

Informal Writing

This course includes a substantial amount of writing, in the form of informal writing during class. At the beginning of most class sessions, a question will be put on the board for you to address in a short, informal essay. Occasionally, a informal essay will be assigned at the end of class discussions as well. The informal essays have three primary purposes: to help you organize your thoughts on the day's topic before discussion, to reflect on the readings, and to evaluate the discussions. In addition, these essays provide you with the opportunity to practice and improve your writing skills.

We will use the writing notebooks for the informal writing exercises. Put the date and topic at the top of each essay. You will leave your notebook in a box that the instructor will bring to each class session. Pick up your notebook at the beginning of each class session, and leave your notebook in the box at the end of each session.

The instructor will review your writing in between class sessions. The instructor may make comments, and will mark each essay that you complete with a plus or minus. A plus indicates a satisfactory essay, and a minus indicates that the essay is missing or that you did not do a satisfactory job on the essay. The informal writing is worth a total of 20 points over the course of the semester. If you come to class and do the informal writing regularly, you can expect to receive a good score at the end of the semester. If several essays are missing or inadequate during the semester, you will receive fewer points on this assignment.

Note that the informal essays are meant to be done in class at the time they are assigned. You should not attempt to do informal essays at any other time, as this defeats the purpose of the essays. You should not take your writing notebook home with you between class sessions. You will not be penalized for missing informal writing on days when you have an excused absence. However, if your notebook has essays from days when you were not in class, you will receive a grade of zero on the assignments for the entire semester.