

PHI 169 – CRITICAL REASONING – SPRING 2015

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ASSIGNMENT #3 – DUE WED MARCH 4

So far we've looked at several testimonies (W2/3). We've also looked at the physical evidence (W4). We should now weigh the evidence as a whole. Please do the following:

1. Recall your witness statements in response to the questions (α) through (η) in assignment #2. The task is to assess the credibility of the witness statements as follows:
 - (a) Assess the credibility of your witness statements *in light of the physical evidence*, e.g. DNA evidence, medical and toxicological examinations, physical traces, etc. Does the physical evidence corroborate your witnesses statements? Does it refute them? Neither? An examination of the physical evidence can be found in volumes 19 and 20 and in the slides for W4.
 - (b) Assess the credibility of your witness statements *in light of what other witnesses said*. Identify the witnesses with whom your witness agrees and the witnesses with whom your witness disagrees. You do not have to do the comparison for all the other witnesses, but of course, the more the better.
 - (c) Check for *biases*. For example, did your witness say something that could indicate that she/he was racist or that she/he disliked Ferguson's police?
 - (d) Check for sources of *unreliability*. For example, given the witness location, could the witness hear and see what she/he claims she/he saw and heard?
 - (e) Scrutinize the *plausibility* of the witness story. For example, given what we know about how people behave and react, is the witness story plausible? Do MB's and Wilson's actions—as described by the witness—have a reasonable and intuitive explanation? Is anything off in the story?
 - (f) On the basis of your findings in (a), (b), (c), (d) and (e) above, assign a degree of credibility to your witness overall testimony, as follows:
 - null*—the testimony has no credibility whatsoever;
 - weak*—the testimony has some, yet still weak, credibility;
 - moderate*—the testimony is moderately credible, though doubts still persist;
 - strong*—the testimony is strongly credible and almost no doubt remains;
2. Write a 1-2 page report in which you address the questions and issues in point 1 above. When you assign a degree of credibility to your witness' testimony, please **motivate your answer** on the basis of points (a), (b), (c), (d) and (e) in step 1 above.

Please do NOT write in essay form. Answer points (a) through (f) in itemized form.