

## 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 sel(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 your responses into one MS Word document (.doc,.docx,.rtf only), formatted using single-spacing. Upload your assignment to Drive by Thursday, February 25<sup>th</sup> before 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 your four different categories 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 Drive 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 and am committed to doing everything necessary to help you do so.

**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?

## WRITING AN INFORMAL ANALYSIS (50 POINTS POSSIBLE)

An analysis is, in essence, a study of the structure of something through its elements.

An *informal* analysis of a text is a focused look at one or more of the elements of the text. The focus of the analysis can be the content or story, the argumentation or plot, the rhetoric or appeals to the audience, the mechanics or style, or any combination of these aspects or others. The informal analysis follows basic principles of critical thinking rather than the specific methods of academic disciplines. A good informal analysis uses the examination of whatever features it chooses to develop a main idea generated out of your own thinking to address a problem, issue, or concern (i.e., a gap) in a way that is relevant to the audience who will be reading your analysis.

To write an effective basic analysis, you must be able to both read and understand the nuances of a text, take generative notes, and then cohesively reorganize your notes around either a known gap (e.g., one given to you), or around an emergent gap (e.g., one you discover). You do this work by synthesizing the connections and interrelationships of your ideas around a conclusion that you develop through your analysis.

### DIRECTIONS

Your assignment is to write a 500+ word informal analysis (at least two full pages, double-spaced) in response to your own personal narrative. Approach the analysis like you are the developmental editor of this text looking at it with a critical eye. Using general principles of critical reading and critical thinking (as covered in DasBender), you will construct your analysis based on how the text you have written functions. In a future assignment, you will take your analysis and create an editing plan from it to rewrite your Project #1.

#### A. Take Notes

As you prepare to write your informal analysis, you must read the text and take detailed notes. Because you have written the text yourself, you might think that you do not need to take notes on it. That is the furthest thing from the truth. In fact, you must delve deeply into the text, reading it multiple times and capturing your insights, questions, and concerns as they appear to you.

As you perform close readings of your text, and your notes, begin looking for specific aspects of the text that you wish to address. I recommend that you write directly on the text itself in the form of annotations and then transfer them to a working document if you can.

Writing an analysis is a process, and this process involves:

- Reading closely and attempting to understand what you read, not by thinking about it, but by writing about it.
- Committing your time and focus to reading the text closely and tracking what you have read through your annotations and notes.
- Reading critically and taking notes, taking time to reflect on what you have read, asking yourself questions about it, and adding notes to your existing notes as part of the process of recursivity.

## **B. Composing Ideas**

Once you have completed your close reading and note-taking of your Project #1, take your annotations and transcribe them into a Word document. While doing so, think about what ideas are most important to you, and which other ideas are related to that idea and “speak to it.” As part of this process, you have to find the main idea, or argument, or narrative/story **of your own analysis** that is speaking to **you** from your notes. In other words, what stands out to you from your own response to the essay? That is where you usually begin developing your analysis. For this to work effectively and efficiently, you must:

- Have sufficient notes that you can use them to produce ideas in sentences to create a chain of argumentation (i.e., related paragraphs) that introduces, supports, and then concludes a main idea that you develop.
- Be able to articulate an opinion on the text you are writing about (an informed opinion), and try to apply that opinion towards a specific, non-general, conclusion.
- Recognize and question your own relationship with the text to situate yourself within it.

## **C. Finding the Gap**

Once you have an adequate base of notes from which to work, you are prepared to draft your analysis.

- Your analysis should focus on what is missing (in your own opinion) that can be filled in through analysis. This is something that will bridge the “gap” between your own interest and understanding, the text, and the audience. What do you seeing your Project #1 accomplishing?
- As part of your analysis, you may summarize, evaluate, connect, and/or extend ideas from your Project #1 text.
- As part of your analysis, you may present conflicting or conflicted viewpoints about Project #1, contradictions, factual information, or any other type of information that you feel would help you understand the essay itself better and prepare you to rewrite it.
- Your informal analysis should have an introduction (written last), body, and (brief) conclusion.

## **EVALUATION**

This assignment is worth 50 points (~5% of your final grade). You will be graded on your ability to demonstrate an informal, but effective, analysis. While you do not need to show each step in the composing process, you may do so to bolster your credibility. Use the basic MLA format of your summary. Show evidence of revision and editing. The deliverable for this assignment is an edited 500+ word informal analysis (uploaded to Drive).

Keep in mind the following requirements;

- Your summary must be in MLA format, and in .doc, .docx, or .rtf file formats. For this assignment I will not accept Google Docs or .pdf documents.
- You can find an example of MLA format on the Purdue OWL by searching for “[MLA Sample Essay](#).”
- Your analysis should be revised and copy-edited before you hand it in.
- This assignment is due on Thursday, March 25<sup>th</sup>.

## Informal Analysis of Project #1

Clear evidence of effective process – organized and detailed paragraphs with main ideas presented early; logical transitions throughout (/20)

Informal analysis captures one or more main themes out of Project #1 to develop with new ideas for an editorial plan (/20)

Sentences are consistently well-developed with proper use of mechanics; errors are not distracting (/10)

SCORE: /50



## WRITING A REVISION PLAN (50 POINTS POSSIBLE)

A revision plan is a document that serves as both an opportunity to revisit your work as an act of rhetorical analysis and as a plan for your future work on the document. You will write the revision plan with an eye on what you wish to change about the document to meet (a) your own needs from the document and (b) the assignment requirements. The revision plan will offer a structured plan of what these changes will be (*what*), why you are making them and what effect you hope to gain (*why*), and the workflow associated with these changes (*how*) and how you plan on engaging it.

To write an effective revision plan, it helps to reflect on how your text works across several dimensions that must work together to produce an effective experience for your reader so you can write about and what you can do to improve how the text works:

- The audience dimension
  - How would I characterize the relationship I am trying to build with my audience?
  - What do I believe the purpose of this document to be?
- The genre dimension
  - Do I have the right content for this text?
  - Am I organizing my content in the way that makes the most sense to my text and my reader?
- The language dimension
  - What parts of my text are setting the tone for it, and is this the tone I want?
  - Can I hear my own voice if I read the text out loud or is it hard to read?
- The design and formatting dimension
  - Does my text look professionally formatted?
  - Have I designed my text in the style the audience expects?

Like the informal analysis you did of your text for Assignment #3, your revision plan is also an analysis (technically, a rhetorical analysis). Unlike the informal analysis where you stopped at analyzing your text; though, in your revision plan you will produce a synthesis of what you have learned in the form of concrete steps that you will take to address your concerns as you move forward on your project.

In essence, your revision plan should be structured around what you're trying to accomplish, how you think you have done so far, and what specific work you plan to do next for each dimension of your text that you wish to address. You do not need to address all of yours (or my) concerns with your text. Instead, focus on the major challenges. This means that your revision plan is not where you write that you need to proofread or copy edit your text as that is simply expected of all writers at your level. It's also not the place where you write that you need to "develop your ideas" or "cut out the boring parts." Generic palliatives like these will get you no further along in your revision than having done no work at all. Instead, focus on deciding what major concerns exist for you and for the reader, why these are problems, and how to address them in concrete detail.

## **DIRECTIONS**

Your assignment is to write a 500+ word revision plan (this page was 522 words for reference). The plan should articulate what you plan to change with your revision of Project #1, why, and how you will do so. Focusing on 4 to 6 substantive changes presented in order of importance with rationales for each should be sufficient.

This assignment is different than your Informal Analysis. In your Informal Analysis, you had approached the assignment like a developmental editor whose job it was to determine how the text worked and did not work. You will approach the Revision Plan like the writer who now has to put that understanding into a plan of action to create the next iteration of the project. While you should generally structure your revision plan around what you feel needs the most attention, you can use the list of dimensions above, and/or Gita DasBender's critical thinking model as inspiration for your revision plan.

If you need help developing a plan for your plan, you can follow my advice below:

### **A. Take Notes**

As you prepare to write your Revision Plan, you should conduct a close reading of your Project #1, my response to it, and your Informal Analysis. Annotate these documents as you work. Don't just take notes, talk back to them. As you work, do you see any connections between the ideas three bodies of text? Write those down too. In your Informal Analysis, you dove deeply into the text and your notes were oriented towards an analysis of your text. In your Revision Plan, you are extending that analysis to one or more of the dimensions above and then synthesizing your results together into a plan of action. As you perform close readings of your Project #1 and the texts that support its development, look for specific aspects of the text that you wish to address.

### **B. Composing Ideas**

Once you have written your annotations on the documents (or in a notebook), transcribe them to Word (or Docs) and develop them further. As you do so, think about what possible direction you want to take your revision in. What features of the Project are most important to you to carry forward? Which ones can be left behind or adapted? As you develop your notes in this direction, think about what you need to do to incorporate these changes into your Project to achieve the results you desire. By the time you have finished developing your notes, you should have a clear direction for both your Project #1 revision, and the Revision Plan.

### **C. Writing the Plan**

If you follow the above steps, writing the revision plan should be easy. You simply take your notes, and compose them into a more organized format with attention to style and mechanics for the benefit of your reader.

## **EVALUATION**

The deliverable for this assignment is an edited 500+ word Revision Plan (uploaded to your individual Drive folder). This assignment is worth 50 points (~5% of your final grade). You will be graded on your ability to show a reasoned approach to the revision of your Project #1 text, with at least 4 planned changes in the conceptualization, content, structure, or presentation of the text (see dimensions above). Changes must include at least a brief rationale (why) and plan (how) for doing so. While you do not need to upload your notes for Assignment #4, you may do so to show your work.

Keep in mind the following requirements;

- Your summary must be in MLA format, and in .doc, .docx, or .rtf file formats. For this assignment I will not accept Google Docs or .pdf documents.
- Use the basic MLA format of your summary. You can find an example of MLA format on the Purdue OWL by searching for "[MLA Sample Essay](#)."
- Your analysis should be revised and copy-edited before you hand it in.
- This assignment is due on Thursday, April 8<sup>th</sup>.

## Revision Plan of Project #1

Clear evidence of effective process – organized and detailed paragraphs with main ideas presented early; logical transitions throughout (/20)

Revision Plan offers 4 to 6 substantive revisions out of Project #1 and develops them with a what, why, and how framework (/20)

Sentences are consistently well-developed with proper use of mechanics; errors are not distracting (/10)

SCORE: /50

## CLOSE EDITING EXERCISE (50 POINTS POSSIBLE)

In the close editing exercise, you will take approximately one page of double-spaced text (2-3 paragraphs) that you wrote for Project #1 (or another essay), and demonstrate your process of revising it using the steps I provide you below. The purpose of this exercise is to provide you with a basic familiarity with some of the tools that an experienced writer might use as they revise a draft of their work.

### DIRECTIONS

The essence of the close editing exercise is to re-work draft text into something (hopefully) more polished and cohesive and to document your process in doing so. To earn full credit for the exercise, you must provide a copy of the text you are editing, proof of your process (e.g., notes and work product), and the final version.

To complete this assignment, follow the steps below:

#### A. Perform a Reverse Outline of Your Sample Text

A reverse outline is a very common rewriting technique where you outline what you have already written so you can see the underlying structure. Your reverse outline should explain what each part of your paragraph is doing or what it needs to do to fulfill its rhetorical function in the paragraph—not a summary of the ideas, but what they contribute to your overall argument. For example, the first sentence of this paragraph explains (a) what a reverse outline is, (b) what it does, and (c) that it is relatively common (and therefore useful). Each sentence of your paragraph should be reverse outlined using a formal outline format. The example I provide you below is just an example, you must adapt it to indicate the structure of your own paragraphs. You are not trying to fit the mold, but to explain in clear, simple terms what each sentence in your paragraph contributes to the paragraph as a whole.

See the full example below:

- a. Topic Sentence – what a “reverse outline” is and what it does. Framed as something common and useful.
  - i. Students should focus on the rhetorical function of the sentences in reverse outlines.
    1. Do not summarize ideas – focus on their contributions to the argument.
      - a. Use first sentence of the paragraph as an example.
      - b. Direct students to use formal outline format.
    2. Explain that my example are not directions, but a sample so students can see what the technique looks like.
  - ii. Caution to students to not try to use my structure, they are looking into their own texts’ structure.
    1. Explain in clear simple terms.
    2. Look at how the parts fit together into the whole.

#### B. Revise Your Reverse Outline into a Formal Outline

Once you have a full reverse outline for your page of text, revise it. Since you outlined what you had actually written, ask yourself, “does this make sense now that I see it outlined” Is there a better way to present this information? Your goal here is to make the changes you want to see in your text to the outline itself, before you invest the time and attention necessary to rewrite it.

See below for a formal outline based on a revision of the reversed outline:

- a. Topic Sentence – The goal of the reverse outline is to more easily identify structure changes that need to be made to a text before committing to rewriting it. (e.g., something useful)
  - i. What a “reverse outline” is and how it works.
  - ii. Students should outline the rhetorical function of the sentences in reverse outlines.
    1. Do not summarize ideas – focus on their contributions to the argument.
    2. Direct students to use formal outline format.
  - iii. Reiterate that students are using the reverse outline as a tool to look into their own texts’ structure.
    1. Students should outline what they find in clear, simple terms.
    2. Students should look at how the parts fit together into the whole.

### **C. Rewrite the Page of Text from Scratch**

Once you have written a new outline from your revised reverse outline, you are ready to rewrite your original text. Do so, but do not use the previous version at all. Use your revised outline. If you need to glance at the previous version for key details, that’s fine, but the new structure of your text should be based entirely on your revised formal outline.

### **D. Edit Your Revision**

Read your rewrite out-loud, slowly saying each word as it is written. Does it sound right to you? Can you breath normally while reading it? If the answer to both of these questions is yes, does the text sound like the best you can do? Now, you are ready to engage in line editing, whatever that looks like to you. The goal here is to get your text to the point that it sounds like you, that it is stylistically correct, and says what needs to be said according to the outline (or your expanding understanding of it) in the best way possible.

### **E. Copy Edit Your Revision**

The final step of your close editing exercise, is to re-read your final text one last time. Outloud, slowly, and backwards. Yes, backwards. Each word. Here, you are looking for mistakes in text spacing, punctuation, and spelling. By reading the text backwards, you are preventing your brain from glossing over those mistakes and ensuring that each word gets a decision made by you about whether it is correct or not.

## EVALUATION

The deliverable for this assignment is in four parts:

- 1) The original text you are working with (approximately one paged, double spaced or two-three paragraphs).
- 2) A formal, reverse outline of this text.
- 3) A revised, formal outline based on the reverse outline.
- 4) A thoroughly copy-edited, rewritten text based on the revised, formal outline.

Keep in mind the following requirements;

- All components of the deliverable must be handed in to receive full credit.
- This assignment is due on Thursday, April 22<sup>nd</sup>.

## Close Editing Exercise

Clear evidence of effective process across all components of the deliverable (/25)

Revised text is substantially re-developed with effective stylistic and mechanics choices (/25)

SCORE: /50

"It is with a kind of fear that I begin to write the history of my life."

--First sentence from The Story of My Life by Helen Keller

## STORY OF MYSELF

For the Story of Myself, you will write a 1,250- to 1,500-word essay on, well, YOU. The basis for this essay will be an informal analysis that you conduct based on the content you generated for Assignment #2 (Personal Inventory). In Assignment #2, you considered many dimensions of yourself and how you relate to your own imagination, aspirations, and the world. Using the techniques of note-taking and informal analysis we will cover in other assignments, find what is important to represent about you, why and how it is important, and compose an essay on that main idea.

You will consider yourself as the motivated and embodied subject of the world that you are, as well as the experiences that have led you to this point. As you conduct your analysis of yourself, consider avoiding a simple restatement of what you have already discovered in Assignment #2. Instead, take the most important insights from Assignment #2 and see how they fit together into a narrative that is unmistakably you. This narrative does not need to be the best thing you have ever written, or capture the ineffable complexity that is your life, or even be that interesting. Think of it as merely a beginning—a first attempt at capturing something important about who you are right now, in this moment of your life, while keeping in mind the person you wish to become.

### Directions

I will provide you with an explanation of what an informal analysis is and how to conduct one. You will use this process to write about yourself. You will use an analytical process and rhetorical techniques to generate and develop ideas, refine those ideas as you build structure into them, devise what the main idea of your essay will be, and then re-structure what you have around that idea into something essay-shaped. After you complete a draft of this work for credit, you will have the opportunity to submit an intensive revision for a re-grading toward the end of the course.

### Recommendations

- 1) Think of this essay as the continuation of a multi-step process. The first step was to generate lots of notes and content. Next, you must decide what you really want to write about. You can do this by re-reading what you have written for Project I, and annotating it. Look for ideas that you connect to, think you have more to say about, or that you believe you can link together around some coherent theme, or anything else that speaks directly to you as being worth pulling forward.
- 2) Eliminate content from Assignment #2 that you feel confident you will not use. You will still have access to it if you are wrong, but if you are not using it, you don't need it taking up mental space.
- 3) Begin or continue to annotate your ideas. Remember the process of close reading, responding, reflecting, and expanding. Annotate your annotations. The goal here is to get a critical mass of ideas flowing about your topic (i.e., about \*you\*) that writing your essay becomes as much a process of what not to include as struggling to get enough.



- 4) Once you have a critical mass of ideas, take your notes and annotations and create a rough outline of what you plan to include in your essay. This is an informal outline of what the main idea will be, and what ideas will feed into and develop that main idea.
- 5) Begin drafting your essay in a non-linear fashion. Do not start at the beginning. Do not write the introduction. Start with what you know the best, or want to write about the most. Work outwards from there by attaching more to that core and re-writing, or reorganizing, what you have. In essence, you are building the essay from the inside out.

**Grading**

This essay is due on Tuesday, March 9<sup>th</sup> before class. The essay is worth a total of 200 points. To receive credit for the essay, you must upload a completed .doc, .docx, or .rtf file into your Drive folder. I’ve provided a rubric below, but generally speaking, an “A” text is one that has been thoughtfully written and reworked based on substantial invention and drafting to articulate a significant statement about the writer’s life. The “C” text is one in which all directions have been followed...i.e. it’s about you, a completed draft is made and submitted and meets all criteria.

Please use the manuscript template uploaded to our Course Document Repository.

|  |  |
|--|--|
| <b>Content Development (80 points)</b>   |  |
| The information you choose to include holds an appropriate level of complexity and interest for a college-educated audience. |  |
| Details illuminate the subject, and expanding on key points.   |  |
| <b>Argumentation (80 points)</b>   |  |
| Ideas demonstrate clear hierarchical logic presented in a discernable narrative flow.  |  |
| Overall argumentation develops a main idea accurately and consistently.  |  |
| <b>Style (40 points)</b>   |  |
| Design and formatting features of the manuscript are accurate.   |  |
| Essay is in a separate, correctly named .doc, .docx, or .rtf in your Drive folder.   |  |
|  |  |

“Stubborn and ardent clinging to one’s opinion is the best proof of stupidity.”  
--Michel de Montaigne

## ESSAI OF THE SELF

The word “essay” comes from the French verb, **essayer**, meaning “to try.” In 1580, Michel Montaigne, the French Renaissance philosopher, statesman, father of modern skepticism, and popularizer of “the essay,” published his still-read volume, *Essais*. This book of, well, essays, are deeply introspective, analytical examinations of the various topics that captured the fascinations of the ever-curious Lord Montaigne during his life.

In modern times, we tend to think of things like essays as eternal forms of communication, but they have histories and (in European culture) not very long ones at that. In Michel de Montaigne’s time, the idea of publically writing about trivial, sometimes even personal, matters unrelated to theology, statecraft, or other doctrinal issues and imperatives was seen as tacky. Even worse was inserting one’s own subjective identity—to appear as oneself—rather than maintaining a high style of objective analysis. Lord Montaigne did both frequently. Because of this, he wasn’t regarded as an author during his own time, but instead only as a rich nobleman deeply involved in regional affairs of the state and the people whom he governed.

Nevertheless, the impact of Montaigne’s *Essais* on modern Western thought cannot be overstated. His work was a primary influence in Francis Bacon’s *Essays*, which was the first widely recognized collections of secular humanistic writing of the Renaissance. Bacon’s *Essays* led directly to his later works, which were the first justification for modern scientific reasoning by arguing for the value of observational evidence over religious explanation in naturalist work. Montaigne’s own *Essais* were among the first examinations of socio-cultural and developmental phenomena in psychology, child-raising, and learning, many of which still have merit today.

### Directions

In the classical tradition of Michel de Montaigne, you are going to make an *essai* (i.e., an essay, a try). Except, for our purposes, you will do more than make an appearance as the author speaking for yourself. Instead, you will write the *essai* **about** yourself. In *Project #1: Story of Myself*, you worked through the process of coming up with a narrative that shared part of who you are. In *Project #2: Essai of the Self*, the basis of your essay will be a conversation with yourself around a single idea of your choice. You will carry this idea as far as you can, intellectually and as a writer. You will examine various aspects of this idea organically through a process of notetaking, note development, and independent research (if needed) and then compose your text using what you have learned about developmental editing, line editing, and copy editing.

As examples of the essay form, you can turn to Gloria Anzaldúa, [How to Tame a Wild Tongue](#), or David Foster Wallace’s, [Consider the Lobster](#). Your essay does not need to be as complex, or as verbose, as David Foster Wallace. Your writing does not need to be as terse or as personal as Gloria Anzaldúa. Your writing must be entirely yours and informed by your deep thinking about what you have learned.

### What Can I Write About?

Mostly anything, keeping in mind the context of your work (a college assignment) and your audience (a professor). I suggest writing about something that is on your mind and that you are open to the possibility that you have a lot more to learn about the subject. You can refer back to your Personal Inventory for inspiration, or any other work you have done for this class. You can also meet with me to discuss your ideas, but I suggest you do so sooner rather than later and that you engage this assignment as writing-to-think rather than thinking-to-write as we have talked about many times in this class. To begin, why not make a list like I have done below?

If it was me, right now I would consider writing about any of the following topics:

- My re-emergent fascination with Ukrainian pianist, Lubomyr Melnyk, and his ecstatic approach to music composition.
- The AI-driven artwork of Refik Anadol and how it is pushing the boundaries of tech-driven art on the production end as much as NFTs are on the demand end.
- The complexities of my relationship with social media and how that has changed over the years.
- Waiting so long to get glasses and the chaos and disruption that caused in my life, and how this generally reflects how stubborn I am.
- Walking the city now in the waning days of COVID-19 compared to pre-COVID, and COVID at its height.
- Growing up in a home with a father who was utterly obsessed by his side hustles and how that has shaped me as a person today.
- Showing my daughter how to do genealogy research, particularly the lesson that you are not your ancestors, either their accomplishments or failures.
- Discovering Caribbean food when moving to New York.

### Expectations

- You will write a 1500 to 2000-word text in 12 pt. font, with double-spacing throughout and 1 in. margins.
- The text will be in MLA format (which is good for essays of this nature). You can find an example of MLA format on the Purdue OWL by searching for “MLA Sample Essay.”
- Your *essai* will deliver an insightful analysis. As part of this analysis, if you include outside sources of information, you must cite them in MLA format.
- Your draft must be uploaded to your Google Drive folder by 11:59 p.m. on Thursday, May 20<sup>th</sup>, 2020.

**Evaluation**

The *essai* is worth 200 points, or approximately 20% of your final course grade. If you submit your *essai* early enough, you will receive guidance for revision.

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|---|----------------------|
| <b>Content and Structure (50%)</b>  | Grade Earned         |
|   | Additional Comments: |
| <p>All key elements of the <i>essai</i> assignment are covered in a substantive way.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Essay develops a main idea related to the prompts.</li> <li>• Essay is structured logically with a beginning and end.</li> <li>• Essay delivers a coherent and insightful analysis of main idea through the prompts given.</li> </ul> |                      |
| <p>The content of the essay is comprehensive, accurate, and persuasive.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Information and details provided are relevant, well-developed, and compelling.</li> <li>• Source materials are relevant and credible.</li> <li>• Audience concerns are anticipated and addressed.</li> </ul>                                       |                      |
| <p>The paper develops a central idea and is directed toward the appropriate audience.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Essay has a recognizable central theme related to your development.</li> <li>• Essay develops this theme throughout the text using ideas informed by the writing prompts.</li> </ul>   |                      |
|   |                      |
| <p>Major points are stated clearly; are supported by specific descriptive details and examples.</p>   |                      |
| <p>The essay attempts to capture a larger point or understanding about the topic.</p>   |                      |
|   |                      |
| <b>Readability and Style (25%)</b>  | Grade Earned         |
|   | Additional Comments: |
| <p>Paragraph transitions are present, logical, and maintain the flow throughout the paper.</p>  |                      |
| <p>The tone is appropriate to the content and assignment.</p>   |                      |
| <p>Sentences are complete, clear, and concise.</p>  |                      |
| <p>Sentences are well constructed, with consistently strong, varied sentences.</p>  |                      |
| <p>Sentence transitions are present and maintain the flow of thought.</p>   |                      |
| <b>Mechanics and Formatting (25%)</b>   | Grade Earned         |
|   | Additional Comments: |
| <p>The paper is in appropriate format, with 12pt font, 1in margins, and double spaced throughout.</p>   |                      |
| <p>The paper is laid out with effective use of headings, font styles, and white space.</p>  |                      |
| <p>Rules of grammar, usage, and punctuation are followed.</p>   |                      |
| <p>Spelling is correct.</p>   |                      |
| <p>MLA formatting is used consistently throughout.</p>  |                      |

## THE LAST QUESTION

You now have the means to put words to your own narrative and build your dreams. You are learning that no one will follow you in the singular, strategic pursuit of your goals unless you have a voice capable of leading them. You know that writing can help you to achieve the highest aspirations of your ambition. And you have seen the truth in your own work—your successes and failures as a communicator and what comes next for you to become the person you were meant to be.

The final lesson of the course is that **\*\*this is your real life\*\***

Class is not a dress rehearsal. Your life doesn't begin when you graduate. Your life is happening this very minute. If you haven't started yet, you must begin moving your own agenda forward. You are either succeeding or you are failing. Now is your time, not tomorrow. **RIGHT NOW**. Right now you must begin cultivating the ideas that will drive your best future opportunities. Writing things down. Go find bright people and connect with them through the mutuality of your shared vision. Find those with more expertise and ability than you and be of assistance to them as you learn. Find those with less experience and offer them opportunity and mentorship.

To do the most interesting work of your life, you have to create the very conditions that lead to your own success. You will need help. I look forward to hearing from each of you in the future about your successes and failures. No one owns your narrative but you. No one, so make it count and remember to share it.

Welcome to the next phase of your life.

### **Directions**

What will you do with what you have learned and practiced in ENG 1101? Respond.

### **What Can I Write About?**

See above, but really, this is your chance to take things in whatever direction you want. Think big, or think small. If you can't think of anything at all, you can start with one or more of these questions below. But truly, this document is where you get to show that you have been paying attention, that you have learned something, and are thinking about how to integrate that something into the framework of your life.

- Document and reflect on what ideas about yourself that you have developed over the course of the semester and how you will cultivate these ideas in the future.
- Document and reflect on how your perspective more generally has changed over the course of the semester through the ideas and activities of this course.
- Demonstrate through reflection how this class is connected to your previous and future development of skills and practices. In other words, what have you learned in this course, how is it different or similar to what you learned before, and how do you think it will help you moving forward?
- Document and reflect on how you will carry forward what you have learned this semester into future courses and into your professional life.
- Explain how you plan to document and build on your successes in learning and carry them forward, including how to be accountable towards self-directed goals.

### **Grading**

This assignment is worth 100 points, as if that could possibly measure the experience of your learning or what you will do with your knowledge.

It should be 500+ words and is due on Tuesday, May 18<sup>th</sup> at 11:59 p.m. in your Google Drive folder.

P.S. This is the most important thing you have written in this course. Make it count.