

THE REFLECTION PAPER

The Reflection Paper is an assignment that invites you to draw on your own experience. It is discipline and course specific and might take the form of a short paper on course readings, a journal, reaction paper, or a response to a service placement opportunity. Read the assignment!

IN THE REFLECTION PAPER, YOU...

- *bridge* comprehension of course readings with your knowledge and experience in order to grasp the readings with greater depth
- *integrate* your knowledge and experience with course readings and concepts by drawing on concrete examples
- *question* your assumptions about a course reading or service placement opportunity; it also invites you to step back from your own prior beliefs and arrive at a more complex, or new understanding of a reading, issue, or life experience

HOW IS A REFLECTION PAPER DIFFERENT FROM A RESEARCH ESSAY?

FEATURE	REFLECTION PAPER	RESEARCH ESSAY
STRUCTURE	Can have an open structure that connects, explores and integrates course content with life experience	Formal: each paragraph provides supporting evidence to prove a thesis statement
THESIS STATEMENT	Generally does not require a controlling idea, however is often exploratory and/or argumentative	Organized around a central claim, or principle argument
POINT OF VIEW	First person ("I")	Generally third person
CONCLUSION	Does not need to be conclusive, but can identify questions and gaps in knowledge, make connections, or challenge prior assumptions	Concludes by summarizing evidence presented; may also suggest questions for future research

A STRONG REFLECTION PAPER...	COMMON ERRORS IN REFLECTION PAPERS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • makes insightful and unexpected connections using examples • reevaluates prior assumptions • develops narrative voice and a unique writing style • incorporates brief quotes from the course material 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • disengaged from course content and/or experience • unfocused stream-of-consciousness writing or brainstorming • an uninformed, unstructured, or disorganized response

EXAMPLES FROM REFLECTION PAPERS

SUBJECT	EXPLANATION	EXAMPLE
Management: reflect on a branding campaign	Brings in experience to probe course material...	When I saw the poster advertising Ai Wewei's exhibition at the AGO, I felt a sense of belonging, since I come from China. I was already aware that Ai Weiwei was a provocateur and that his show was banned in China; and this made it seem that much more enticing, as I might never have a chance to see it in China. When I later reflected on this experience, I realized that effective advertising elicits a profoundly personal connection from the viewer.
English Literature: reflect on an essay	Reevaluates prior assumptions...	Personally, I don't think Chesterton's description of the colour brown as "the primal twilight of creation" is hyperbolic at all; in fact, brown is the colour of the earth, from which mostly everything grows, and which thus supports existence. More importantly, the earth in itself is literally primal, as it was a prerequisite for creation of any kind. Thinking about the colour brown in these terms made me question my initial assumption that brown is a boring colour.
Psychology: reflect on social media	Draws on your knowledge to explain a concept...	One type of social influence I have experienced online is interpersonal. My personal experience using online gaming demonstrates the interpersonal dimension of social influence discussed in tutorial. Players are motivated to form into organized groups in massive multiplayer online games. When forming these groups, various roles are played in order to accomplish collective goals within the group. Some of the roles include trading information to reach a destination or goal, while still trying to be the best player in the group.
Service Learning: reflect on service placement	Illustrates what you have learned from your service placement...	During my placement at CAMH working with a neuropsychiatrist, I developed personal initiative. For example, I read the articles written by the principle investigator. When he learned I was engaged at a practical and academic level with his work, he allocated more tasks to me. This helped me to develop my confidence and to bridge my academic knowledge of neuroscience with the complexities of working in lab where the results are not always as cut-and-dry as they appear in a textbook.

ONE APPROACH TO THE REFLECTION PROCESS

- (a) *Identify* a fascinating issue, or concept that arose out of the course material, class discussion or service learning placement
- (b) *Relate* this to your experience and/or knowledge; you can also start with your experience and connect it to the course material
- (c) *Consider* how (a) helps to understand or even challenge (b) and vice versa
- (d) What are the implications of this in terms of your intellectual development, individual growth and/or understanding, or career goals?

Works Cited

Mezirow, Jack, *Transformative Dimensions of Adult Learning*. San Francisco: John Wiley & Sons, 1991. Print.

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