Reflective Learning Journal

Only when you carry out reflective thinking can you be a genuinely independent thinker.

**Reflection** is thinking with conscious effort by focusing your awareness. Reflection involves monitoring yourself when performing a task and evaluating yourself after the task is done. A reflective journal helps you think deeply about learning, your progress in learning, the difficulties you encounter, and strategies to get around difficulties. It is a space for you to record ideas, to think about what is useful for you in learning, and to come up with solutions to get around roadblocks to learning.

This is known as **metacognition**, or thinking about how you think. Metacognition allows you to explore your learning experience in relation to your academic, professional, and personal development. This moves you from passively taking in information to actively engaging with what you are learning by: **becoming aware** of the current state of your learning experiences; **evaluating** your learning experiences to identify roadblocks to improvement; and **regulating** your thoughts and actions to improve your learning process.

**Benefits:**
- understand course material more deeply
- gain insight into how you learn best and implement strategies which suit your needs
- evaluate your strengths and weaknesses as a learner and plan to overcome challenges

**What to reflect on?** Readings and films are grouped together to explore a set of closely related themes each week. **Focus on one or two of those themes.** Focus narrowly so you can go deeper rather than trying to cover too many themes.

**Feedback.** Journal entries are primarily assessed for faithful completion as opposed looking for any specific content so you can feel free to follow your thoughts where they take you. If you want more detailed feedback let me know and I will do my best to oblige.

0 – Not done or what is done is not related to the subject.
1 – Your writing is descriptive, only saying “what” happened (awareness).
2 – You explain “why” or “how” what you are writing about is important (evaluation).
3 – You accomplish #2 and also make plans to improve your learning process (regulation).

**Week 1 — Content (What?)**

I. **Awareness:** What have I learned?
II. **Evaluation:** Do I understand what I have learned? What else do I need to learn?
III. **Regulation:** What can I do to gain a better understanding?

**Week 2 — Process (How?)**

I. **Awareness:** How did I learn it? What strategy have I used in learning this topic?
II. **Evaluation:** How effective is this strategy?
III. **Regulation:** How can I make this strategy more effective? Is the way I do it the best way?
Week 3 — Reasons (Why?)
   I. Awareness: Why learn it? What is learning?
   II. Evaluation: Why would I think so? Is this the only purpose of learning?
   III. Regulation: What would be a more useful way to understand learning? How could this learning experience be interpreted differently?

Week 4 — Explore your learning in relation to your academic development.
   I. Awareness: How does this learning experience contribute to my academic development? What are my short-term or long-term academic goals?
   II. Evaluation: What does this learning experience reveal about my academic goals? Am I making good progress? Am I on the right track?
   III. Regulation: All things considered, are my goals suitable? Are there other options? What other paths can I take to achieve my goals?

Week 5 — Explore your learning in relation to your professional development.
   I. Awareness: How does this learning experience contribute to my professional development? What are my short-term or long-term professional goals?
   II. Evaluation: What does this learning experience reveal about my professional goals? Am I making good progress? Am I on the right track?
   III. Regulation: All things considered, are my goals suitable? Are there other options? What other paths can I take to achieve my goals?

Week 6 — Explore your learning in relation to your personal development.
   I. Awareness: What does this learning experience mean to me? How does it matter to me if I fail or succeed?
   II. Evaluation: What does this learning experience tell me about my potentials and myself as a person?
   III. Regulation: What do I know about myself? How am I getting the most out of myself?

Paper I Self-Assessment Guidelines

Writing Goals (and grading criteria)
1. Have a clear, complete, and direct answer to the question
2. Apply key concepts from readings, films, and class discussion
3. Support your thoughts by drawing on specific evidence from source material
4. Communicate your thoughts clearly and in detail so your thought process is evident
5. Effectively evaluate your own paper after completing it

Directions
Do the following for each paper. Using the first four writing goals, write a brief paragraph on each goal (four paragraphs total) describing three things: 1) how well the author accomplished the goal, 2) why you think so, and 3) at least one thing the writer could do to better accomplish the goal. If possible, point to some specific examples from the paper to illustrate your comments. As you share your feedback with each other in class, allow the person whose paper is being evaluated to share first. You will turn in your written assessments of the papers you review, including your own.

Source: Chris Kolb, Anthropology 315 Syllabus
Reflective Writing Prompts Adapted from *Writing about Writing*

**Tip:** Good for early self-assessment in a writing intensive course, such as the first day of class. This exercise allows you to assess students’ writing confidence and competency while encouraging metacognition early in the course.

- Think of a reading or writing situation when your usual habits didn’t work to complete the task or communicate effectively, when you were made to feel like an outsider. Instead of denigrating yourself, ask where your ideas and feelings and practices came from, and how they compared with those of the people around you at the time. Were there unspoken rules that help explain what went wrong in that writing situation for you?

- Think of something about writing (not related to grammar or “flow”) that you wish you were more confident about. (Grammar and flow are two things students commonly say they want to work on; I want to push you to consider other elements and aspects of writing.) What makes you uncomfortable with what you know about the writing skill you selected? What do you imagine you could be doing differently or better?

- Writing is not about making it perfect or getting it right, so what is it about? If you are not prioritizing perfection in your writing, what are you prioritizing instead? Try to keep this in mind when you write from now on. How will this change in focus impact how you write and how you feel about yourself as a writer?

*Source: Writing about Writing (Third Edition) by Elizabeth Wardle and Doug Downs. Available at Spalding University Library, CTL collection 3rd Floor.*