Project 1: The Exploratory Essay
(1,000 words for 10 points)

Purpose: Ask a question about writing consulting and explore possible answers using writing center scholarship and class discussion

Audience: Your instructor and peers. The world?

The Assignment
From the Purdue OWL resource on Exploratory Essays, written by your instructor: Many paper assignments call for you to establish a position and defend that position with an effective argument. However, some assignments are not argumentative, but rather, they are exploratory. Exploratory essays ask questions and gather information that may answer these questions. However, the main point of the exploratory is not to find definite answers. The main point is to conduct inquiry into a topic, gather information, and share that information with readers.

For this assignment, you will ask a question about something we've read for class, or something you've read about outside of course assignments, and try to answer that question. As noted above, however, the point of the assignment is not necessarily to find the ultimate answer to that question. The point is to *explore*. So, if during your research you discover something you are curious about, you should investigate that topic. In practice, your exploratory process will be answering a series of questions: Your primary research question and then the secondary questions that develop as you conduct research. **For a 1,000-word essay, you should have one primary research question and two or three secondary questions**.

For example, your primary research question could be "What are some special considerations I should keep in mind when working students who are writing about topics I disagree with, especially issues of religion?" This is a perfectly reasonable question to ask in any context, but it's particularly important when tutoring at a faith-based university like SLU. During your search for articles and resources on this topic, you run across an article that discusses service-learning in a writing center at a Jesuit university, "A Place to Begin: Service-Learning Tutor Education and Writing Center Social Justice." After reading this article by Dr. Zimmerelli, you are curious about the different types of social justice work conducted at faith-based schools and secular schools, so you explore that topic.

While exploring social justice and service-learning in writing centers, you come across the article "Investigating Adult Literacy Programs through Community Engagement Research: A Case Study" by Dr. Jaclyn Wells. In this article, Dr. Wells discusses her dissertation project at Purdue University where she collaborated with a non-profit organization to develop resources for the Purdue OWL while tutoring in the Purdue Writing Lab. So, while you began by asking a question about tutoring at a faith-based university, your exploration took you in different directions, and you landed in a place you never expected, learning much during your journey.

Goals of the Assignment
This exploratory essay should help you learn more about writing consulting and writing center theory and practice. It should also help you lay the foundation for Project 2 where you will investigate an issue in writing center theory and practice and then propose a way of addressing

that issue through your consulting. In a sense, then, the exploratory essay is helping you build a corpus of information from which you can better understand the writing center world and the primary issues related to that world. Lastly, you should feel free to explore anything that interests you; please don't feel confined or constricted. Explore. Become engaged. Have fun.

Format
This essay should adhere to MLA, APA, or CMS guidelines and must be around 1,000 words.

Organization
Because you may not have written an exploratory essay before, it may be helpful to provide some information about how it should be organized. In short, your essay should follow your exploratory process. Once you introduce your topic, explain why it's important, and make clear what you would like your readers to learn from reading your essay, you should explain your research question(s), how you conducted your research and what you found when you tried to answer that question. Then explain how you moved on to your next question and why that question sparked your interest.

From the Purdue OWL resource on exploratory essays: Exploratory essays are different from argumentative essays. In fact, an exploratory essay is likely different from any other essay you've written. Instead of writing to convince an audience of the validity of a thesis, you will be writing to find out about a topic and perhaps form some preliminary conclusions about that topic.

But there is another aspect the exploratory genre that is equally important. An exploratory essay is, in essence, a retrospective of your writing and thinking process as you work through a question. It describes when, how, and why you completed certain types of research. This kind of writing is about how you work through problems that require writing and research. You will have to be introspective and think about your thinking process for your essay to turn out well. Very roughly, then, your exploratory essay may follow this sort of structure:

Introduction
The introduction should outline the question you asked and why it's important. In addition, you should briefly explain what readers will learn from your essay and the types of sources you used during your research. You might also outline how the essay is organized.

Body Paragraphs
Body paragraphs should discuss the inquiry process you followed to conduct research for your question. These paragraphs should include the following:

- The question driving this step in your research
- Introduction of source (title, author, type of media, publisher, publication date, etc.) and why you chose to use it in your exploration
- Important information you found in the source regarding your question
- How and why the information helps you answer your question for this step
- Some personal introspection on how the source helped you, allowed you to think differently about the issue, or even fell short of your expectations and led you in a new direction in your research, which forms a transition into your next source

Conclusion

The conclusion should restate your primary research question and the secondary questions that emerged during your inquiry process. The conclusion should also outline the most important findings you had and any questions that remain (it's ok to have some). Discuss why you think you still have questions regarding the topics you explored, where you might look to answer these questions, and what other forms of research you would have to do.

Revision

From Projects 1 and 2, you may choose **one** document to revise. Your revision will be due with your Tutoring Philosophy on our final exam day. You may not use the revision due date as an extension for this assignment. I will average the grades from your original and your revised documents for your final assignment grade.