<u>Thank You Note Assignment</u>
<u>Length:</u> 300 words

This assignment hearkens back to the Journal assignment (WP#1) and also a bit to the Memo (WP#3) since it asks you to think hard about your audience.

To use a term introduced earlier in the semester, the thank you note is part of civic discourse–the writing we do to shape our social identity, our "tribal" connections.

Intellectually, what is important to get at the outset of this assignment is that the genre of the thank you note is not simply part of good manners, of being courteous. It has been and can be simply a <u>transactional</u> (aka, socially adept) thing to do, **but** the genre can be part of something more <u>transformative</u> for a person. It can be part of a life truly and completely lived.

First of all, lots of research show that gratitude expressed and not simply felt has the most benefits to people. The reason for that is because in writing a real thank you note, not a perfunctory one (or one generated by AI), we engage in a process of identifying in ourselves what we value and need and how others have supported that.

There is of course a difference between values and needs, between flourishing and baseline health and homeostasis. This chart (below, by Mazlow) is often used to identify different levels of needs and values:
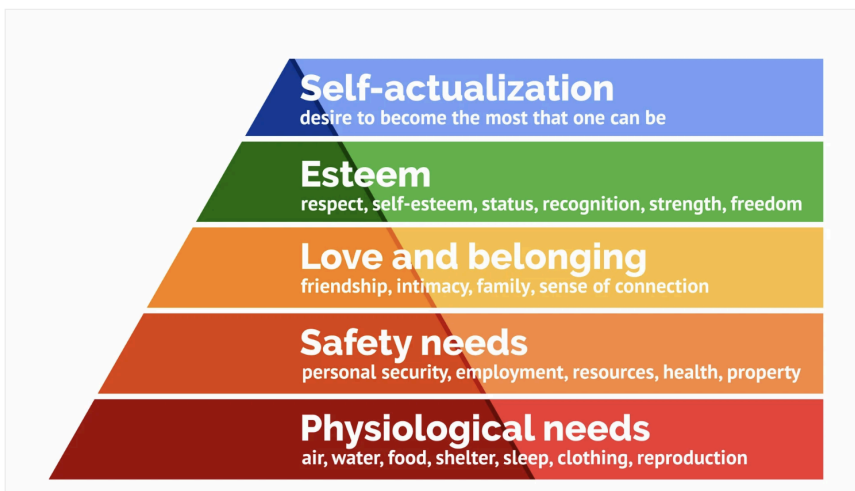
In identifying someone you want to write to, you can choose anyone that contributes to your efforts to obtain and achieve any of your needs and values.

This chart isn't something you would reference in a Thank You note, but it serves the brainstorming stage of this assignment when you are trying to figure out to whom to write.

Another thing to keep in mind when choosing a person to express gratitude towards is this process can be helpful to your self-awareness: what are your needs and values and how do you achieve them? Of course, a lot of what we do and are goes to our own self-efficacy—believing in ourselves and relying on ourselves and our disciplines—but some is also attributable to the involvement of others.

When you're brainstorming about why you are grateful to another person, don't get caught up in the weeds of what it cost them or whether they are going above and beyond the call of duty. Focus on what it gave *you*: how it helped *you* achieve your values and goals and what were the effects *on you.*

Some examples can help make this contrast between two types of focus clear:

If someone did the dishes when it was your turn, you would say:

Thank you, that stack of dishes was really stressing me out.

[and **not**: Thank you–that must have taken a lot of your time and no one likes to do the dishes]

Another example: someone on your team always shows up on time and gives their all.

I wanted to say thank you. Having you as a teammate makes being on this team more meaningful to me. I love this sport, but I also really love being on a team and you are part of what makes this team great]

[and **not**: Thank you—you are a role model, always on time and giving your all.]

Now, as to the question of length: If you feel your thank you note isn't long enough, don't go to AI to solve that problem. Comb through your memory for specific memories that support your focus and recount those details: tell a story, or tell two stories. Narrative is how we get across to others our authentic selves.

The other thing you can do is you can explain a bit about why the value matters, or how you came by it. So, in other words, you are sharing a bit about yourself, about what has shaped you.

Once you hit the mark (300 words), or come close, then you can put the draft aside and come back to it later to decide whether you want to dial it back some.