Giroux.

# What is expected

Writing a book review is a not the same as writing an essay. Overall, a book analysis is more opinion-based – you are evaluating the author. Is it a good book or not? However, the trick is to be able to explain what ‘good’ means in this context. The task requires an ability to read and digest the essential argument of a book, including the more specific discussions that occur in each of the chapters. You should offer a clear summary of the core arguments, draw attention to key quotes, place the book within a context of sorts (this helps to explain whether the book should be judged as an important new contribution to the field), and finally provide an evaluation – all within the confines of 800 words.

So, the first thing you should do is read the book – in its entirety. Take notes as you read – then synthesize your thoughts in the form of a summary. What do you believe to be the key points – tip, these are usually flagged by the author in the introduction and conclusion of the book. Your analysis should engage with the author’s ideas (are they original, coherent, convincing?). Remember, a book analysis is opinion-based. But you can’t merely state it is ‘good’ or ‘unconvincing’ – you need to qualify why it is being assessed positively (or negatively).

# Here is a basic template that might help:

**Starting point**

Introduce discussion by referring at the beginning to the book cover and title and include the author’s name. Then turn to the substance.

**Next paragraphs**

Write a brief description of the book, including a few comments that contextualises the timing of publication (what issues inspired the author?).

Summarise the main points of the book including the chapter breakdown.

At this stage, try to avoid offering your own any opinions. Now turn to a more evaluative discussion, i.e. point to strengths and weaknesses.

**Remember**

Use about 2-4 brief quotations from the author’s text.

Summarize the quotations in your own words.

Offer your own point-of-view regarding the substance of quotation.

**Conclusion**

In brief, summarize the essence of the book.

In brief, summarize the explanations and offer your take.

Offer insights that might have improved the book – are there things ‘missing’ that you would have liked included?

Finish with a concluding sentence.

This can include your final opinion of the book.

Here is an example of an academic book review: <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/13510347.2021.2017424?tab=permissions&scroll=top>