Assignment Four: Final Project

Objectives

Apply the lessons of this semester to our own narratives. Introspect, contextualize, analyze, communicate. Also allow individuals to express themselves in creative and personally meaningful ways.

We will start discussing the final project shortly after Spring Break. It will contain a substantial written component, including analysis of sources from this semester, and may in addition have a significant artistic or creative aspect.

Your project should have a creative or exploratory component that tells your audience something about who or what “I” is for you. This may be a piece of writing, a work of visual or performance art, an exploratory research project, or some other form of your choosing. Regardless of the form that your project takes, you will also be responsible for producing a written explanation of the ideas behind what you have produced. This will generally take the form of an artist’s statement, an accompanying explanation, or perhaps of one or more extended footnotes. The purpose of the explanatory comment is to reiterate your intentions in the deliverable (though that should also be apparent from the deliverable itself) and to make explicit the connections between what you have done in your disciplinary deliverable and the things that we have discussed in this course. You should expect to make explicit connections to at least three different works that we have discussed this semester.

Your project will be judged on how well your project answers the question What is “I”? and on how effectively it engages (an appropriate subset of) the material we’ve discussed this semester. It will also be judged on the goals that you set for yourself and how well your project accomplishes these goals.

The final project occurs in phases… Phase zero is really a preview, in which you will do some exploratory life narrative writing. It is really intended as a mental warm-up and will take place as a part of the writing workshop. Phase one is your (non-optional) opportunity to submit a proposal and outline for comment. You must select a question or idea to explore, create a plan to produce something that answers this question or communicates this idea, and describe what you’ve done in a way that relates it to the themes and readings of this class. Unless otherwise approved in advance, your project should have either an autobiographical or a self-portraiture aspect, i.e., it should help to communicate what “I” means for you. Phase two is the completion of your deliverable.
You will have slightly under two weeks to complete your project, which means that you should pick something appropriately scoped. Ideally, your project will be something that you can stop part-way through and have something reasonable or continue working on longer and have something even better. Phase three is the creation of an explanatory comment on your project. You will need to explain the purpose of your project and connect what you did to several of the readings and themes that we’ve discussed this semester. If it is not apparent from your deliverable, the comment should also indicate how and why your project gives insight into what “I” means for you. The explanatory comment will generally take the form of a three to five page paper separate from your main deliverable, but it may be integrated into your deliverable if appropriate (e.g., if your deliverable is a research project). Phase four is the presentation of your deliverable to the class. At this time you will also turn in whatever tangible manifestation your deliverable takes along with your explanatory comment.

Let’s explore all these phases in more detail!

**Phase Zero: Pre-project Workshop on Life Writing**

- Deadline: March 31 at 1PM, i.e., before class
- Length: about a paragraph
- Collaboration: Not forbidden by any means, but probably not very relevant either. Do acknowledge any assistance that you receive, of course!
- Grade: Not graded, unless you don’t do it.

Bring to class a paragraph that is either autobiographical (tells a piece of your story) or self-portrait (shows some of who you are). Alternatively, you may use some form other than writing, but you must bring a tangible artifact (a sketch, an explanation, …) that could be shared with one or more of your classmates.

We will use the writing workshop on Thursday March 31 to discuss these pieces and to begin to think about final projects.

**Phase One: Proposal/Conference**

- Deadline: bring something (at least notes, ideally a written proposal) to your conference on Thursday, 7 April. Be certain that you have answers to all of the questions below. Turn in a formal written proposal by 11:59 pm on Friday, 8 April. This should reflect what we’ve agreed upon at the conference.
- Length: a paragraph to a page; as long as it takes to answer the questions below.
- Collaboration: you are welcome to receive suggestions and feedback from other students, and of course you will have feedback from Lynn. Acknowledge all assistance that you receive in a note at the end of the proposal and again in your final project.
- Grade: Not graded (unless you don’t do it), but it will be used to judge your final project.

This project has two parts: a disciplinary deliverable and an explanatory comment. The proposal should justify both of them.
Your proposal should indicate the nature of your planned deliverable as well as its scope (length, depth of exploration, number of components, etc.) and a plan for its creation. You should be able to complete your proposed project comfortably within twelve days.

Your proposal should articulate clearly the intended purpose or message of your deliverable. This may be in the form of a question that you seek to answer, a statement that you wish to make, connections that you wish to illustrate, or something else that you can describe in your proposal. Your deliverable will not be judged on its artistic merits, but it will be judged as to how well it accomplishes the intended purpose or communicates its intended message.

Your proposal should address:

- What question are you exploring?
- What thing or things will you produce?
- How will this contribute to an understanding of your question (or communicate your idea or intent)?
- How will this reflect your "I"?
- How will you accomplish this deliverable? This should include steps with deadlines and deliverables for each one, i.e., a schedule of what you’re going to do. Begin no earlier than Friday 4/8 and end no later than Tuesday 4/19.
- How will I be able to tell whether you’ve accomplished your goals?

What readings relate to this project? How? (This should be no more than about a sentence for each one.)

- How will I be able to see these connections? (What forms will they take? Will they be apparent from the deliverable or only from the comment?)

**Phase Two: Produce your deliverable for the Mid-project workshop**

- Deadline: April 20 at 11:59 PM
- Length: determined by your proposal; may not be written at all
- Collaboration: You are welcome to receive suggestions and feedback from other students. Acknowledge all assistance that you receive in your final project and/or explanatory comment.
- Grade: Together with the final project presentation, deliverable, and explanatory comment, 30% of your grade.
- Complete your disciplinary deliverable as planned.
- Email your disciplinary deliverable to Lynn and to any classmate(s) she’s specified, unless it is not suitable for emailing.
- Also email an assessment of how well you feel you accomplished your goals (as set out in your proposal), whether (and how) your plans changed, and what if anything you’d like to do to improve what you’ve produced.
- Bring your deliverable to class on Thursday in any case.
Phase Three – Write your Explanatory Comment – and Four – Presentation and Final Deliverable

- Deadline: May 2 in class.
- Length (for comment): Typically three to five pages in the format specified above.
- Collaboration: You are welcome to receive suggestions and feedback from other students. Acknowledge all assistance that you receive on this or any other part of your project in a note at the end of the written comment.
- Grade: 30% of your grade.

In class on May 2, each student will have an opportunity to share your deliverable with the rest of the class. We will schedule these based on the nature of the individual deliverables, but you should expect to spend at least five minutes sharing your project even if the deliverable is not one that lends itself to easy presentation. If you anticipate an issue, please let me know ASAP. (Also, please let me know ASAP if your project will require more than fifteen minutes for presentation.)