

HONR 300: The Dangerous Art of Truth-Telling and Truth-Seeking
Guidelines for Guided Self-Assessment

Due: May 15 (please email a Word document to me: bbenedix@depauw.edu)

As we agreed in our learning contract, your grades will be determined through a guided self-assessment approach. Remember that our basic mode in this class is to make the material come alive, and the attendant act of close reading. My objective for each assignment has been to provide you with the maximum opportunity for you to guide the shape of your own learning and to take your curiosity in the material where you want it to go. My hope is that your projects have helped you to deepen your own understanding of the material. My hope is also that you have challenged yourself to take risks and to pursue questions and topics and strategies that may be unfamiliar and/or uncomfortable to you.

Self-assessment, as a general rule, is an exercise in self-awareness and accountability. At the end of the day, though, it also *has* to be an issue of justice and equity. In other words, it is unfair for someone who has not done the work and who lacks the willingness to be self-critical to receive the same grade as someone who has done the work and has taken the time to reflect on that work seriously. Here's where I come into the mix: consider me your mirror on the wall/polygraph. I am here to help you see the truth. As I suggest on the syllabus, "my role, as I see it, is to nurture your curiosity, provide us with food for thought, help you to shape your ideas into a form that you find relevant and challenging, and be an honest judge of the quality of your work and the level of your mastery of the material. I therefore reserve the right to modify your grade if your assessment differs markedly from my perception of your performance in class."

Your self-assessment should provide a thorough reflection and grade for each of your assignments (probably around a page of reflection for each assignment). Please consider the following in your reflection:

1) *Reading journal* (suggested percentage of final grade: 10%)

- how consistent were you in keeping this journal?
- did it serve, as recommended, as a companion to your reading?
- did you use the journal purposefully? Did you use it to pose questions, pursue issues raised in class, as a place to collect your thoughts and interpretations of the material?
- do your entries reflect curiosity?

2) *One-on-one conversations* (suggested percentage of final grade: 10%)

- did you show up?
- did you come prepared with questions and topics you raise in your journal and wanted to pursue further?
- did you come away with a richer understanding of your own questions/concerns/curiosities?
- was it a productive/meaningful use of your time?

3) *Rhetorical analysis* (suggested percentage of final grade: 15%)

- did you wrestle closely with your chosen texts, reading attentively with an eye towards the details?
- did you parse out what you thought was most effective and ineffective about these texts? --Were you thinking ahead to your own project and the voice you want to cultivate? Did you speak deliberately about how you want to use these texts as models (or anti-models!)?

4) *Proposal for independent project* (suggested percentage of final grade: 15%)

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--did you include the “what,” “why,” and “how” in the description of your project?
--did you clearly articulate the particular “truth” you want to nail down?
--are you thinking intentionally about the relationship between what you want to say (the kind of truth you want people to hear), how you want to say it (what vehicle and voice

most effectively communicate this truth), why you want to say it (what are the stakes of your telling this truth? Why is it urgent for you to tell it?), and what you want/hope your audience will do with it (do you describe the kind of relationship you want to create with your audience through the piece, in other words)?

5) *Independent project* (suggested percentage of final grade: 20%)

Global caveat going in: the creative process can’t be shoe-horned into a semester, particularly if you are concerned with truth-telling and helping people to see things in a new way! Please, please don’t think of your piece as a definitive rendering, but, rather, as a work-in-progress that I hope you will be so attached to that you’ll keep refining it until it feels “done” on your own timeline. In that spirit, please reflect on these questions:

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--did you do what you set out to do in your proposal? If your project went in a different direction, not to worry... this is a place to reflect on what you ended up creating and the process that took you to this creation. If you started going down one road and changed

mind, why did you change it? Really just looking for you to dig into your own creative choices.

--does your piece reflect symmetry between message and method (what you say and how you say it)? What is the nature of this symmetry?

--do you think you found a way to pull people in and get them to hear/listen to the truth you are telling? How did you try to pull them in?

--if you weren’t the creator of this piece, do you think it would pull you in?

5) *Student-led discussion* (suggested percentage of final grade: 15%)

--did you choose a text that speaks to the truth you want to tell?

--did you facilitate an energizing conversation that got us digging into your chosen text?

--did you provide us with a description of your project, an update on where you are in the creative process, and questions aimed at helping us to help you hone your piece? (did you know what you still needed to be working on/towards, in other words and transparently bring that into the conversation)?

--were you open to feedback?

6) *Participant in class and collaborative event* (suggested percentage of final grade: 15%)

--were you engaged in the class? Did you demonstrate this engagement in substantive, meaningful and constructive ways?

--did you participate regularly and thoughtfully in discussion? What was the nature of your participation? What role would you say you played in class?

--did you actively participate in planning and implementation of the collaborative event?

The grade you assign yourself for the class—and the rationale you provide to justify that grade—will be based on your responses to these questions above. In addition to your narrative reflections, I would like to see **a quantitative measure** (based on the suggested percentages, for each assignment... what percentage out of 100%, in other words, have you earned). Please consult this holistic rubric as you make your final evaluation (you can assign yourself plusses and minuses as well):

An **“A”** should be awarded for consistently thoughtful, introspective, rigorous, engaged work. If you give yourself an A, it means that you’ve completed all assignments in a timely and thorough manner, come to class regularly, participated heavily and meaningfully in class discussion, and challenged yourself to take on difficult questions and make the material your own. Your work is consistently well executed and demonstrates creativity, high expectations and an element of risk-taking. You are leaving this class feeling that you have gained a rich understanding of the material, and that you have maximized every opportunity available to you. Note: this is NOT the default grade: an A should be reserved for truly excellent work.

A **“B”** should be awarded for solid performance in class participation and assigned work. You have completed all assignments in a timely manner, come to class regularly and contributed frequently to discussions. Your work clearly demonstrates preparation and effort, but might not be as well-executed, thorough, or creative as “A” work would be. Overall, you feel like you’re coming away from this class with solid literacy of the concepts and material we’ve covered. If someone were to ask you to define and describe the course content, you would be able to do this.

A **“C”** in this class means you’re phoning it in. You may not come to class regularly and may not have kept up with the reading. Your participation in class is infrequent. You’ve completed the assignments, but haven’t really challenged yourself to take on questions or topics that go beyond the surface of the material. You’re not sure what you’re taking away from the class with regard to the material, and know that you could have challenged yourself more.

A **“D”** in this class means that you just haven’t done the work. You don’t come to class regularly or keep up with the reading. You may have missed assignments or completed them in a haphazard or half-hearted way, not really taking the time to think about the larger picture. You don’t feel like you’re taking away much of anything from the class.

An **“F”** in this class... would make me very sad. This means you haven’t completed the work or put in the time. You’re leaving the class feeling like you haven’t learned anything at all.