

Major Projects

Project: 3-Part Journal {Experiences, Ideas, Inventions}

Your Journal is a major feature of your work this quarter as it represents a major component of the work of professional writing. Your journal is not a place for idle angst or haphazard annotations but is the repository for 3 specific kinds of creative and critical work, some of which will be directly prompted by assignments and in-class activities, though most of the work of your journal is yours to conduct as you read, research, and seek out new experience and new understanding.

You will (or won't) assemble your own journal using a slim 3-ring binder & dividers in which you will write directly and integrate printed, 3-hole punched sheets. Bring these materials to the first Friday workshop session.

The 3 sections of your journal should be clearly separated.

Each journal entry must have a header in the top margin in this format:

date, day of the week	location or topic
for instance	

10/3/09, Saturday

4th Ave. Downtown, Body Piercing

This approach to the journal builds upon a rich tradition of humanities-based journal making at Evergreen, exemplified by emeritus faculty Pete Sinclair in his 1981 essay, "The Journal of Exploration," which we will use as an orientation to the logic behind our journal's design.

Experiences: This section of your journal is a record of things done & observed, conversations, meditations that draw on your immediate environment. Here is where you will put accounts of your fieldwork and other events that you participated in or witnessed, focused on accurate description of what you did, saw, heard, felt, and thought.

Ideas: This section of your journal is largely text-based and synthetic. It's a place to reflect on readings, keep notes and summaries, begin explorations of a particular thesis or theme. While much of your work here might be directed toward your creative inquiry question (all sections of the journal may serve your creative inquiry), it can also range freely over the program materials. Again, if you take notes in this section, allow the burden of the concept of *journaling* to

compel you toward more than quick jottings—take the time to extend notes into paragraphs, building scraps into something substantial and substantive.

Inventions: This part of your journal will be guided in part by work done on Fridays: exercises and assignments in fiction and non-fiction. It is a place to explore all sides of our work creatively, perhaps to extend experiences and observations into fictionalized scenes, stories, or portraits. You might also find narrative or poetic ways to explore program readings and themes outside of assignments.

As you can see, we have not divided the journal strictly into “Fiction” and “Non-fiction,” though there is some of that separation suggested in the section titles. We hope that these terms—experiences, ideas, inventions—suggest the possibility that fiction and non-fiction, whatever distinguishes them, have similar sources and serve similar purposes in relation to our experience of the world, the ideas we hold, and our capacity for invention.

Project: Life History—>Portrait

The purpose of this project is to document a person’s stories and to write about what you learn in a way that is true—that evokes for readers the person’s life. The work hinges on open-hearted listening and the setting aside of preconceptions. For inspiration, we’ll look to Joseph Mitchell’s depictions of his subjects: the richness of characterizations, the vibrant descriptions of settings and interactions, the respectful probing, the depths touched as persons speak for themselves.

You will (if you’re able) find your own subject: someone you know, or know about, whose life genuinely intrigues you. This person has to be available to meet with you several times in the first part of the fall, and should not be a close relative or acquaintance—though you can pass such contacts along to fellow students in need of a narrator!

You will have an initial meeting, record and transcribe two interviews, make journal entries describing each visit, and consult relevant background material. Out of all this evidence you will fashion a portrait that captures topics and themes that matter to your narrator and includes yourself as a character, too.

Learn how to listen to and to write about a single person, and you are ready to document the stories of a group, an institution, a community, or a place.

Project: Creative Inquiry

Your Creative Inquiry project is an evolving open-form essay that will usually begin in various manifestations in your Journal *and* shows up as required drafts in seminar each Friday.

By Friday of each week, your Creative Inquiry work is to “grow” your existing material by 2 pages, integrating new ideas and directions from your journal and new material from texts and other sources.

**Everything that you do for your Creative Inquiry
is guided by a single thematic question.**

One model for this might be the book we’ll read by Calasso. Throughout the first chapter, and less explicitly in other areas, Calasso winds his way through Greek mythology by asking, “But where did it begin?” This simple, insistent question is both clear enough and potentially broad enough to allow him to wander through myriad issues. Likewise, we’ll have you exploring questions that are deceptively simple; for instance: “What are stories for?”

Discovering a range of answers and interesting approaches to your question throughout or studies will be the work of your creative inquiry. Crafting those ideas into an evolving form will require you to balance the traditional work of an analytic essayist with the *experiences* and *inventions* that will make of this piece, ultimately, a hybrid of essay, meditation, research, and creative writing.

Eye
of the
Story

**Program
Covenant**



1
Students and faculty will do their utmost to meet the expectations set out in the Evaluation and Credit section of the syllabus.

2
Students and faculty will do their utmost to treat one another with respect and to nurture dialogue about our common and individual work.