

Personal Response Papers: A Guide

The Paper

A Personal Response Paper is your opportunity to reflect on the major themes of the course in relation to events and experiences in your own life. In each case, I will give you a prompt to help stimulate your intellect and imagination.

The Personal Response Papers are short essays of at least 500 words. I place no upper limit on length. However, I will penalize you if your essay is long and filled with empty verbiage.

Given that these papers are short, they must be tight. Every word counts. Your paper should have a distinct point of view. Even more importantly, it must present this point of view clearly and consistently. I cannot emphasize enough that murky papers which jump from point to point with no clear organization fall short of my basic expectation.

You are permitted (even expected) to use the personal "I"; you are permitted to tell stories; you might even write a poem. But here's a warning. Whatever form your paper takes, it will be judged first and foremost by its success at elucidating the class' subject matter.

Indeed, grades for the Personal Response Papers are based on two criteria: (1) the appropriateness and intellectual depth of your response to the question, and (2) the clarity and quality of your writing. In other words, even though this paper asks for a personal response, papers that lack focus and/or precision will receive a lower grade than papers that answer the question with well-formed ideas expressed clearly.

The Submission

You *should not* bring a physical copy of your Personal Response Paper to class. All papers must be submitted through the website turnitin.com. If you are not familiar with turnitin.com, then make sure you speak to a classmate, or speak with me, as soon as possible. Difficulties with signing up for turnitin, or logging on to turnitin, will not be accepted as excuses for late papers.

The class ID for turnitin is: 16377761

The class password for turnitin was given in class. If you did not get it, make sure that you get in touch with me as soon as possible. Not knowing the password is not an excuse for not turning in your paper.

The Grade

All papers are judged by the clarity and elegance quality of their writing. Being innovative and intelligent is not enough. Strive to be a good writer!

- ✓ + reserved for insightful Personal Response Papers that demonstrate their authors' ability to draw interesting connections between distinct concepts in the pursuit of new knowledge. The ability to think synthetically is an above average skill: it is rewarded accordingly. (Equivalent to A or A-)
- ✓ • is intermediate. It represents an especially analytic paper, or a somewhat deficient example of synthetic work. (Equivalent to A- or B+).
- ✓ is bestowed upon think pieces that demonstrate their authors' ability to understand and analyze the subject matter. Some readings are quite difficult, and it can sometimes be a challenge just to make sense of them. Nevertheless, the ability to make sense of difficult material is the basic skill you are expected to develop as a college student. The development of that skill does not earn special credit. (Equivalent to B+, B, or B-)
- ✓ is an intermediate grade. It represents a lower than average response. (Equivalent to B- or C+)
- ✓ - is given to papers that are not adequate responses to the question. There are many different ways in which a think piece can fall short of expectations. If you receive this grade, I would advise you to come speak with me about why I found your work deficient. (Equivalent to C+, C, C-)

If your think piece has no notation, it means either that you have received an "F" or that I have forgotten to record the grade. In either event, please come speak to me.