

Unit 1 ► Writing About the World: Observation and Reflection

Deliverables: Journals (5), Peer Review, Personal Essay (turned in as a portfolio)

Value: 250 points, 25% of overall grade (Journals – 100 [5 X 20], Peer Review – 25, Personal Essay – 100, Portfolio Presentation – 25)

Due Date: September 28, 2007

Writing is complex; it involves the sharing of information, ideas, opinions, discoveries, and explanations. It can be used to persuade or instruct or entertain. Its purpose is often defined by the audience for whom it is intended, but it can also be defined simply by the writer as a means of acquiring new knowledge and making new sense of the world. Unit 1 is designed help you, the writer, begin or continue to explore the world in which you live and how you associate with it. The purpose is to get you comfortable with trying new ways of writing, pushing yourself to become a stronger writer, and understand the reasons why we write, who we write for, and how that writing changes depending on the audience. For this unit, you will be required to write five (5) journals, write a draft and conduct a peer review of others' drafts, and write a personal essay. You will turn in these assignments as a portfolio.

Personal Essay Writing about your experiences as they relate to the world around you help you to understand what you believe, what you know, and what you hope to find out. Writing with a purpose to tell a story that involves you allows you to concretize the way you think about an idea or event. The purpose of this essay is to help move you from a traditional 5-paragraph essay in which you regurgitate information into something much more stimulating, academic, and, ultimately, useful.

As a culminating assignment to this unit, you will write a 5 – 7 page personal essay about a moment in your life that had some kind of significance. You will tell a story that in some way involves you, though I am being loose with that concept. Think of a moment in your life that may have altered (even if very slightly) the way you think about or view something. Narrow the event to one very specific moment in your life and explain its significance; do not try to cover an entire period in your life (like your high school years, entire childhood, or even a two-week vacation.) Try to narrow the moment to a day or even an hour. You will be expected to incorporate the components of writing that we discuss in class, including especially a clear focus and reason for telling the event. Also, you must incorporate a research component into the paper, meaning you must show evidence of having researched something you knew little about before.

Peer Review A great part of any learning experience involves getting ideas from and sharing with others. On Thursday, September 20, we will have a peer review day where you will be expected to share your rough draft of your personal essay with two (2) classmates. On this day you will have a chance to share your ideas and writing style with others in the class. On a worksheet that I will provide in class, you will be expected to give useful feedback to your peers. Although it is obviously expected that you are respectful when giving comments, it is also expected that the comments give both positive *and* negative feedback. We cannot learn if we are never told what isn't working well. You and your peers will appreciate knowing what is working as well as what needs to be improved. I will be looking for feedback that is specific and useful to your peers

Journals Like most things in life, we get better at writing when we practice. One of the best ways to generate ideas and begin exploring a new topic or one we are interested in is to simply begin writing about it. The purpose of these journals is to allow you to freely write about your ideas. This is where you can experiment with and develop new strengths in writing. Push yourself to use more sophisticated diction and academic prose. Find new ways to express your ideas. For this unit, you will be writing five journals that will help prepare you write your personal essay. The topics of the journals include the following: Discovering History, Analyzing Political Cartoons, Reflecting, Observing, and Informing. Because I expect you to experiment and freely express your ideas in these journals, you will not be graded on structure, format, style, voice, or grammatical correctness. I am simply looking for well-thought-out ideas and an effort to learn and express something new and interesting. I expect you will take each journal assignment as a serious opportunity to improve your writing and critical thinking skills. These essays must be typed, and I expect them to be at least 500 words (which would be roughly the equivalent of one page typed, single-spaced, 12-point font, Times New Roman, 1-inch margins).

Portfolio Presentation Be careful not to lose any of your journals, peer review, or rough draft during the course of the unit as you will be expected to turn them in all at the same time. As a good practice for turning in any combination of professional documents, you will turn in these assignments in a folder with a short explanation (one or two paragraphs), or executive summary, describing the contents of the portfolio in a way that is clear and informative.

Refer to the reverse side of this page for the detailed grading rubric and assignment description.

Name: _____

Due: September 27, 2007

Unit 1 Scoring Standard & Checklist

Personal Essay, Peer Review, Journals (5)

Personal Essay (100 pts.)	Comments	Score
<p>Content</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Essay is 5 – 7 pages in length, typed, double-spaced, with 12-point font, 1-inch margins, and Times New Roman typeface <input type="checkbox"/> Essay covers one very specific event in your life that tells about your experience, relationship, or understanding of some aspect of the world in which you live <input type="checkbox"/> Essay includes the components discussed in class, including observation, reflection, and information. There is good detail, making use of sensory details, similes, and metaphors <input type="checkbox"/> The essay has a clear, cohesive focus that answers the “so what?” question. It is obvious what your point is and your descriptions relate to that main topic. <input type="checkbox"/> A clear, academic voice is established that makes the essay interesting and engaging and is consistent. It only makes use of first and third person (never second) <input type="checkbox"/> Organization is clear with smooth transitions between ideas <input type="checkbox"/> Prose is well-developed with a good choice of diction that avoids clichés and insipid language <p>Grammar & Mechanics</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Grammar is used correctly, making the letter easy to read and follow <input type="checkbox"/> There are no spelling or punctuation errors 		
Peer Review (25 pts.)	Comments	Score
<p>Content</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> A draft of the personal essay is brought to class the day of the peer review <input type="checkbox"/> Both sides of the peer review are completely filled out <input type="checkbox"/> Comments given to your peers are courteous and show respect <input type="checkbox"/> Both positive and negative feedback is given 		
Journals (100 pts.)	Comments	Score
<p>Content</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Five (5) journals worth 20 points each <input type="checkbox"/> Writing is on topic with the assignment given in class <input type="checkbox"/> Journals are at least 500 words each, either handwritten or typed (generally this means about 1 page typed, single-spaced) <input type="checkbox"/> Comments are thought-provoking and interesting. It is obvious that some thought went into the writing of the journals 		
Portfolio Presentation (25 pts.)	Comments	Score
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> All assignments are included and bound in a clean, professional folder, placed in the order assigned in class <input type="checkbox"/> Includes a short (2 – 3 paragraph) executive summary at the front that contextualizes each of the documents <input type="checkbox"/> Executive Summary is written as if the person opening the document has no idea what to expect. 		

Grand Total _____/250 Points