

On notetaking and Journaling—English 242A

1. Regarding word count for journaling: there are no requirements here. But you are required to keep writing in the journal, *at least once a week*.
2. Experiment with using the *Speculative Starters* for beginning your notetaking and journal entries.
 - a. A similar practice to notetaking/journaling we have done so far is the 4-column notebook exercise. The practice of reading a passage, interpreting that passage by asking questions, exploring alternative meanings, or how it connects to the overarching themes is a good practice of what “good-journaling” looks like. It is more a reflection of what you have read than an act of tedious note-taking.
3. An alternative to conventional and systematic note taking, you might explore, to digest and remember what you are reading:
 - a. Try writing about what you are reading instead of taking notes. Stop periodically—at the end of each chapter or when something important strikes you—and simply write about what you have read and *your reactions* to it.
 - b. This procedure may make you nervous at first because you can't "cover" as many points or make something as neatly organized as when you take notes; but you will remember more. Perfectly organized notes that cover everything are beautiful, but they live on paper, not in your mind.
 - c. The same procedure is helpful for lectures and discussions. You may learn more if you take no notes at all, and instead, put all your attention into listening. Then after class sit and write for ten or fifteen minutes about what you have heard and what it means to you.
4. Similar to the Metacognitive reflections you submitted with the Text Merge assignment, the journals you keep for this class should ask:
 - a. What were you aware of experiencing or noticing?
 - b. What was in your mind as you did this?
 - c. Were you bored, unengaged, distracted?
5. Some questions to explore when reading, thinking and writing about the texts in your reading journal:
 - a. What confused you in the readings?
 - b. How does your own personal experience relate to what you studied today/this week?
 - c. What effect does this reading have on your beliefs, your values, your previous understanding of things?
 - d. How does this reading relate to your other courses or to other parts of this course?

Supplementary prompts to the Speculative Starters:

1. Pretend you wrote the novel/section/passage/line. Something important was going on in your life and you poured strong feelings into the work you have written (but in actuality, the work you are assessing). What was going on, how does it relate/does not relate to *your own life*? What were those feelings?
 - a. Alternatively, pretend you wrote the novel/section/passage/line. Nothing special was going on in your life and you had no strong feelings. Describe what you liked about this thing you created (but in actuality, about the work you are assessing).
2. Imagine this work of art *as medicine*. What is the disease? What are the symptoms? How does this medicine cure it?
3. Imagine this work of art *as poison*. It destroys whoever experiences it. Describe the effects of this poison, the course of deterioration.
4. Imagine that everyone on the globe owned this work of art or all infants were repeatedly exposed to it. What would be *the effects*?
5. What would you notice about this work of art if you never encountered any other works in its medium (African American literature, science fiction, work by the same author, etc.)?
6. What *tiny detail* in this work says more about it than any other?
7. How would you *gender* this work of art (this prompt *is not* asking about who wrote the novel, think bigger)?
8. What other work of art would it *marry* (from any medium: art, ballet, novel, poem, short stories, music)?
9. What works of art do they have for *children* (from any medium: art, ballet, novel, poem, short stories, music)?
10. Imagine this work of art as part of an *evolutionary process*. What work did it evolve from? What work will it evolve into?
11. If this is the only *human artifact* transported to Mars, the only evidence they have about humans. What guesses or conclusions would they reach about humans on the basis of this work?
12. Imagine your work of art as evolving into *different media* (poetry, other novels, movies, paintings, music, etc., etc.). Describe two or three of these new works of art. See what these evolutions tell you about the original work.