COURSE DESCRIPTION

How can we describe people’s personalities in ways that allow for quantitative comparisons among individuals, and among specific aspects of personality? Several decades of research have demonstrated the usefulness of an instrument called the California Adult Q-Sort (CAQ). Developed by psychologist Jack Block of UC Berkeley, the CAQ consists of 100 descriptive items (e.g. “Is fastidious, meticulous, careful and precise” “Is condescending toward others”) which the rater is required to distribute across nine categories ranging from “Most characteristic” to “Most uncharacteristic” of the person being described. In this seminar, students will use the CAQ to describe fictional characters of their choice (drawn from novels, movies, or TV shows) and will discuss their ratings with other students who have described the same character (as well as the rest of the class). Finally, we will use the ratings that you’ve produced to illustrate larger issues in personality psychology by comparing the fictional characters’ CAQ profiles to several published prototype CAQ profiles (e.g. a Psychopathy prototype).

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

1. Attendance and participation in seminar meetings. For a passing grade, you must attend at least 8 of the 9 class meetings during Weeks 2-10.

2. Prepare a Q-sort profile of one fictional character and discuss your choices of the placement of items. During Week 1, I will ask you to provide me with the names of 10 fictional characters that you would like to describe using the CAQ. Based on these lists, I will choose 5 characters and assign 4 students to each character. Each class meeting between Weeks 4 and 8 will be devoted to one character. At 5pm on the Monday preceding the discussion of your assigned character, your emailed CAQ profile of that character will be due. I will compile the profiles and distribute them to the class. At the class meetings, we will discuss the consensus (average) placements of each item, and the differences among the profiles created by the 4 students who described that character.

3. Discussion questions for the class meetings of Weeks 2, 9, and 10. By 8:00 PM on the day before these class meetings, please email to me one question that you have regarding
the reading assigned for that day. I will compile these questions (with your names
removed) into a list that I will distribute at the beginning at each class meeting. These
questions will form part of the basis of our discussions.

**COURSE OUTLINE**

Week 1 (Oct. 3): What is personality and how can it be measured? Part I.

Week 2 (Oct. 10): What is personality and how can it be measured? Part II. Reading:
Oxford University Press.

Week 3 (Oct. 17): Introduction to the California Adult Q-Sort.


Week 6 (Nov. 7): Character description & discussion 3.

Week 7 (Nov. 14): Character description & discussion 4.

Week 8 (Nov. 21): Character description & discussion 5.

Week 9 (Nov. 28): CAQ Templates, Example 1: Primary Psychopathy. Reading: Reise,

Week 10 (Dec. 5): CAQ Templates, Example 2: “Optimal Mental Health.” Reading: