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# THE REFLECTION PAPER

The Reflection Paper is an assignment that invites you to draw on your own experience. It is specific and might take the form of a short paper on course readings, a journal, reaction paper, or service placement opportunity. Read the assignment!

## IN THE REFLECTION PAPER, YOU...

- *bridge* comprehension of course readings with your knowledge and experience in order to grasp the reading
- *integrate* your knowledge and experience with course readings and concepts by drawing on concrete examples
- *question* your assumptions about a course reading or service placement opportunity; it also invites you to challenge prior beliefs and arrive at a more complex, or new understanding of a reading, issue, or life experience

## HOW IS A REFLECTION PAPER DIFFERENT FROM A RESEARCH ESSAY?

FEATURE	REFLECTION PAPER	RESEARCH ESSAY
STRUCTURE	Can have an open structure that connects, explores and integrates course content with life experience	Formal: each paragraph must prove a thesis statement
THESIS STATEMENT	Generally does not require a controlling idea, however is often exploratory and/or argumentative	Organized around a central thesis statement
POINT OF VIEW	First person ("I")	Generally third person
CONCLUSION	Does not need to be conclusive, but can identify questions and gaps in knowledge, make connections, or challenge prior assumptions	Concludes by summarizing findings and may also suggest questions for further research

A STRONG REFLECTION PAPER...	COMMON ERRORS IN REFLECTION PAPERS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• makes insightful and unexpected connections using examples</li><li>• reevaluates prior assumptions</li><li>• develops narrative voice and a unique writing style</li><li>• incorporates brief quotes from the course material</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• disengaged from course content</li><li>• unfocused stream-of-consciousness writing</li><li>• an uninformed, unstructured response</li></ul>

## EXAMPLES FROM REFLECTION PAPERS

SUBJECT	EXPLANATION	EXAMPLE
<b>Management:</b> reflect on a branding campaign	<b>Brings in experience to probe course material...</b>	When I saw the poster advertising Ai Weiwei's exhibition at the AGO, I realized that my initial assumption that brown is a boring colour. I was already aware that Ai Weiwei was a provocateur in China; and this made it seem that much more enticing, as I might not have been drawn to it if I had not been to China. When I later reflected on this experience, I realized that effecting a personal connection from the viewer.
<b>English Literature:</b> reflect on an essay	<b>Reevaluates prior assumptions...</b>	Personally, I don't think Chesterton's description of the colour brown is hyperbolical at all; in fact, brown is the colour of the earth, from which all life originates and which thus supports existence. More importantly, the earth in itself is a prerequisite for creation of any kind. Thinking about the colour brown has changed my initial assumption that brown is a boring colour.
<b>Psychology:</b> reflect on social media	<b>Draws on your knowledge to explain a concept...</b>	One type of social influence I have experienced online is interpersonal. Playing online games demonstrates the interpersonal dimension of social influence. Players are motivated to form into organized groups in massive multi-player online games. By forming these groups, various roles are played in order to accomplish a common goal. Some of the roles include trading information to reach a destination or becoming the best player in the group.
<b>Service Learning:</b> reflect on service placement	<b>Illustrates what you have learned from your service placement...</b>	During my placement at CAMH working with a neuropsychiatrist, I developed a better understanding of the practical applications of my academic knowledge. For example, I read the articles written by the principle investigator. When I asked him about the practical and academic level with his work, he allocated more tasks to me to help increase my confidence and to bridge my academic knowledge of neuroscience to the practical applications in the lab where the results are not always as cut-and-dry as they appear in the literature.

## ONE APPROACH TO THE REFLECTION PROCESS

- Identify a fascinating issue, or concept that arose out of the course material, class discussion or service learning placement.
- Relate this to your experience and/or knowledge; you can also start with your experience and connect it to the course material.
- Consider how (a) helps to understand or even challenge (b) and vice versa
- What are the implications of this in terms of your intellectual development, individual growth and/or understanding of the world?

## Works Cited

Mezirow, Jack, *Transformative Dimensions of Adult Learning*. San Francisco: John Wiley & Sons, 1991. Print.  
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