

ENEX 101
Fall 2008

Personal Essay: What's Your Story About Writing?

"It is important to note that although essays are often written for the self and about the self, they are eventually intended for a wider audience." ~Donna Qualley

Your first class assignment will give you an opportunity to shape some of the stories about writing you've been sharing in class into a personal essay. Your purpose here is to explore an aspect of your writing story and communicate a point about it to readers, the NCoW audience.

Genre Issues

Use the following guidelines to help you compose in the genre of the personal essay (taken from p.122 in *The Curious Writer*):

- Don't just tell a story: "there must be a purpose behind telling the story that speaks in some way to someone else."
- Answer "so what?"
- Your experiences serve as evidence in this essay
- Use narration and reflection as your evidence
- Your audience is NCoW readers and writers. Remember, you may ultimately choose this essay to submit to NCoW.
- Your final draft should be 1,000 words

Guides to Invention

- Review the writings you did related to Chapter 1
- Engage in the Generating Ideas invention prompts in the text
- Write about your past experiences as a reader and writer in different contexts (academic, civic, home/ personal).
- Consider NCoW questions: How, where and why do you write? What do you write? What do you like to write and not like to write? How does your writing happen/develop?
- Visit NCoW site <http://comppile.tamucc.edu/NCoW/index.htm>

Evaluation

You will receive comments rather than a grade on selected drafting artifacts and your final draft.

I will collect and look over your drafting materials to see if you complete all aspects of the assignment and understand and practice assigned writing process activities. Please select one piece of invention work and one piece of drafting. If the invention is handwritten, you may turn it in in class; otherwise submit your paper and drafting electronically via MyCompLab at least 1 hour before class time, so I can check submissions before we meet.

I will read your final draft to determine your success:

- Focusing on a purpose
- Selecting and using evidence from your experiences appropriate to your purpose and the NCoW audience
- Engaging the genre of the personal essay
- Demonstrating an understanding of literacy
- Practicing conventions of grammar, punctuation, spelling as appropriate

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Profile: Writing up Someone's Story About Writing

“There is no better way of dramatizing the impact of a problem, the importance of a question, or the significance of an idea than showing how it presents itself in the life of one person” (CW).

Maybe you're impressed that your grandfather, who can hardly drive, can navigate the web and writes his own daily blog. Maybe you want to be a software engineer, an organic farmer, or a business executive and you don't know what kind of writing they really do regularly. Maybe you're interested in other college students past and present experiences with writing on the job, in school, or in their favorite pursuits. Here, you turn your efforts as a writer and listener to someone else's writing story. You'll choose to interview a family member, a fellow student, or a member of the community about some aspect of their writing story to share on NCoW.

To write a profile, you turn your attention to interviewing someone about his or her writing story. Your aim is to ground an abstract concern or question (generally framed as “what's your writing story?”) in the experiences of a representative person.

Genre Issues

Use the following guidelines to help you compose in the genre of representative profile (see CW):

- Organize “around ways your profile seems representative or typical of the larger group to which your subject belongs” (think workplace writing or grandpas who blog)
- Include anecdotes to help reveal the profile's purpose
- Use selective quotations to give voice to your interviewee
- Write 1000 - 1200 words

Guides to Invention

- Engage in the Generating Ideas invention prompts in the text
- See interview questions and suggestions on the NCoW site
<http://comppile.tamucc.edu/NCoW/index.htm>

Evaluation

You will receive comments rather than a grade on the drafting and final draft.

I will collect and look over your drafting materials to see if you complete all aspects of the assignment and understand and practice assigned writing process activities. Please select one piece of invention work and one piece of drafting. If the invention is handwritten, you may turn it in in class; otherwise submit your paper and drafting electronically via MyCompLab at least 1 hour before class time, so I can check submissions before we meet.

I will read your final draft to determine your success:

- Focusing on a purpose
- Selecting and using evidence (paraphrasing and quoting) from your interviews
- Selecting and using evidence gathered through other forms of research as necessary (observation, library or internet research)
- Engaging the genre of the profile for NCoW audience
- Demonstrating an understanding of arrangement and style
- Practicing conventions of grammar, punctuation, spelling as appropriate to the writing situation
- Practicing conventions for documenting source use within the text and in a works cited page

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Op-ed: Putting Your Oar in on Complaints About Electronic Communication

Imagine that you enter a parlor. You come late when you arrive, others have long preceded you, and they are engaged in a heated discussion, too heated for them to pause and tell you exactly what it is about. In fact, the discussion had already begun long before any of them got there, so no one present is qualified to retrace for you all the steps that had gone on before. You listen for a while, until you decide that you have caught the tenor of the argument; then you put in your oar. Someone answers; you answer him; another comes to your defense, another aligns himself against you, to either the embarrassment or gratification of your opponent, depending on the quality of your ally's assistance. However, the discussion is interminable. The hour grows late, you must depart. And you do depart, with the discussion still vigorously in progress.

~ Kenneth Burke

The metaphor of entering a conversation at a party is a useful one for thinking about argumentation. To engage academic conversations, or even a conversation at a party, you need to (1) see what conversations are going on and find one that interests you, (2) listen to what's being said in the conversation, (3) and join the conversation by responding to someone, building off what someone has said, or asking a new question. In other words, to enter an academic conversation, you need to research the history of a question or issue that interests you, do further research and thinking to determine what your contribution to that issue or question will be, and draft an essay to make your contribution to the conversation.

Your argument assignment will focus on entering a conversation that crosses both academic and civic contexts through the genre of the op-ed piece. The op-ed piece is an argument located in the context of a local newspaper or magazine whose subject is an issue of civic concern. Your aim is to compose an argument that contributes to yours and readers' understanding about a particular issue, in this case the notion that electronic communication is ruining "proper" writing skills in English. You've undoubtedly heard, or perhaps even said, "IM is ruining student writing" or "no one writes anything but bad blogs". You'll write your op-ed piece for our NCoW audience.

To write your op-ed piece, you'll use primary and secondary forms of evidence – that is, in addition to writing from observation and experience or interviewing someone, you also need to do some more formal library and internet research to help you determine what conversation you want to participate in, what you want to say and how you'll communicate your major claim effectively to others.

Genre Issues

Use the following guidelines to help you compose in the genre of the op-ed piece (see CW 303):

- Focus explicitly on a question related to electronic communication and its effects on writing, (your tentative answer is your major claim)
- Make clear premises and claims in support of your major claim
- Use appropriate and researched evidence to support your claims
- Locate the op-ed piece in the context of relevant arguments and counterarguments
- Your final draft should be 700 – 1000 words

Guides to Invention

- Engage in the Generating Ideas invention prompts in the text
- Explore definitions of key terms: argument, claim, ethos, logos, pathos
- Read samples of op-ed pieces in your local papers and online publications to help you learn about the genre and consider what argument you want to make
- See <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5C7nprvyt-k&feature=user>
- You might want to use interviews here again, or do a small survey for the IMers you know

Evaluation

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I will read your final draft to determine your success:

- Focusing on a purpose
- Selecting and using evidence appropriately for your audience and purpose
- Doing primary and secondary research to develop evidence (observation, experience, interviews, library and internet research)
- Engaging the genre of the op-ed
- Demonstrating an understanding of argument and appeals
- Practicing conventions of grammar, punctuation, spelling as appropriate to the writing situation
- Practicing conventions for documenting source use within the text and in a works cited page

ENEX 101
Fall 2007

Your Take: “Is Google Making Us Stupid?”

In the July 2008 issue of *The Atlantic*, Nicholas Carr says that the Internet is “imposing” a new way of thinking on us, one that focuses on skimming or scanning. He worries that in gaining this new way of thinking, we risk losing our ability to be contemplative, to sit with a book and actually read the whole book. In this final project, an academic research essay, you’ll get a chance to study this issue and offer your take on this current question.

While the phrase “academic research essay” often evokes memories of dreaded note cards, restrictive and uninteresting assigned topics, dead prose, and a plethora of rules about sources and documentation. We’ll shift away from these horror stories to emphasize the researcher’s interest in his or her research, where the motive of any kind of research, everyday or academic, is curiosity, the need and desire to answer a particular question. In addition, Hurston indicates that research is a process a person embarks on purposefully. A good academic research essay then is a lively inquiry into an academic question of interest to the author and of value to readers.

Your research essay will focus on this notion of “formalized curiosity”; you’ll develop a research question of personal interest that takes part in the big question “Is Google Making Us Stupid?” and pursue your research into that question using a number of strategies for gathering, understanding, and evaluating different texts. You’ll share the answer to your research question in an essay addressed to a specific, academic audience. You’ll still have guidelines to follow to help you compose an academic research essay, but these will not focus on demanding you follow discrete, arbitrary rules but learn and practice strategies and conventions academics in the humanities use to conduct research and make a contributions to their disciplines.

Genre Issues

Use the following guidelines to help you compose in the genre of the op-ed piece (see CW):

- Focus on a researchable question you’re curious about in the context of Carr’s argument
- Have a purpose (or major claim) that answers your research question (note: your research question will evolve during invention and research)
- Select and use sources appropriately; use both primary and secondary forms of research
- Use documentation appropriately and demonstrate an understanding of the logic of MLA
- Your final draft should be 2,000 – 3,000 words

Guides to Invention

- Engage in the Generating Ideas invention prompts in the text
- Explore definitions of key terms: research process, documentation

- Identify connections between this assignment and the personal essay, profile, and argument to help you research, draft, and write
- Begin to learn to use the library and its many resources
- Listen to <http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=91543814>
- Read Carr's article online: <http://www.theatlantic.com/doc/200807/google>

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I will read your final draft to determine your success:

- Answering (even tentatively) your research question
- Selecting and using sources appropriately
- Engaging the genre of the academic research essay
- Demonstrating an understanding of the research process and research as inquiry
- Practicing conventions of grammar, punctuation, spelling as appropriate to the writing situation
- Practicing conventions for documenting source use within the text and in a works cited page