

PERSONAL INVENTORY

Let's do a little self-exploration through writing. Who are you? What experience(s) have defined you? What are you good at? What is holding you back? What absorbs your complete attention? What are you interested in? How are you known among your family and friends? What is the horizon of your interests?

Most importantly, knowing that there are no shortcuts in life, how are you going to get to this horizon and beyond?

It is not enough to **think** about these questions. You must answer them, in writing, and do so through rich detail. Doing this not only gives you direction for the work of this course, it also helps you become a more effective writer and communicator.

Why? Because excellent writers know themselves. They are their own first and best audience. They understand their own motivations, needs, desires, insecurities, strengths, weaknesses, *et cetera*. They do not let themselves be intimidated by who they are within themselves or within the world. Instead, they use their knowledge of their self(ves), in all the dimensions the multiple-self encompasses, as they create meaning and share that meaning with the world. It's how they connect to other selves and lead them forward.

If you haven't already, it's time to begin that work.

Directions

Compose all of your responses into one MS Word document (.doc,.docx,.rtf only), formatted using single-spacing. Upload your assignment to Drive by Tuesday, September 29th before you come to class.

The following guidelines will help you produce a successful document:

PART I.A—Take some notes for your own reference first. This does not need to be included in the document. It is for your reference in case you are not comfortable jumping in and writing.

Write a list of 10 things on a separate piece of paper for **each** of the following four categories:

1. What fascinates you that you always want to learn more about?
2. What do you want to accomplish in the next five years besides school?
3. What things that you do for your job, your schooling, your hobbies, and/or your professional ambitions that make you feel really good (i.e., give you "flow")?
4. What problem(s) are holding you back in your life currently?

In total, you will have 40 things in your notes across four categories. What you want to be sure of is that your 40 items are not just general words (e.g., love, sports, poetry, music, etc.). These will not help you complete and pass the assignment. You want to come up with complete thoughts. So, rather than writing, “I like guitars,” you would write, “I like to collect custom Japanese electric guitars” or “I want to be a djent guitar god who gets invited to demo the best equipment at NAMM.”

For example, for things that fascinate you, someone else might include:

- a. Browsing community websites like Reddit, Metafilter, or Quora to see how much drama other people have in their lives.
- b. Participating in the culture surrounding collecting and wearing “sneakers,” especially Takashi Murakami’s one-of-a-kind creations.
- c. Designing and soldering circuits to build my own electronic devices.
- d. Hacking Raspberry Pi boxes into custom containers, like old cell-phone cases.
- e. Following the #MeToo movement and cases of sexual harassment in media.
- f. Watching videos of people flying (and sometimes dying) using wingsuits.

PART I.B—Choose the five most interesting things from each category and develop a paragraph for each of them (20 paragraphs total). With each interest, be sure that your paragraph-long explanation conveys why it is interesting or relevant to you. A *well-written* five-to-seven sentence of explanation for each (approximately one average paragraph) is sufficient for an honor grade.

For example:

My Fascinations (Today, Anyway)

Browsing community blog websites – I’ve always been a compulsive reader and enjoy learning about things through conversations by knowledgeable people. Reading community question-and-answer sites is one way to explore worlds that I don’t otherwise have access to. Whenever I’m bored, or overwhelmed with work, I check into these sites because I always learn something new. My favorites are Reddit, Metafilter, and Quora. I used to write on these sites, but that takes up a lot of time and so now I mostly just check in and read when I have a few minutes. I particularly like to read about “human relations” kinds of things because it shows me how other people deal with the messy drama in their lives and maybe I’ll learn something about avoiding it in my own.

Studying data visualizations – I’m a very visually-oriented person, but I have to struggle for every single bit of creative skill I’m able to acquire. I don’t learn well by watching videos, or listening. I have to have a visual system to read/study. Data visualizations are an example of how I learn best, and also what I wish I could do better. I really like visualizations that provide some level of meta-analysis of a subject. I can do simple information visualizations, but I lack the technical skills to do more complex ones and, more importantly, I lack the motivation to learn this. Instead, I like looking at and appreciating the hard work of others.

You will be required to think and maybe even look up words and ideas to articulate aspects about you well enough to cover a paragraph. If you don’t manage to complete the paragraph, you can’t earn full credit, so make writing each paragraph well a focus of your efforts.

When you don’t know what to write, ask yourself the journalistic questions: what, where, when, how, and why (you already know “who”). Be sure to give yourself enough text to connect your ideas and an explanation of them to both an internal audience (you) and an external audience (me).

PART II—Choose 20 questions from the question bank on the following pages and answer them with a paragraph each. The questions that you choose are entirely up to you, but you should have at least five (or more) sentences for each response (see my examples above). Be sure to include a subject heading that lets your reader (i.e., me) know what you are writing about.

PART III—Create a finished document using standard margins, font choice, and organization as you understand them from your previous writing experiences. Except, this time make the document **single-spaced** and **well-organized**—much like this assignment sheet is doing. I will add a sample template for a simple reporting style to OpenLab for your reference. You can use it if you wish, but it will need to be adapted.

Grading

The Personal Inventory is worth 100 points and is graded on your ability to use the directions to generate an appropriate volume of well-organized content and that this content is suitable to use as the basis for developing a personal narrative. **Your grade *will not* be determined by how correctly your writing approximates Standard Business English, so write freely, but with care.**

You must thoughtfully complete the entire assignment for full credit. Credit cannot be awarded for work not completed and loaded to your Drive folder in the proper format. Incomplete work (i.e., missing sections, lack of full paragraphs, unformatted, wrong file type) will be given partial or no credit. Also, if I see you are counting sentences and doing the minimum amount of work necessary for what you think will be an A, I will joyfully give you a C and encourage you to do better next time.

Your peers in previous semesters and years rose to the occasion and crushed this exercise. I expect that you will do the same.

Personal Inventory Questions to Choose from To Answer (Choose 20)

1. What hobby would you get into if you had as much money or time as you wanted?
2. What is your super power?
3. What job or activity would you be terrible at?
4. What habit do other people have that annoys you the most?
5. What skill would you love to master if you could?
6. What would be an once-in-a-lifetime adventure for you?
7. What is the last adventure you went on? Who joined you?
8. What song have you completely memorized? What does it mean to you?
9. If you could live in a movie or game, which one would you choose and why?
10. When friends come to you for help, what kind of problems do they bring to you?
11. What do you want to know more about? How do you think it fits into your life?
12. Who has impressed you with their accomplishments? What have they accomplished and why?
13. What luxury in your life can't you live without? Why? What does it provide you?
14. What are you interested in that your friends don't know about?
15. Among your friends and family, what are you famous for? How did this fame come about?
16. How different was your life one year ago? What has changed? Why did it change?
17. What is special about the place you grew up? Be specific.
18. What is the most impressive thing you know how to do? Explain.
19. What are you most insecure about in your life? How has this insecurity contributed to shaping you?
20. What is something that you are really good at, but embarrassed that you are really good at it? What has caused you to be embarrassed about this?
21. What dumb accomplishment are you most proud of? Why?
22. What is something that you keep messing up regardless of how many times, or how hard, you try?
23. How do you get in the way of your own success? Do you think this is a permanent condition?
24. What do you have doubts about? Where did those doubts originate?
25. If, as the metaphor goes, life is a game, what are some of your rules?

26. What habits, behaviors, values, and/or attitudes would your friends say are “so you”?
27. What gets you worked up? Why does it get you worked up?
28. What do you consider a good life? Where do these ideas about what is “good” come from?
29. What have been some of the turning points in your life?
30. What are three interesting facts about you that most people don’t know?
31. What is the hardest lesson you have learned in your life so far?
32. What do people that know you think is weird about you?
33. What is the best thing that you got from your parents? What is it about this that you value?
34. What is the smell of your childhood?
35. What are your favorite smells? What memories do they trigger?
36. What do you like the feel of when you touch it? How would you describe touching it?
37. What lifestyle change have you considered making for a while? What is preventing you from making it?
38. What would be your spirit animal? Describe what connection you have to this animal and why?
39. What are you really, really good at but hate to do?