In this assignment, you are asked to display your understanding of some of the ideas that we have been considering in class by providing descriptions of how they apply to circumstances in your own life or the lives of those immediately around you. The best way to display your understanding of these ideas—and the way that will be most favorably evaluated when it comes to the assignment of grades—is to describe instances that are plainly and considerably distinct from the specific examples given in class, and yet still reveal that you clearly understand the idea under consideration. Where possible, make use of relevant material from the textbook and/or the material from lecture to explain or elucidate your examples. Particularly clever or compelling examples provided in this assignment may be used in subsequent semesters’ discussions of these concepts (obviously without using any details that might identify anyone).

1. Provide an instance in which you catch the fundamental attribution error “in action.” That is, start listening critically to conversations with friends/family and give an example of a case where someone you know makes a dispositional attribution about the cause of something that has happened when, in your thinking, a situational attribution would actually have been more appropriate. Be specific in both what is the dispositional attribution, what is the situational attribution that could have been made but was not, and why you might think the situational attribution is more appropriate.

2. Drawing on our consideration of material cognitive artifacts, describe an instance of a technology that you use in order to help you remember something that you would not remember or would remember less easily in the absence of the artifact. Be specific in your reflection about how this artifact transforms the practical problem of remembering that you would have without the device into a task that requires less mental work to accomplish the same ultimate goal. Please think of something besides a calendar or cellular phone!

3. Drawing on our consideration of material cognitive artifacts, describe an instance of a way in which you or someone you know has manipulated the arrangement of their physical environment in a way that makes it easier for them to remember something than it would be without making this alteration of the environment. Be specific in your reflection about how this manipulation of your environment transforms the practical problem of remembering that you would have without making the manipulation into a problem that requires less mental work to accomplish the same ultimate goal.

4. Drawing on our consideration of material cognitive artifacts, describe an instance of a way in which you or someone you know has manipulated the arrangement of their physical environment in a way that makes it easier for you/them to forget something that you/they want to forget (or not think about right now) than it would be without making this alteration of your/their environment. Be specific in your reflection about how this manipulation of your environment makes forgetting (permanently or temporarily) easier than it would be without this manipulation. Please think of something other than removing all that reminds you of a recent ex.

OR

Drawing on our consideration of mental cognitive artifacts, describe an instance of a way in which you use/have used a “catchy phrase,” “acrostic,” or “acronym” or some related mental “device” to remember something that would be harder for you to remember without the mental cognitive artifact. Be specific in your reflection about what and how the mental cognitive artifact makes it easier for you to remember than it would be if you didn’t have (know) the mental cognitive artifact.

5. Drawing on our consideration of “collaborative cognition,” describe an instance in which you either feel/have felt less of an obligation to remember something consequential to you because of the presumption that the remembering and reminding would be done by someone else. In other words, if this person/role did...
not exist, you would have to exert more effort in remembering something than what you have to exert now because of the existence of this person/role. Be specific about why you feel that you can rely on this person/role to do the work of remembering for you and whether or why this person does or does not have an “obligation” to do the remembering work.

6. Describe an incident from your own life, or someone else’s, in which a failure of memory had calamitous results (tragic or comic). Based on your knowledge of cognition, how might the situation have been avoided? What cognitive strategies have been employed to avoid the problem in the future?