

Appendix 1: Major Course Assignments

Sequence I: Writing about Learning

Assignment 1: In-class Writing, First Day: Snapshot of a Moment in Your Life as a Writer

For your first major written assignment, you will be writing “My Writing Life”—an essay in which you tell the story of how you have come to be the writer you are.

To get started, today we’d like you to write a preliminary essay—spending one hour writing—in which you tell me about one distinct moment in your writing life—a time a particular assignment was due, say, and you were stuck and unable to write. What were you writing, when, and why were you unable to make progress? Maybe this was in high school? Or was it early in your schooling? Or was it when you were trying to write an essay for a College application?

Or, contrariwise, you might write about a time when you found writing easy—when was that? How old were you? What were you writing? Why do you think now that it was “easy” to do? That it came without a lot of hard work on your part?

Do your best here, but don’t worry a lot about “how good” it is— this is a first step towards a more finished product and won’t be graded per se. In assigning this we want to help you get started on the paper, but we also want to get some sense of you—a snapshot, as it were—of you as a writer as this course begins. That way I will have a base-line comparison point against which to reflect on the progress you make over the next four weeks.

This is an ungraded essay, but I will read and comment on it as a way to help you get started.

Assignment 2: My Writing Life

Who I am as a writer, and how I got this way

Prompt: This assignment asks you to tell me the story of how you came to be the writer you are. This is something you know a lot about—even if you haven’t thought much about it—but about which I know exactly nothing. Yet as your teacher for the next four weeks, it would really help me to know you better—to know what kind of writing you’ve done, and especially what problems you have had. In writing terms you are here an insider to a knowledge (your own experience), and I am an outsider to that same knowledge. Your job is to give me an insider’s look at what you know about yourself as a writer and how you came to be that way.

Pre-writing: In thinking about what to write, think about distinct moments in your writing life—a time a particular assignment was due, say, and you were stuck. What were you writing, and why were you unable to make progress? Or a time when you found writing easy—when was that? What were you writing?

Would you say you are a good writer? What have you written in your life? Has all your writing been for school? Is it online? Is writing part of your social life? Have you ever really wanted to write something? What? When? How? With what results?

Do you like writing? Do you hate it? Fear it? If not, did you ever? What happened that made you like it less? What is it about your writing that has brought you to this class? If you're in this class pretty much just because you are here, then think about your affective relation to writing.

Summary: In other words, tell me the story of yourself as a writer by recounting three or four different events in your writing life that exemplify who you are as a writer, how you have come to feel about writing, and what you see your challenges to be. Your purpose is to help me get to know you as a writer, and to help me understand the kinds of things we will need to work on during the next four weeks.

Assignment 3: My Learning Profile

In the last paper you used anecdotes from your life to tell the story of how you came to be the writer you are. In this essay, you will again use examples from your own experience, but your focus will be on applying the concepts we have studied to understanding your own tendencies as a learner today. With this writing assignment, you are both an insider and an outsider as you write: you are not expert insiders (yet!) on learning issues, though you have certainly learned some things about them; you are, however, expert insiders on yourself. You know as I can't how you've dealt with difficulty in the past, or how you have resisted at points, both positively or negatively, or what has motivated you in the past to keep going, or where and how you have not-learned.

The point of the project is for you to create a Learning Profile of yourself in which you give me a picture of who you are as a learner, demonstrated by details drawn from your learning life. We'll be spending Monday and Tuesday recapitulating and deepening the learning concepts we've been using over the past weeks in order that you have a strong conceptual basis for thinking about, and describing yourself as, a learner.

Prompt: This assignment asks you to give me an insider's look at what you know about yourself as a learner. What are the three or four most important things you know? *How* do you know what you say you know? Think of the way Kohl tells you about his not-learning—the pages we read could be seen as Kohl offering at least part of a profile of himself as a learner when he was a child.

Pre-writing: In generating material to write about, think about distinct moments in your learning life—a time when you were unmotivated to learn, say, and couldn't perform, or when you thought you couldn't perform and then found a way. What happens when you encounter difficulty? What have you typically done? What are your characteristic forms of resistance?

How do you know? What are the prior knowledges you have—personal and academic—that you think will be strong resources for the classes you are about to take? Have you ever found yourself not-learning in the way Kohl describes?

Summary: In other words, tell me about yourself as a learner, using key learning concepts we have developed over the past two weeks and supporting your self-analysis by recounting three or four different events in your learning life that give a profile of you as a learner. Your purpose is to help me get to know you as a learner, and to articulate for me as well as yourself the kinds of things you will need to work on during the next school year.

Sequence II: Conference on Learning

Assignment 4: Group Research Presentation

Sequence Two is a group research project that publishes (“makes public”) the results of your inquiry into your chosen learning/writing topic and presents them to your peers. Your presentation will use a PowerPoint show, but will also require your physical and vocal presence. You’ll be giving your presentation during a day of conferences: on Tuesday, September 17th. You, along with every other English 108 student, will be presenting your projects for other 108 students, instructors, and even a few folks from campus who might drop in. It’s going to be awesome—your work will be received by an actual, involved audience, and you’ll leave your presentation having had an experience that few other newcomers to campus will be able to claim.

Now, the presentation will be the (almost) last part of a series of assignments, so it’s not as though you’ll just be putting this together overnight. You’ll be performing a number of targeted, scaffolded tasks along the way to help you generate your ideas, interests, questions, and practices. You’ll receive training and orientation in library tools—and if you need PP help, let me know and I’m there.

We’ll answer a lot of the questions about “what you’re gonna do” and “how’re you gonna do it” along the way, but honestly, it is you who will be making most of these decisions. Use this opportunity to present yourself and your ideas in a professional manner – remember: you will have become the insiders, and your audience hasn’t done the work you have done! You will have to do many presentations at the UW, so take this opportunity to practice and put your best foot forward.

Selecting Your Conference Topic

There are five criteria for your group's conference topic.

- (1) It has to be a topic connected to writing or learning.
- (2) It should be something you think your audience--other 108 students and instructors-- will care about.
- (3) It should be something you are intellectually curious about.

(4) It should be a topic that you would enjoy teaching your audience about.

(5) It has to be something you can find sources for (sources include articles in academic journals and articles in non-academic sources, such as magazines). Each group member needs to find two useful sources.

And finally, for your tentative research, your group should pick TWO topics, not ONE: decide on a first and a second choice. (In case you don't find good research results or you research and then decide a topic is not that interesting to you after all, you will have a back-up!)

Sample Topics Past English 108 Students Brainstormed:

- What makes a good teaching/learning environment?
- Strategies for managing anxiety about learning
- How mood affects learning
- How physical state/physiology affects learning
- Helpful study habits
- How to take notes usefully
- Threshold concepts (explaining one and why it is a threshold concept)

Requirements:

- Presentations must be 10-12 minutes in length (**no shorter, no longer!**)
- Each of the 5 members of the group must speak during the presentation, ideally in equal amounts
- After the presentation, the group will take questions—if the audience is lacking in its own responses, you should have a few follow-up points or icebreakers of your own ready (but I will be harassing the audience into asking questions, so don't worry too much)
- The PowerPoint element of your presentation needs to be done purposefully and with a sense of balance
- Remember to use the MLA format for all of your materials (check out the Purdue University site: <http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/747/01/>)
- Be Creative! – This is your chance to show off your own creativity so I'm looking for you to bring out your personality to this presentation. You don't need to be crazy or silly for the sake of originality—instead think about what individual traits you bring to the table and use your skills to their best ends

What to Say: During your presentation, make sure to include the following:

- Main Ideas – What is your topic, the question you have asked about that topic,
- Results – What kind of information did you find? Here talk a little about the articles and findings from primary research.

- A description of what you have developed as an answer to that question--or of any particular problems you may have had in trying to answer that question.

Tips on Presenting:

- Introduce yourselves – say your names so everyone can ask you specific questions later.
- During your speech, make sure to make eye contact, **speak clearly, loudly and slowly** (you may be nervous, and that tends to make us speak FAST!), avoid reading from the handouts or visual aids, and smile!
- Remember that you will be giving a presentation – so aim to be professional during your talk (formal tone, no jokes or laughing).
- Keep your audience in mind—your speech, your posture, your demeanor, your attitude...it should be pitched and practiced towards your particular listeners
- Practice your talk in front of your team and the mirror – make sure that you sound confident about the topic you are speaking about. Know what you're going to say before you say it. (We'll have a run through of everyone's presentation in class on Monday!)
- Make sure in your practicing that you are within the time limits! It is VERY easy to lose track of time....

Assignment 5: Conference Reflection and Analysis Paper

A few days from now, you will have gone through a complex process to participate in our academic conference, most of which had to be new to you. You worked as a member of a research team, navigated a UW Libraries database, read various sources to find something you could use for your presentation, and found a way to organize your thoughts into a two-minute chunk, and then you actually performed it as well. That is a lot of steps, few of which, if any, were familiar or easy.

After the conference, we would like you to write a 3-4 page paper that, first, tells the story of your conference experience (what happened as you began the project, how did you and your group function, what was hard to do, and what turned out to be less challenging than you thought?), and then concludes by analyzing and evaluating one of the presentations you attended. Make sure to summarize the presentation, because I may not have seen it! Then explain what about the presentation made it special to you. (How did the subject of the presentation connect to your own learning experiences or to questions you have about being a successful UW student?)

Assignment 6: Writing Ready Course Portfolio

A portfolio for an English class is like many other portfolios: a collection and display of the work you have done, together with a reflective essay describing your experience in the course. This project thus offers you a chance to review your quarter's work, as well as to put that work into some kind of narrative perspective. Your portfolio should include:

- 1) A detailed listing of the contents of the Portfolio.

- 2) All of the writing you have done for this class over the course of the quarter, including the final assignment.
- 3) A short Self-Reflective Essay, which you will write in class on the final day of the quarter.

In your Self-reflective Essay you will tell me the story of your experience in this course.

For this essay again you are the insider—you know what you have learned, what you still have to work on, and some of the means you've developed to cope with problems that have arisen for you. And I am again the outsider. I'll know more about you and the progress you have made than I did when we began—but I won't know it as you know it.

This will be your chance to tell me what kinds of difference this class has *or has not (!)* made in your Writing Life. And paradoxically, the more honest, thoughtful and convincing you are about the challenges you still will be facing as you leave this class, the better your grade on this essay will be.

The portfolio counts for 20 per cent of the course grade; I will evaluate the daily assignments included in the Portfolio on the basis of completeness and quality of involvement (10 points total). The essay I'll evaluate on the basis of responsiveness and thoughtfulness as follows (10 points total):

Fully responsive and thoughtfully undertaken	= 10
Responsive but less completely thought through	= 5
Marginally responsive, or not well thought through	= 0

Assignment 7: In-class Writing, Last Day: Reflecting on English 108

In this final essay you will tell me the story of your experience taking this course. For this essay again you are the insider—you know what you have done here, what you have learned, what you still have to work on, and some of the means you've developed to cope with problems that have arisen for you. And I am again the outsider. I'll know more about you and the progress you have made than I did when we began the course—but I won't know it as you know it.

Prompt: As you look back on all the work you have done these past four weeks (feel free to consult your portfolio), think about what kinds of difference this class has or has not (!) made for you as a writer and learner. Remember the hopes, goals, questions and anxieties you had on the first day of class? What has happened since? What goals have you achieved, or begun to achieve? What hopes, questions and anxieties do you have going forward into fall quarter? Have you discovered any useful strategies for addressing these questions and anxieties? This is an opportunity for self-reflection, for you to again practice metacognition. The more honest, thoughtful and convincing you are about the challenges you will still be facing as you leave this class, the better positioned you will be to practice self-efficacy fall quarter!