

ENG 106 Units 1 & 2: Literacy self-study

English 106, Bradley Dilger, Fall 2014 ~ <http://dtext.org/>

This semester we have four key assignments which match our genre awareness approach to writing about writing. I'm offering the first two here; the last two will be distributed the week before midterm.

Project 1: Literacy narrative

Summary: Document the ways your literacy has developed and then write a four page literacy narrative which focuses on a single event. Starter 9/05, final 9/19.

Some writing scholars who study genre believe that “critical transitions,” important moments where writers learn through change, help writers learn to adapt relevant skills, knowledge, and experiences to perform new writing-related tasks. At these moments, we realize our skills, experience, and knowledge seldom move between contexts unchanged: we have to transform or repurpose them in some manner. This is particularly important when we learn the features of a new genre, or the ways a particular community adapts it for their purposes. In these moments, what approaches help us? Who offers advice, encouragement, or even stinging rebukes? Where do we learn what we learn? How long does it take? What tools and technologies help us? Require extensive practice? Get in the way?

For this assignment, we will tell stories of our development as writers, focusing on these critical transitions. Because we define “writing” broadly, experiences with reading, speaking, computing, and creating or consuming other media are relevant, too—our communicative world isn't made solely of letters on pages.

When composing our literacy narratives, we will draw on the conventions of storytelling. Narratives are stories of personal experiences, moments in our lives through which we can explore how we have become who we are today—and invite others to identify with and learn as we do the same. With that in mind, and given our target length, you will want to examine, describe, and reflect on one particular event. That will be far more powerful than a number of shorter stories with less depth and detail. Our assignment will be structured to help you identify an good event to work with, then develop a narrative which is characteristic of this genre.

Starter (due Fri 9/05)

Using our readings and discussions about genre, literacy, and technology as a guide, list and describe the moments, people, and technologies which have been important for your growth as a reader and writer. Be detailed and descriptive—set yourself up to engage the features of a literacy narrative. With that in mind, you should include relevant anecdotes, and your starter should be rich in the quotations and direct engagement with people and texts which makes literacy narratives compelling.

Include examples of your reading and writing, or similar works in the same genres. This need not be polished; in fact, spending a lot of time making it pretty is a distraction from the real work of invention.

Length: Enough raw material to require 10 minutes of careful reading time.

Format: Use whatever formats you like—a notebook, a Word file which includes an outline and cut-and-pasted images, a WordPress blog—as long as it is hard copy and/or you can print it.

Submission: Turn in a plain pocket folder containing your hard copies at the start of class on the due date.

Grading: 0–50 points, based on completeness, detail, relevance, and engagement with issues related to course readings. How well does this starter equip you to write a literacy narrative? Any good faith effort will receive at least 35 points.

Final (due Fri 9/19)

With feedback from your peers and me, isolate a key critical transition and write a literacy narrative which tells your story in a compelling manner.

Length: 4 to 5 double-spaced pages (1,200 to 1,500 words).

Format: Follow MLA style. No cover page. Staple or paper-clip your hard copy.

Submission: Print and turn in at the start of class on the due date. Email a .doc format (MS Word 2007) attachment to me as well, using a unique subject line in the form “Purdue 106 Literacy Narrative” and the file name “purdue-106-litnarr.doc”, with your last name substituting for the name of our fine institution.

Grading: 0–100 points on A–F scale, considering the following in this order of importance:

1. Genre features: closely following the features of literacy narrative, as documented by *NFG* and our other readings.
2. Interestingness: using carefully written dialogue and rich detail to tell a compelling story.
3. Relevance to course: engaging issues raised in or by our readings and discussions.
4. Format and style: following MLA format and style. Writing with few correctness errors. Professional appearance.

Project 2: Literacy self-study part two: reflection

<p>Summary: Further investigate your literacy history in comparison to others, and write a four page reflection which draws conclusions about it. Starter 9/29, final 10/10.</p>

As the *Norton Field Guide* points out, whereas a narrative focuses on telling a story in a compelling way, in a reflection writers offer tentative analyses and explanations. (To be sure, narratives can engage cause and effect or make arguments, but not at the exclusion of storytelling!)

This semester we consider not only genre but the role technologies such as mobile computing play in reading and writing. This is nothing new; writing itself is a technology, and stories of the growth of literacy over time are deeply technological, regardless of the culture or communities in which they are told. With that in mind, use our readings to add to your self-study by documenting the technologies of your literacies, then reflecting on the ways you have learned certain key ways of reading and writing over time.

Starter (due 9/29)

Create a second worksheet, outline, flowchart, or other form of written analysis which, like your first, is rich in description and detail. More so than the first, you'll want to think hard about the tools and technologies you've used. And you'll want to document any important ways you've written through images, sound, and video.

You should also engage the material we read directly in your starter. For example, who are your sponsors of literacy? What genres do you value the most? To what discourse communities do you belong? Use the language of writing studies which we're studying—so you can learn it too.

Remember, since reflections offer ideas and tentative answers, you will need to explore that in your final essay. With that in mind, ensure that your starter includes some speculation, brainstorming, even guesses about the way you've learned and the directions in which you are heading.

Length, format, and submission: Same as P1, with one exception: if you need to include audio or video, create a WordPress weblog and send links to relevant posts in an email to me.

Grading: 0–75 points, based on completeness, detail, relevance, engagement with issues related to course readings, and progress from the first assignment. As before, how well does the starter set you up to take the next step? Any good faith effort will receive at least 50 points.

Final (due 10/10)

With feedback from your peers and me, write a reflection which focuses on your literacy and technology history. While this is not a research paper, you may need to cite some of the sources you rely upon, both those assigned for class and others.

Length, format, and submission: Same as P1, with one exception: the file name of your attachment should be "lastname-106-reflection.doc."

Grading: 0–125 points on A–F scale, using the same criteria as P1 with the following change:

2. Reflectiveness: using thoughtful analysis to pose relevant and meaningful questions.

Strategies (and a few directives) relevant for both projects

- ✓ Refer to the *NFGW* and other course readings early and often—they offer far more detail about the genres we're examining than this assignment sheet.
- ✓ Feel free to ask questions about our assignments in class, by email, or in office hours, or to make assignments the focus of your conferences.
- ✓ Please note I will not give written feedback to submissions which, in my judgment, fail to meet a majority of assignment criteria because of lack of effort. In that case, a grade of F (1%) is likely.
- ✓ Assignments build in two ways: you recycle material, and I tweak future assignments with past successes and trouble spots in mind. With that in mind, think carefully about the stories you tell, the media you select, etc. If you lay down some bullshit now, you're gonna have to sit in it later.

- ✓ Turn to the examples in *NFGW* to learn the characteristics of the genres you are writing—but *do not use them as templates*. Consider what they do best, then try to do that in your own way. (My dissertation adviser often recited, “Follow not in the footsteps of the masters, but seek what they sought.”)
- ✓ Remember, we think of writing broadly—texting, creating a PowerPoint deck, writing a sermon, developing an outline for an extemporaneous speech, and coding a video game are all forms of writing. With that in mind, engage writing in diverse ways in all your assignments when possible—and especially when required!
- ✓ In final documents, please pay attention to correctness—print, read carefully, mark, and revise. I am happy to help.