

EN120G: Language, Thought, and Writing:
Community Literacy and Migration
4 Credits * Fall 2026

Instructor: Dyani Johns Taff
Class Time: MWF 10:00-10:50 am
Class Location: Miller 319

Contact: dtaff@colby.edu
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Office Hours: W 2:30-3:30 pm;
T 1-2 pm & By Appt.



From the Council of Europe Statement on human rights and migration: <https://www.coe.int/en/web/commissioner/-/european-states-must-put-human-rights-at-the-centre-of-their-migration-policies>

Course Description

Where are we and what are we doing here? How did we get here and how do we know what we know? What's next and who needs to hear our stories? These three sets of questions will guide our exploration of personal essays, literary texts, scholarly criticism, images, and more as we seek to gain literacy—not only the ability to read and write but also to engage cultural knowledge—about Colby College and Waterville, about the communities from which we come, and about the concept of migration. We will examine our arrival in the Colby College community through reflective, analytical, narrative, and research-based writing, peer editing, and other literacy-focused activities. We will place our own stories in relation to those of writers from the past and the present, including Oliver Burkeman, Karen Russel, Joy Harjo, Margaret Cavendish, bell hooks, and Mohsin Hamid. Our goal will be to develop a successful college-level writing practice while gaining a textured understanding of what it takes to migrate, what kinds of knowledge we bring with us when we do, and how humans gain literacy and become creators of new knowledge when we join new communities.

Texts

Please buy the following books in hard copy (not ebook) as soon as possible. **If you have trouble locating or paying for these books, please contact me and I can help.**

- Gerald Graff and Cathy Birkenstein, *They Say / I Say*, 6th edition, Norton, 2024, ISBN: 9781324070030
- Mohsin Hamid, *Exit West*, Riverhead Books, 2017, ISBN: 9780736212206
- Oliver Burkeman, *Four Thousand Weeks*, Picador, 2021, ISBN: 9781250849359

All other texts will be provided as PDFs on our Google Drive (accessible through Moodle). **You are responsible for printing these texts and bringing hard copies** to class. I recommend acquiring a folder or binder and printing our readings as you go on a personal printer or at the library. **You must bring your course texts—books and hard copy PDFs—to class with you each day.** If you do not have your course texts, you will be marked **absent** for the day. Please contact me if printing readings will be an issue for you. The [Purdue Online Writing Lab](#) and the [Colby College Library “All About Citations” Guide](#) are excellent, free resources for citation, grammar, and writing help.

Grading System

I take a holistic approach to grading, aiming to reward process, collective support, and *learning* in as many forms as we can imagine it. I am inspired by the research of scholars including Alfie Kohn, Asao Inoue, Cathy Davidson, and Jesse Stommel; their work and my own observations of students during my eighteen years of teaching have led me to believe that numerical and letter grades are not especially useful tools for assessment and feedback. They can, in fact, cause harm and reflect systemic biases.

I have modeled our assignments and assessment structure on labor-based contract grading and ungrading systems. These systems seek to measure students’ work differently, accounting for as many modes of learning as possible. They aim to create equitable, socially just classrooms where students feel comfortable taking risks, exploring and being brave about new ways of speaking, reading, and writing, and even experiencing failure: these are key aspects of the process of learning.

We will work together—as a class community as well as in our one-on-one meetings—to reflect on and assess the work—the labor—that I ask you to complete this semester. I have designed all assignments for this course with care; everything I ask you to do is meant to support your work in **four core areas** that I take to be vital to learning at the college level:

1. Community

Proximity—simply being together in a room—does not equal community: making our class into a community takes the hard, rewarding work of being an engaged citizen. Assignments include: arriving on time to class sessions having completed **reading and other assignments, participating** fully during class **verbally or otherwise**, taking a turn (or two) as **class note taker**, large and small group work, **peer support/feedback**, and leading class **discussion**.

2. Textual Engagement

Our texts are essential materials for learning in this course; they function like lab equipment for a science course or paints and brushes for an art course. By *reading* and engaging actively with our texts both before and during class, we'll learn about literacy, community, migration, writing, ourselves, and each other. To promote active reading, and to extend our learning community beyond the classroom, you will form **Read Aloud Groups** with your peers and you will keep **Journals** in which you will collect observations, ideas, research, and questions about our texts as you prepare for class.

3. Writing

We often think of writing as a medium of communication, which it is. But writing can also serve as a means for thinking itself; I often use messy drafts and freewriting to work out what I *actually* think or feel about a topic, or to organize my understanding, or to work through or synthesize complex or overwhelming scholarly work. We will do many kinds of writing in this class, and your **Journals** will serve not only as a means for deep textual engagement but also for frequent writing practice, including a **Poem Draft** and other creative experiments. Longer assignments will include the **Community Text**, **Topics in Writing**, and **Collective Annotation and Writing Projects**. Your journals will directly support your work for these assignments and you will **meet with me 1-1 at least twice** to discuss your writing.

4. Reflection and Revision

As you complete your work for this course, I want you to think actively about *why* and *how* you are doing the work you are engaged in, and about how your work will influence your next steps within and beyond my course. Honest reflection is a powerful tool, and sustained learning cannot take place without it. To promote reflective thinking, you will track your time in a **labor log** for a month, and complete two detailed **self-assessments** (one at mid-semester and one at the end as a part of your **Final Portfolio**).

Detailed assignment directions are available on Moodle and in the assignment handbook. **You will assess your work in these core areas, and I will use your self-assessments to arrive at your course grade.** As a general baseline, completing all assignments in a timely, thoughtful manner will earn you a B; rushed, missing, or otherwise lack-luster work will earn you a lower grade; work that exceeds expectations, deepens your own or the community's learning, or otherwise goes **above and beyond** will earn you a higher grade.

Community Care Policies and Resources

We are subject to a welter of social, political, environmental, and other circumstances that can affect our mental and physical health. In response, **we need to prioritize an ethic of care: caring for yourself and caring for your community.** Here are policies designed to promote self and community care:

- **Attendance and missing class:** In order to create and sustain a compassionate community, we must all commit to preparing for class, showing up, participating, and attending to what members of our community (students and professor) say and ask of us. That said, our lives are complicated; if, for any reason at all, you are unable to attend one or more of our class sessions, you may complete an **alternative attendance** assignment, described in the in-class notes document, that will count for participation in the missed session.

- ***We'll need a critical mass of folks in class each week. Participating asynchronously (after class has happened) will mean that you will miss out on group work and real-time insights. **Please prioritize synchronous, in-person participation**, but use this option as a back-up whenever you need to.
- **Masking in class is optional**, but I encourage you to wear a mask if you have a cold or other respiratory illness, if you have recently traveled by bus, train, or plane, if you think you might have been exposed to someone who is sick, or for any other reason that you might have to keep germs in or out. I will always have masks on hand; just ask if you need one.
- **Late work:** Completing course assignments on time is part of how you show your commitment to community, textual engagement, and writing work. Completing assignments on time will also save you from the stress of having assignments pile up. And yet, we all sometimes find ourselves overwhelmed or in need of more time for one reason or another. One or two late assignments is fine. Chronic lateness will affect your grade because it will affect your ability to complete the course work in a thoughtful, timely way.
- **Academic Support:** The Dean of Studies office offers comprehensive academic support in the form of academic success programs, learning consultants, tutors, and much more. [Consult the academic success page to learn more.](#)
- **Financial Security:** If you need support so that you can buy textbooks or food, pay rent, buy or borrow a laptop or interview clothes, or any other kind of financial relief, [contact your class Dean](#) (they are friendly and ready to help! If you want help reaching out, let me know!).
- **Counseling Services:** [Colby College provides cost-free mental health and counseling services](#) to help you manage challenges that threaten your personal or academic wellbeing. **Getting help when you need it is the smart, courageous thing to do.** I am not a mental health professional, but I can make you an appointment, walk with you to Counseling Services, discuss coursework-related stress (and make plans to alleviate it), or help you to see or know when you need to get help beyond my expertise. **Email me any time.**
- **Access and Disability Services:** In accordance with Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and the Americans with Disabilities Act, reasonable accommodations will be provided to qualified students with documented disabilities. Students seeking accommodations should start by contacting the [Office of Student Access & Disability Services](#).
- **The Farnham Writers' Center:** From the FWC's website: "The FWC is a place for you to get skilled feedback on your writing. Our peer writing tutors have experience working with Colby's diverse student populations, and they are eager to engage you in collaborative conversations about your writing." [To learn more and to make an appointment, visit their website.](#) The Writers' Center also has a Multilingual Writing Specialist, Dr. Chaoran Wang, who meets individually with international and multilingual students and provides workshops to support multilingual writers. You can reach her at chaowang@colby.edu. Please feel free to contact her, either to discuss your writing concerns and issues in general or to discuss a specific course-related writing assignment.

- **Academic Integrity:** Please read [the Colby Affirmation](#) and review Colby's policies and resources regarding [academic integrity](#). It is the responsibility of every student and faculty member to be familiar with, and comply with, these expectations for honesty, integrity, and personal responsibility. If you have any questions at any time about whether or how to cite a source, about when it's ok to collaborate and when you must work alone, or other topics relating to your own or others' conduct, please ask me! I am happy to explain how to correctly give credit where credit is due or to discuss other concerns.
- **Large Language Models (LLMs) such as Claude or ChatGPT** are tools that generate text probabilistically, outputting the most likely next word. They are trained on large amounts of text taken from the internet *without the writers' permission*. I do not yet know, fully, what I think about LLMs. I do know two things:
 - ChatGPT and other LLMs raise **serious labor and ethics concerns**: who's making money from these tools? Who's losing jobs? What happens when it is *so* easy to generate plausible but fake, misleading, harmful information?
 - **Writing is thinking** and thinking well is difficult and vital. Reading difficult texts with care and attention changes your brain. If you let the LLM or AI assistant do your reading, summarizing, or writing for you, you are not learning to *think*.

For this course, please do ALL of your own reading and writing at each stage, including summarizing, brainstorming, drafting, revising, and polishing.

Reading and writing are hard and time consuming, but putting in that time will enable your intellectual growth, deepen your understanding of our texts, and hone your communication skills. If you would like to experiment with an LLM (and analyze and cite what it generates!), get in touch and we can discuss your plans.

- **Sexual Misconduct/Title IX Statement:** Colby College prohibits and will not tolerate sexual misconduct or gender-based discrimination of any kind. [Colby is legally obligated to investigate sexual misconduct](#) (including but not limited to sexual assault and sexual harassment). If you wish to speak confidentially about an incident of sexual misconduct, please contact Colby Counseling Services (207-859-4490) or Kate Smanik, the Confidential Resource Advisor and Dean of Religious and Spiritual Life (207-859-4272).
 - Please note that as your professor, I am designated a "responsible employee," a legal category that requires me to report to the Title IX Coordinator, Emily Schusterbauer (207-859-4266), if you disclose an experience related to sexual misconduct. This is not as scary as it sounds: if I contact Emily, she and her office will email you. If you want to follow up, you can. If not, you don't have to.
 - **I will support you whatever you decide:** I can connect you to community resources for dealing with sexual misconduct without you needing to disclose specific information to me. If you wish to disclose a specific incident to me, I will help to connect you to Emily Schusterbauer. The college will take initial steps to address the incident(s), protect and support those directly affected, and enhance the safety of our community. Emily will work with you to determine the best way to proceed.

- **Bias Incident Prevention and Response Team (BIPR):** From the Office of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion website: “BIPR is a non-disciplinary body charged with both responding to bias incident reports and implementing educational initiatives designed to decrease the frequency of bias incidents in our community. Community members who have experienced and/or witnessed a bias incident are encouraged to submit a BIPR report or contact BIPR chair Emily Schusterbauer (207-859-4093).” [To submit a Bias Incident Report, click this link.](#)

Course Schedule

The following schedule will give you an overview of our readings, topics, and schedule of assignments for the semester.

*****This schedule is subject to change, as needed, throughout the semester.** Our Moodle site will be our home base: I will update checklists and assignments there regularly.

Reminder: for a 4-credit course, you should expect to spend approximately 8 hours per week on your work *outside of class*. Some weeks you will need more than 8 hours and some less; I have designed my assignments with that time frame in mind. Plan your time outside of class accordingly and get in touch if you have questions!

	Readings and Assignments
Week 1:	<u>Unit 1: Where are we? What are we doing here?</u> <u>W Sep 9:</u> Course Introductions <u>F Sep 11:</u> Read Alfie Kohn, “The Case Against Grades” and Rachael Meager, “Thinking is difficult.” ***BUY YOUR BOOKS! Begin your journals and labor logs!
Week 2:	<u>M Sept 14:</u> Read Rotella, “I’m a Professor. A.I. Has Changed My Classroom...” and listen to The Ezra Klein Show, “This is your Brain on Deep Reading.” <u>W Sept 16:</u> Read bell hooks, “Engaged Pedagogy” and Langston Hughes, “Theme for English B.” <u>F Sept 18:</u> Oliver Burkeman, <i>Four Thousand Weeks</i>, p. 1-35 (Introduction and chp. 1)
Week 3:	<u>M Sept 21:</u> Community Text Project: Introducing Materials in the Robinson Room—Special Collections <u>W Sept 23:</u> Community Text Project: Group and Individual Work in Robinson Room—Special Collections

	<u>F Sept 25:</u> Community Text Project: Group and Individual Work in Robinson Room—Special Collections
Week 4:	<u>M Sept 28:</u> Community Text Project Presentations (Robinson Room); read Burkeman, <i>Four Thousand Weeks</i>, p. 37-55 (chp. 2) <u>W Sept 30:</u> Community Text Project Presentations (Robinson Room); read Burkeman, <i>Four Thousand Weeks</i>, p. 57-70 (chp. 3) <u>F Oct 1:</u> Community Text Project Presentations (Robinson Room); read Burkeman, <i>Four Thousand Weeks</i>, p. 71-88 (chp. 4) Community Text Project Letters DUE on Moodle by 11:55pm Sun Oct 4
Week 5: 1-1 Writing Meetings	<u>Unit 2: How did we get here? How do we know what we know?</u> <u>M Oct 5:</u> Re-read Hughes, “Theme for English B” and Read Karen Russel, “St. Lucy’s Home for Girls Raised by Wolves” <u>W Oct 7:</u> Read Rita Joe, “I Lost My Talk,” “I am the Indian,” “Who are you?” “Images from the past,” “I lay my body upon the grass,” “There is a hill,” and the glossary. <u>F Oct 9:</u> Read Burkeman, <i>Four Thousand Weeks</i>, p. 89-109 (chps. 5-6); Topics In Writing discussion leadership Complete your labor logs; reflection due by start of class on F Oct 16
Week 6:	<u>M Oct 12:</u> NO CLASS: Fall Break <u>W Oct 14:</u> Re-read one Rita Joe poem (or more!); Read Mihku Paul, “Echo of Multitudes,” “Piecework,” “Jefferson Street School,” “Acadia,” and “Undertow.” <u>F Oct 16:</u> Labor Log Reflection DUE; Read Burkeman, <i>Four Thousand Weeks</i>, p. 113-124 (chp. 7); Topics In Writing discussion leadership
Week 7:	<u>M Oct 19:</u> Read Joy Harjo, “Ah, Ah,” “A Map to the Next World,” and “Invisible Fish.” <u>W Oct 21:</u> Louise Erdrich, “The Butcher’s Wife,” “I was Sleeping Where the Black Oaks Move,” and “Birth”; read Li-Young Lee, “Persimmons.”

	<u>F Oct 23</u>: Mid-Semester Self-Assessment DUE in your journal; Read Burkeman, <i>Four Thousand Weeks</i>, p. 125-140 (chp. 8); Topics In Writing discussion leadership
Week 8:	<u>M Oct 26</u>: Rita Dove, “Parsley” and Walcott, “The Sea is History.” <u>W Oct 28</u>: Class in the Museum: Imagining and Archipelago Read Phyllis Wheatley, “On Being Brought from Africa to America,” “On Imagination.” <u>F Oct 30</u>: Read Burkeman, <i>Four Thousand Weeks</i>, p. 141-160 (chp. 9—“Rediscovering Rest”); Topics In Writing discussion leadership
Week 9:	<u>M Nov 2</u>: Read John Milton, excerpts from <i>Paradise Lost</i>. <u>W Nov 4</u>: Read or re-read one or two poems by Milton and/or Wheatley; Reginald Wilburn, “Phyllis Wheatley and the ‘Miracle’ of Miltonic Influence” <u>F Nov 6</u>: Read Burkeman, <i>Four Thousand Weeks</i>, p.161-71 (chp. 10); Topics In Writing discussion leadership
Week 10:	<u>M Nov 9</u>: Read Margaret Cavendish, “Of Many Worlds in This World,” “The Hunting of the Hare,” “Of a Spider’s Web.” <u>W Nov 11</u>: Read Anon. “The Seafarer.” <u>F Nov 13</u>: Poem Draft DUE in your Journal; Read Burkeman, <i>Four Thousand Weeks</i>, p. 173-201 (chp. 11-12); Topics In Writing discussion leadership
Week 11:	<u>Unit 3: Where do we go from here? Who needs to know our stories?</u> <u>M Nov 16</u>: Mohsin Hamid, <i>Exit West</i>, parts 1-3 <u>W Nov 18</u>: Hamid, <i>Exit West</i>, parts 4-5 <u>F Nov 20</u>: Read Burkeman, <i>Four Thousand Weeks</i>, p. 203-228 (chp. 13-14); Topics In Writing discussion leadership
Week 12:	<u>Nov 21-28</u>: NO CLASS: Thanksgiving Break Over the break, please read Burkeman, <i>Four Thousand Weeks</i>, “Afterword” (p. 229-34) and as much of Hamid’s <i>Exit West</i> as you can; if you’re able, finish the novel!

Week 13: 1-1 Portfolio Meetings	<u>M Nov 30:</u> Hamid, <i>Exit West</i> , parts 6-9 <u>W Dec 2:</u> Hamid, <i>Exit West</i> , parts 10-12 <u>F Dec 4:</u> Final: Collective Annotation and Writing I
Week 14: 1-1 Portfolio Meetings	<u>M Dec 7:</u> Final: Collective Annotation and Writing II <u>W Dec 9:</u> Revision Workshop and Portfolio Work <u>F Dec 11:</u> Revision Presentations and Closing thoughts
	Final Portfolio with self-assessment DUE F Dec 18 by 11:55pm

Assignment Handbook

Grading System Overview

Community

- Attendance and Participation
- Discussion Leadership
- Peer Support and Feedback

Textual Engagement

- Notes on Reading
- Read Aloud Groups
- Journals

Writing

- Community Text Project
- Topics in Writing Project
- Poem Draft
- Final: Collective Annotation and Writing

Reflection and Revision

- Labor Log
- Self-Assessment
- Portfolio

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1. Community

Proximity—simply being together in a room—does not equal community: making our class into a community takes the hard, rewarding work of being an engaged citizen. Assignments include: arriving on time to class sessions having completed **reading and other assignments, participating** fully during class **verbally or otherwise**, taking a turn (or two) as **class note taker**, large and small group work, **peer support/feedback**, and leading class **discussion**.

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4. Reflection and Revision

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You will assess your work in these core areas, and I will use your self-assessments to arrive at your course grade.

As a general baseline, completing all assignments in a timely, thoughtful manner will earn you a B; rushed, missing, or otherwise lack-luster work will earn you a lower grade; work that exceeds expectations, deepens your own or the community's learning, or otherwise goes **above and beyond** will earn you a higher grade.

Our four core areas of work overlap in productive ways. This document sets out the work I have sorted into each of our categories, but remember that all assignments require work that might usefully be categorized into any of our four areas. For example, you cannot complete any of the writing assignments without substantial revision or without contributing to our community's learning by presenting your journal entries or without engaging deeply with our texts. As long as you are completing the assignments with thought and care, you will be growing, learning, and supporting our community in each core area.

Community

Attendance and Participation

Your central task for engaging in community work will be to arrive on time to class having completed your reading and other assignments listed on the syllabus and in the daily checklist on Moodle. Once you are in class, you will need to participate fully, verbally or otherwise. Modes of participation include reading aloud, asking questions, offering ideas, taking your turn as class note-taker, sharing your in-class writing, responding to your peers' ideas, using your body to signal active listening, discussion leadership, peer feedback and writing review, and so on.

As noted in the syllabus, our lives are complicated in terms of physical and mental health, and I assume that you have commitments beyond my class. If you must miss class for any reason, you may complete an **alternative attendance assignment** to make up for your absence. Do the following: first, catch up on any work from the day's checklist (see Moodle) and contact a peer or two to ask if you can have a look at their journal entries and in-class writing for the day you missed. Next, review the day's in-class notes as well as any class slides or other relevant materials. Finally, below the day's in class notes, make an entry marked "Alternative Attendance by ___ [your name]"; write about 200 words in response to what you see in the notes, class slides, journals, etc. adding to or commenting on what your peers were discussing, bringing in a new part of the reading, asking a new question, and so on.

Remember that alternative attendance is a back-up plan: use it when you need it, **but please prioritize in person attendance!**

Basic Requirements: Attend and fully participate in all class sessions; complete alternative attendance assignments if you must miss class.

- Missing 6 or more class sessions (i.e. 2 full weeks), even if you complete alternative attendance, will seriously impede your ability to complete your work for the Community category, and will result in a lower course grade.
- If you miss 9 or more sessions (i.e. 3 full weeks), even if you complete alternative attendance, you cannot pass the course.

*****If you find yourself in crisis mode, for any reason, get in touch as soon as you can and contact your class dean! If necessary, we can work with your class dean to adjust assignments or rules in any way that will best support your learning in this course.**

Discussion Leadership

During many of our class sessions, you will engage in small group work that leads to whole-class discussions as well as other informal activities that are designed to aid you in gaining confidence speaking in front of peers and in deepening our learning through creativity, research, and close reading. In addition to informal activities, each student will lead a whole class discussion twice.

During Unit 1 (weeks 1-4), students will complete the **Community Text Project** (full directions below) and lead a discussion based on their project work.

During Unit 2 (weeks 5-12), students will complete the **Topics in Writing Project** (see directions below) and lead a discussion based on their project work.

At the end of the semester, after completing our in-class sessions for the **Final: Collective Annotation and Writing project** (full directions below), students will share their revision work.

Basic Requirements: Complete all informal discussion leadership activities with thought and care. Lead two discussions based on project work and share final revision work.

Peer Support and Feedback

One of my goals is for you to learn from your peers: from each other, you can learn to provide and respond to targeted, constructive feedback on your writing as well as your presentation style, you can expand your vocabulary and ability to ask questions, and you can learn to see our course texts and topics from perspectives (plural!) outside of your own. I will regularly ask you to respond to your peers' writing and ideas, and a **basic requirement** for the course is that you respond with care and attention, in a timely way, and to the best of your abilities. Peer support and feedback activities will include (but will not be limited to): sharing journal entries, read aloud group work, collective writing, letter writing, project idea sharing, and revision exercises.

Textual Engagement

Notes on Reading

All students read at different rates and different texts require different kinds of attention and time. Think about how it feels to read a social media feed, a novel, a comic, a text from a friend, an art book, a poem, a play, a scholarly article, a scientific paper: these texts all invite you to engage in very different ways. This semester, we will be reading a wide variety of texts of varying length, topic, and density. **If you are struggling, or if it feels difficult to read our texts, don't worry: that means you're doing it right!** I can guarantee that you aren't alone in those feelings of struggle and difficulty. Here are a few things to try when the reading gets tough:

- **Assess your time/space:** try reading at a different time of day or in a different location. Some texts might require perfect silence, and some might actually feel easier to read with some ambient noise or music (in a coffee house, for instance).
- **Poems and other artistic texts: re-reading is key!** Read once quickly, for sound and initial impressions. Read again for comprehension. Read again for line breaks, rhymes, puns, metaphors, and so on. Your subsequent reads need not be linear; you might start in the middle or end. The key is to make time and space for reading slowly and re-reading.
- **Scholarly articles: master the strategic skim.** Read the first ~5 pages slowly and carefully, looking for the writer's central argument or point. Next, read section titles and topic sentences, and consider slowing down for a few paragraphs in the middle to see how the writer is using evidence (and to see what kind of evidence they're using). Next, read the conclusion or the final 3 paragraphs slowly. With your remaining time, go back and re-read as needed to clarify your understanding, ask questions, apply ideas, etc.
- **Use your resources (BUT be a skeptical reader!):** bring the power of the internet to bear on your reading; I support you using SparkNotes, LitCharts, Schmoop, Wikipedia, and so on to aid you in understanding our texts. BUT: please note that although these sites provide great summaries, they also have errors and frequently provide one-dimensional or overly simplistic analyses. **The same goes for AI assistants/overviews:** they can give you the big picture, but they can't give you what you need to fully and deeply understand a text. **ALSO: always, always, always** cite if you make use of these or any other aids in your writing!
- **Listen to an audio book while you follow along in the text:** If listening while you read is helpful, check out LibriVox: they have crowd-sourced, FREE audio versions of many, many texts. One cautionary note: the reader quality is variable, and intonation IS interpretation, in my view. BUT: do you want to know how I got through reading James Joyce's *Ulysses* in college and Chaucer's *Troilus and Criseyde* in grad school (twice!)? I read along in my physical copy while listening to LibriVox recordings. Particularly useful for difficult or long texts, but helpful for anything you're reading.

- **Come to office hours:** I am always happy to talk more about our texts, to read sections slowly with you, to clarify key concepts, and so on.

The Most Important Thing: embrace uncertainty and do your best.

Reading *some* is infinitely better than reading *none*, and engagement does not mean mastery! Sit calmly with your confusion about or boredom with or other reaction to a text you're reading, read as much of it as you can, and then, crucially, try to articulate your confusion to our class. Commit to spending time moving slowly through our texts; as long as you do so, your reactions, observations, perplexities, and so on will enrich our class discussions and promote your learning.

Read Aloud Groups

Reading can sometimes feel like a joyfully—or arduously—solitary activity. In the age of ChatGPT and LLMs/AI Assistants, the tech bros of the world are trying to remove that arduousness—and that joy—entirely. To resist the cultural mandate to speed up, to summarize, to optimize, and so on, we will engage together in a slow reading practice designed to make reading for this course into a community activity that can promote sustained attention to our texts.

Beginning in week 2, you will form groups of four. Each week, you and your group will meet for at least 30 minutes—in person or on zoom—and take turns **reading our class texts out loud to each other**. After each meeting, your group will add an entry to our Read Aloud Forum on Moodle that takes **one** of the following forms:

- An audio file that contains ~30 seconds of each group member reading aloud a favorite or confusing or essential or enraging or otherwise notable set of lines or sentence/s.
- An audio file that contains ~2-4 minutes of conversation and reflection about what you read; each group member should contribute to the conversation.
- Another method by which to record and share your group's work; get in touch before posting to confirm that your method meets assignment requirements.

The Moodle forum has a built-in tool for recording audio, so you can use that tool or post a link to an audio file hosted elsewhere.

You and your group are welcome to read aloud for longer than 30 minutes and to meet more than once per week; you can post as many times as you would like to, and your posts can be longer than the approximate length given above.

Basic Requirements: Meet and read our class texts aloud with your group for **30 minutes** each week. Create a forum post after each meeting according to the assignment guidelines. You and your group will meet and post a total of **ten times** (no meeting or post due in weeks 4, 12, or 14).

Journals

Before most class sessions, you will complete a class prep entry in your journal. The goal of these entries is to help you slow down, write questions, and consider how and why part of the text has provoked an emotional or intellectual reaction for you. Your entries will serve as a starting point for many of our in-class conversations as well as for your class projects.

We will also use your journals for **in-class writing prompts and activities** as well as for **research and preparation entries related to your writing assignments** (see below for detailed directions). You may wish to take notes during class or during your reading in your journal as well, and you are welcome to do so.

Given the number and kinds of entries you will be creating, *****clear labeling is essential!***** Make sure that I can identify where an entry begins and ends, and include important information about the entry, like the date and prompt title. Aim for **legibility** in your handwriting; it doesn't need to be beautiful, but I do need to be able to read it!

Class Prep Entries

When you have completed the day's reading, do the following:

Step 1: Select a brief passage from the readings (a word or phrase, a sentence, a few lines of a poem, a paragraph) that you found compelling: it was beautiful, strange, disturbing, funny, difficult, repugnant, intriguing, or noteworthy in some other way. Write all or part of the passage in your journal or just note the **page/line number** so that you and I can find it easily. Also include the **author's name** and the **text's title**.

Step 2: Write a few **sentences or bullet points** about **why** you found the passage compelling.

- You might focus on turns of phrase, rhetorical figures, sensory imagery, shock value, character/plot development, and so on.
- Be ready to read your passage aloud. Practice once or twice before class!
- Be ready to talk about why you found the passage emotionally or intellectually provocative.

Step 3: Write at least **two questions**. These can be on your passage or on any other part of the day's reading, and can include both analytical discussion question (how/why) and fact / information / confusion questions. There are no stupid questions!

*****I will collect your journal each Friday at the end of class;** I will read the week's entries and then place your journal in the wire basket outside my office door for you to pick up (usually by Friday afternoon). If you need to miss class on a Friday, you can turn in your journal early at my office or send your book in to class with a peer.

Basic Requirements:

- Bring your journal to class **every class period**.
- Complete a class prep entry for most class sessions; I will note in the Moodle checklist when entries are due or *not* due.
 - Each prep entry must contain a quote, part of a quote, or page/line numbers from one of the day's readings AND the text title and author's name.
- Complete other journal entries (in class writing; research and preparation entries) as they are assigned.
- Keep track of your work sessions at the back of your journal for a month (see **Labor Log** directions below).
- **Clearly label** all entries in your journal with the date and the prompt title or entry type (e.g. "Class Prep for Oct 14" or "In-Class writing Nov 2" or "Community Text Research Sept 23")

Writing

My sister has run several marathons (and completed two Iron Man triathlons; I like to brag about her athletic accomplishments!). Based on what she has told me about her training, she did not get ready for these epic races by running marathons or swimming the full two miles and so on. She mixed shorter and longer workouts, did interval, slow, and fast runs, and supplemented with yoga and crunches and weights and so on.

The same principle, I think, can be applied to learning to write well. One does not learn to write a long analytical essay well by simply writing a long analytical essay (though that is one way to go about it). One learns to write by writing consistently, often, in several shorter and longer modes, and with a variety of goals. To that end, you will be completing journal entries, freewriting in class, logging your labor outside of class, doing research to support your discussion leadership, and completing a variety of in- and out-of-class exercises designed to build your close reading and writing skills (or muscles, if you'll permit me to extend the metaphor). We will also experiment this semester with letter-writing and collective annotation, building revision and reflection into our practice at every step.

Community Text Project

During Unit 1, we will spend two weeks diving deep into materials about Colby's history and culture in the Robinson Room in Miller Library Special Collections. Our goal will be to develop literacy about our community: we will learn more about where we are, how Colby came to be the way it is, and how we fit into the picture (what's changed, what's stayed the same?).

Each student will select an item from special collections, read, research, and write in a sustained way about the item, and then lead a discussion based on their insights about the item. Finally, each student will write a letter to the class about what they learned through the process of the project.

Here is our schedule:

Day 1 (M Sept 21): Introduction to and initial examination of materials in the Robinson Room. You will examine and discuss a variety of community texts and begin the process of selecting one on which you will focus for your projects.

Day 2 (W Sept 23): Research and rhetorical analysis. You will select your community text and begin your deep dive. Read your text thoroughly and take photos of passages/details so that you can examine them between library sessions. Begin answering the rhetorical analysis questions (see below) in your journal. *****GENERATE MESS, IDEAS, MORE QUESTIONS:** your responses should NOT be polished; they should reflect your deep thinking and experimenting and complex learning in relation to your text! After class, continue to engage in research and rhetorical analysis.

***Arrive in the Robinson Room on Day 3 having responded to all of the rhetorical analysis questions, ready to re-read and discuss your text with your peers.

Day 3 (F Sept 25): Peer Support and Feedback; continued research and analysis. With your Read Aloud group, share what you have learned about your community text so far. Read parts of your texts aloud to each other, ask each other questions, make observations, and make suggestions. As you listen to and learn from your peers, offer ideas: if this text were your own, how might you deepen your research, develop your writing, or begin to shape your presentation? By the end of the class session, each group member will write in their journal a set of goals and remaining steps for analysis, research, and presentation preparation.

Days 4-6 (Sept 28, 30, Oct 1): Community Text Presentations and discussion leadership. Five or six students will present on each day. Each student will share a photograph of one page, detail, or element of their community text with me; I will project the image on my slide show so that all can see it. Students will then present and lead discussion about their image, following this format:

1. **30-60 seconds:** brief overview and background. What do we need to know about your community text, its creator, and its contexts in order to understand your presentation?
2. **120-180 seconds:** tell us all about your image. Why did you select this page/element/detail? Direct our attention to important parts of your text and tell us about your observations and rhetorical analysis of the text. What did this page/element/detail make you think or feel? How does it relate to the text as a whole? What does it teach us about your text?
3. **30-60 seconds:** take-aways and questions for discussion. What are you still wondering about or what's the most important or interesting thing you learned from or about your text? What do you want our class community to weigh in about?

Your presentation should take NO LONGER than 5 minutes (ideally less!); be sure to practice at least twice before you present (speak clearly; don't rush!). As a class, we will take notes in response to your text, ideas, and questions. After all five or six presenters have offered their ideas, we will use our notes to have a class discussion about the day's community texts.

Presenters are in charge of leading our group discussion: be ready with questions and ideas for your co-presenters!

Community Text Project Letters

After presenting your community text and engaging in discussion, **write a letter to our whole class (500-1000 words) in which you describe what you learned from the process of selecting a community text, analyzing/researching/writing about it, and presenting and discussing it in class.**

You might choose to focus on the most important word or phrase or detail from your community text and discuss how your ideas about that word/phrase/detail evolved (changed or deepened or became more nuanced, etc.) or you could focus on the most difficult or the most fun part of the process and bring in a direct quote or two from your text, your peers' texts, and our discussion to support your writing, or you might choose another focus.

However you proceed, be sure to **discuss specific details** (include direct quotes!) from your text, from class discussion, and, if relevant, from our other course texts.

- Handwrite a **first draft** of your letter in your journal.
- Re-read your draft and mark it up: how might you make your argument, evidence, organization, and style/details clearer? Write a **revision plan** (a paragraph or healthy set of bullets) about how you plan to revise your letter.
- Type up a **second draft** and post your letter on Moodle by **11:55pm on Sun Oct 4**.
- Please also deliver a **hard copy of your letter** (typed or handwritten—your choice) to me during our 1-1 writing meeting. We will take notes on your hard copy during our meeting. Envelope optional!

Basic Assignment Requirements:

- Select, analyze, research, and present on a community text of your choice.
- Complete all journal entries associated with the community text project in a timely, thoughtful way.
- Participate fully in each of our research and presentation days.
- Write a letter (500-1000 words) to the class detailing what you learned from the project process; include direct quotes and details in your letter. Draft your letter by hand in your journal. Revise and post on **Moodle by 11:55pm Sun Oct 4**. Deliver a hard copy (handwritten or typed) to me during our **1-1 writing meeting**.

Engaging fully in each step of this project will support your learning in all four of our core areas; missing or late or rushed work at any step will impede your ability to be a full community member, to engage deeply with our texts, to write, and to revise.

Questions for Rhetorical Analysis

➤ **Synopsis:**

According to the OED, a synopsis is “A brief or condensed statement presenting a combined or general view of something” (“synopsis,” n.1). A synopsis should consider the text’s main idea or thesis, its structure and content, and its significance. Main idea or thesis statement: What’s the main aim of the text? What is the creator’s “so what”? What does the creator want us to know, understand, or do? Structure and content: What’s the text about? How does it proceed? Significance: Why is the text important? What does the text teach and how might its teachings apply to the world beyond the text’s scope?

➤ **Purpose:**

What are the creator’s motivations and primary goals? What are the rhetorical effects of the creator’s decisions? Motivation: what are some of the reasons this creator may have composed this piece? What appears to have sparked their curiosity, ire, interest, etc.? What questions or issues appear important to the creator? What does this creator have to say that’s new, as far as you can tell? Primary Goals: does the creator try to inform, persuade, educate, entertain, complicate ideas, raise awareness for a call to action, or raise funds? Do something else? What information from the text indicates these primary goals? Rhetorical Effects: what evidence does the creator use to achieve their purpose? Does the creator appeal to ethos, pathos, or logos, or do they make other rhetorical appeals? What is the overall effect? What details from the text support your answers to these questions?

➤ **Stance:**

What is the creator’s attitude and position? Attitude: what is the emotional state of the creator? Do they come across as angry, annoyed, worried, passionate, etc.? What is the intellectual state of the creator? Do they come across as curious or skeptical? Are they trying to solve a problem? What details from the text show the creator’s emotional or intellectual state? Position: does the text feel intimate and personal or remote and distant? Does the creator forge a close connection with the audience or establish distance and objectivity? What evidence from the text shows this?

➤ **Audience:**

What assumptions do you think that the creator makes about the knowledge, values, attitudes, and prior experiences the intended audience? What does the creator assume that we *know* and what do they want to tell us about? What do they assume that we *don’t know*? Why? What kinds of knowledge and inside information are needed to relate to the text? Who would *not* relate to the message of the text? Why? Are there any terms or ideas that are particular to certain social groups? What specific quotes or details from the text can support your answers?

➤ **Context:**

What social, political, cultural, economic, historical, news-related, psychological, or other contexts shaped the production of this text or prompted the creator to make or write it? What elements of your own experiences either match up with or diverge from the context of the text? To address these questions, you might need to do a little research (Google, Wikipedia, college or university websites, etc.; please avoid the AI overview and look for .edu or .org websites; create a **working bibliography** to record where all of your information comes from!). **You can also start by asking me or Erin Rhodes for help finding information about your text’s context!**

➤ **Medium and Design**

What does your text look like? Is it small, large, sleek, cluttered, colorful, black-and-white, single medium or multimedia? Why did the creator select the given medium (i.e. essay, poster, letter, scrapbook, etc.) to convey the content of the text? Are there images, graphs, or other media that accompany the text? If so, why did the creator select these media and how do they further the creator's purpose or shape the way that audiences digest the information in the text?

Topics in Writing Project

Beginning on October 9th, we will spend part of each Friday class discussing writing and revision strategies. Each student will lead discussion (~three students per Friday) based on a chapter of the student's choice from *They Say / I Say* (TSIS). We will aim to have each student choose a different chapter from the book; if you would like to do the same chapter as a peer, you must coordinate with your peer to ensure that you're focusing on different elements from the chapter or approaching the content and revision work from a different angle.

Step 1: Select and read your TSIS chapter thoroughly. Pick 2-3 quotes from your chapter to read aloud to your peers; **in your journal**, note the page numbers for your quotes and write a few bullet points about each one, detailing why you chose it.

Step 2: Select a piece of your own writing (no more than a paragraph). You can choose part of an essay for another class, a journal entry, part of your community text letter, or another piece of writing. Copy your original sentence(s) or paragraph **into your journal** (if it's not already in there; if it is, tell me how to find it or mark it with a sticky!). Using the principles that you learned about in your TSIS chapter, mark up your original sentence or paragraph and then revise *thoroughly* by hand in your journal. **By 11:55pm the evening before you lead discussion**, send me a picture of both your marked-up original AND your revision; I will project them for you (please show us your mess/crossings out/false starts, etc., and talk us through your thinking!).

Step 3: Lead discussion (about 10 minutes). Begin by reading aloud your 2-3 quotes from TSIS and telling us how those quotes capture key insights from the chapter you read. Then, read your original and your revision aloud. Finally, tell us how and why you changed your original in the ways you did. How did you improve your writing in terms of clarity, nuance, evidence, and so on? Where are you still stuck or what's the next step for this piece of writing? What are your lingering questions, and how can we—your class community—help? Be as specific as you can!

Basic Assignment Requirements:

- Select and read a chapter from *They Say / I Say*; in your **journal**, note 2-3 quotes and write about why you picked them.
- Using the TSIS principles you learned about, **revise** a sentence or a paragraph of your own writing thoroughly (by hand; original and revision should appear in your journal).
- **Lead** class discussion based on your reading and revision work. By 11:55pm the evening before you lead discussion, send me a picture of your original and revision so that I can project them for the class.

Poem Draft – Creative Experiment

During Unit 2, we will study a wide variety of poems that present literacy, language, community, migration, and place narratives. During this unit, you will experiment with writing a poem yourself.

You can go as big or as small with this assignment as you'd like, and you can use any form: free verse, sonnet, haiku, villanelle, sestina, ghazal, limerick, acrostic, diamante, anything. You may choose to freewrite some ideas about your own experiences in order to generate material for your poem, or you might just dive right in. If any of these forms are unfamiliar to you, look up a definition and read a few examples.

The only requirement is that you complete a draft of at least one poem that is a literacy, language, place, community, and/or migration narrative.

Basic Assignment Requirement:

- Before class on F Nov 13, complete a rough draft of your poem in your journal.

Optional:

- Write more than one poem!
- Revise your poem and share it with the class (sharing dates TBA; likely F Nov 6 and F Nov 13).
- Revise your poem (or one of your poems) and include it in your final portfolio.

Final: Collective Annotation and Writing Project

At the end of the semester, in place of a traditional essay or a final exam, we will collectively annotate and write about a passage from one of our syllabus texts during two intensive class sessions. My goal is for us to approach the writing process from a new angle, in real time, supporting each other in thinking deeply about our texts and learning to build on and develop each other's ideas.

For this assignment to succeed, **each member** of the class will need to **study**: before our first in class session, review all of your journal entries, class slides, the community text letter forum on Moodle, the Read Aloud forum, and your notes on our texts, as well as the in-class notes document. Use these materials to direct strategic re-reading of our syllabus texts so that you have **a thorough, working knowledge of material we have covered this semester.**

Collective Annotation and Writing I (F Dec 4)

- **Bring to Class:** your journal and ALL printed readings and books. Also bring several of your favorite writing implements (pens, pencils). Be sure that you have **STUDIED** thoroughly before you arrive. ***Leave phones and laptops and watches at home or in your bag.
- **Procedure:**
 - I will hand out a copy of a passage from one of our syllabus texts (see the attached list from which I'll pick!), along with an ID slip. I will then read the passage aloud.
 - Your first task will be to **identify** on your ID slip the passage's author, the text's title, and the text's date of composition or publication WITHOUT using your books, readings, or notes. As long as you get the century and decade correct, I'll accept the date.
 - Once you have turned in your ID slip, you may use all of your books, readings, and notes; you will have 20 minutes to **annotate the passage** as fully as you can. In your annotations, show me what you know and what you can see in a text when you slow down and read it closely.
 - In the remaining 20 minutes of our session, we will create a **collectively annotated version of the passage**. Each student will share their most interesting/significant 1-3 annotations to contribute to our collective document.
 - I will collect your annotations at the end of our session.

Collective Annotation and Writing II (M Dec 7)

- **Bring to Class:** your journal and all printed readings and books. Also bring several of your favorite writing implements. **REFLECT and STUDY**: what did you learn from our first collective writing session? What will you need to have at your finger-tips for day 2, when we begin to write about the passage we annotated? ***Leave phones and laptops and watches at home or in your bag.
- **Procedure:**
 - I will hand back your annotations along with a green book for you to write in. I will also hand you a printed copy of our collective annotations.
 - In your green book, you will write **a *shitty* first draft of 1-3 body paragraphs** for a(n imaginary) thesis-driven close reading essay about our passage. I will suggest a topic and claim drawn from our collective annotations, or you can come up with your own topic and claim. Each paragraph should **center one of the lines or phrases that we annotated together**, working slowly and closely with the language from our passage in order to show how it serves as evidence for our/your point about the whole poem.
 - **You are aiming for a shitty first draft!** No need for *any* of your writing to be perfect or polished. Draw on what you have studied and build on what we have learned from each other and from close reading and annotating together.
 - I will collect your annotations and green books at the end of our session.

Collective Writing Revision and Presentations

After collecting your green books and annotation pages, I will check them for completeness, and then place them in the box outside of my office door by 1:00 pm on M Dec 7 for you to pick up.

Your final task will be to revise one of your paragraphs. Gather everything you've learned about writing this semester—TSIS, topics in writing presentations and discussion, writing meetings, journal practice—and use that knowledge as you revise. Once you've selected the paragraph you'll work with, do the following:

- Type up the paragraph double-spaced and then print it out.
- By hand, mark up the paragraph; cross things out, add new phrases or whole sentences, move sentences here or there, add to/cut/change the evidence from the passage and how you're using it, perhaps even make two (or three!) paragraphs out of the original one, and so on. Show us all of your messy thinking as you work to improve your writing.

- Type up and print out your revised, polished paragraph(s). **Bring your marked-up original and revised final paragraph to class with you on F Dec 11.**
- **In your journal before class on F Dec 11:** write a paragraph or two in which you reflect on what you changed and why in your revision process and on what you learned through the Collective Annotation and Writing project process.
- During class, each student will share one or two insights from their journals and/or revision work.
- I will collect your marked-up original and revised paragraphs, and I will scan and post all of our writing on Moodle so that we can all see that great drafting and revision work!
- **Optional:** If you would like to challenge yourself, you can write a full-fledged essay developed from your shitty first draft paragraph(s). If you choose this option, please do the following:
 - **Email** me to announce your intention before class on W Dec 9.
 - In your greenbook, mark up your draft thoroughly with revision ideas and make a **revision plan** (a paragraph or a robust set of bullet points) outlining how you will go from paragraph(s) to essay draft.
 - **Write a full essay draft by hand** in your greenbook. Your draft must include an introduction, 2-5 body paragraphs that each include fully analyzed direct quotes from the passage, a conclusion, and a works cited entry for your passage and any other texts/sources you use.
 - You may also include quotes from other parts of the text from which our passage comes; just be sure that your reader knows *why* you're taking our attention momentarily away from the passage!
 - Each quote should have a parenthetical citation noting the page or line numbers of the quote (or the secondary source, if you use any).
 - After completing your essay draft, write a **letter to the reader** (a brief paragraph) in which you address the following questions: who are you writing to in this essay and what do you want them to know about your text? What was the easiest or hardest part of the writing and revision process? If you were to revise this essay again, what would you change and why?
 - Bring your completed greenbook to class with you on F Dec 11, ready to turn in your work and share your insights.

During weeks 13 and 14, we will meet 1-1 to discuss the Collective Annotation and Writing process, your revision work, and your writing goals; during this meeting, we will make a concrete plan for your portfolio contents.

Basic Requirements:

- Study for and participate fully in both days of our Collective Annotation and Writing project; complete and turn in your passage ID slip, passage annotation, and green book at the appropriate times.
- Complete your Collective Writing Revision and reflection paragraphs before class on F Dec 11. Turn in your marked-up original and your revised paragraph in class.
- Meet with me 1-1 to discuss your semester's worth of writing and revision and to plan your portfolio.

Engaging fully in each step of this project will support your learning in all four of our core areas; missing or late or rushed work at any step will impede your ability to be a full community member, to engage deeply with our texts, to write, and to revise.

Reflection and Revision

Labor Log

One of my goals for this course is to help you become more aware of your work habits and to prompt reflection about *how* and *why* you are doing the work for this course. Knowing how and why you are working can aid you in making changes to your habits, if you need or want to do so. Knowing your *how* and *why* can also help you protect your health, find intrinsic motivations for your work (i.e. not just for the grade or for credit but because you see value in the labor of learning, reading, and writing for the course), and see progress or change in your own thinking.

This kind of reflective practice, **when done with honesty and care**, can deepen the knowledge you've gained and make it more likely that you'll remember what you've learned in the future.

- In the interest of these goals, I am asking you to keep a **labor log** during our first four weeks together, from F Sept 11 to F Oct 9.
- For each day or for each work session during which you complete labor for my course, you'll create an entry in your log. How much and what kind of information you keep is up to you, but students seem to find the labor log most helpful when they quantify some of their work (tracking when, where, and how many minutes) and also make qualitative notes by commenting on how it felt to complete work for this class.
- Each entry should take you 5 minutes max, and likely only a minute or less.
- By the start of class on F Oct 16, you'll be responsible for writing a **reflective paragraph** in which you look back at your labor log entries, notice patterns, and articulate your goals for the rest of the semester.

*****I will never, ever use the information in your labor log to arrive at or alter your grade.**

If you enjoyed the labor log or found it helpful, continue keeping it! If not, think strategically about how you will track and reflect on your work for the remainder of the semester and write a sentence or two about your plans in your reflection paragraph.

In order to begin your log, follow these steps:

1. Flip to the back of your journal and write "Labor Log" at the top of the last page.
2. Create columns and label them with the information you intend to collect about your work habits.

- Suggested columns: Date, Location, Start/End Time, Total Session Minutes, Activity (reading, writing, talking to peers, etc.), Engagement Level (high, medium, low), “I felt _____”, and Notes. **Feel free to create your own set of columns; aim for both quantitative and qualitative measures.**
3. For each work session, fill in your columns with as much or as little information as feels right to you.

Some students can read for hours at a time, and some prefer to read in short bursts. Some students can complete a complex writing assignment in 20 minutes and some need longer. Some students read quickly and some read slowly. **The goal here is not to achieve the most total minutes of work time but rather to *come to know yourself* and to know what conditions create the most successful, satisfying, useful, or otherwise good work sessions *for you*.**

Basic requirements:

- Complete one log entry for each work day or session for this class, beginning F Sept 11 and continuing through F Oct 9.
- At the end of your labor log, write a paragraph or two (at least 5 sentences) reflecting on your log, noticing patterns you see in it, and articulating labor goals moving forward. **DUE before class on F Oct 16;** I will check your log when I do my weekly Journal check.

Self-Assessment

A little after the midpoint of the semester, you will pause, reflect on your work so far, and assess your work according to the scale below. The mid-semester grade that you assign yourself is **advisory only**; it should aid you and me in taking a pause, communicating, and making any necessary adjustments. I will contact you if I feel that you are being too hard (or too easy!) on yourself in the grade you've chosen.

As a part of the final portfolio process, you will complete a second self-assessment, reflecting on and assessing your *entire* semester's worth of work. Once again, if I feel that you are being too hard or too easy on yourself in terms of the grade you have assigned, I will reach out, and we'll have a conversation about your work.

In the assessment section (step 2), you will find guidelines and rules for scoring your work. We can negotiate these guidelines and rules if circumstances warrant it (as in the case of major illness, death in the family, other big or unforeseen crisis). We will make adjustments *only* with the help of your class dean.

This is a reflective exercise: HONESTY is key and will help you get the most out of this work.

Step 1: Reflect (about 40 mins; ~5-10 mins per set of questions)

Free write in you journal in response to the following questions. There are no right or wrong answers; there's no need to respond to all questions (but do read and think about each category).

1. Community:

- What have you learned from your peers? How have you contributed to your peers' learning? How have you participated both during class sessions and outside of them?
- What challenges do you see or face or what goals do you have for yourself or for our community? How have you been working toward solving challenges or achieving goals? Who might help and how?
- Have you completed most or all community assignments in a thoughtful, timely way, meeting the basic assignment requirements (i.e. the baseline / B / 2 level)? Have you attended and arrived on time for class? Have you offset any absences with alternative attendance assignments?
 - If you struggled with community work, please describe how so and why; reflect on how you might change your work habits or ask for help in the future.
 - If you have gone above and beyond the basic assignment requirements (listed at the bottom of each assignment sheet) in your community work, please describe specifically how so in terms of the depth of your learning, the improvement or progression of your skills, your commitment to your peers, the scope of your writing or research, or along another axis that you can describe here.

2. Textual engagement:

- What has it been like to read for this class, aloud and silently? What have you learned from our texts? What have you learned through creating your journal entries or through discussion with your peers?
- What do you do when the reading feels difficult, in terms of content or comprehension or otherwise? What textual engagement goals do you have for our class or for yourself?
- Have you completed most or all textual engagement assignments in a thoughtful, timely way, meeting the basic assignment requirements (i.e. the baseline / B / 2 level)?
 - If you struggled with textual engagement assignments, please describe how so and why; reflect on how you might change your work habits or ask for help in the future.
 - If you have gone above and beyond the basic assignment requirements (listed at the bottom of each assignment sheet) in your textual engagement work, please describe specifically how so in terms of the depth of your learning, the improvement or progression of your skills, your commitment to your peers, the scope of your writing or research, or along another axis that you describe here.

3. Writing:

- What has it been like to write for this class? What have you learned about our course topics, about yourself, about our texts, about your peers through writing?
- What do you do when the writing feels difficult? What writing goals do you have for our class or for yourself?
- Have you completed most or all writing assignments in a thoughtful, timely way, meeting the basic assignment requirements (i.e. the baseline / B / 2 level)?
 - If you struggled with writing assignments, please describe how so and why; reflect on how you might change your work habits or ask for help in the future.
 - If you have gone above and beyond the basic assignment requirements (listed at the bottom of each assignment sheet) in your writing work, please describe specifically how so in terms of the depth of your learning, the improvement or progression of your skills, your commitment to your peers, the scope of your writing or research, or along another axis that you can describe here.

4. Reflection and Revision:

- How does it feel to work for this course, in the classroom and out of it? How engaged were you in the work? How do you arrange your time and what pressures—social, academic, other—do you have to negotiate as you work for my class?
- What did you learn from completing the labor log? From writing and revision work? Did you change anything about your work habits across the semester? Why or why not? What goals do you have for your scheduling or labor?
- Have you completed your reflection and revision assignments in a thoughtful, timely way, meeting the basic assignment requirements listed in at the end of each assignment sheet (i.e. the baseline / B / 2 level)?
- Are you satisfied or unsatisfied with your work for this course? How so? Have you struggled? Have you pushed yourself to go above and beyond (if so, how so, specifically)? What work that you've been doing, if any, is **not** captured by what you've written so far?

Step 2: Assess

After completing your freewriting, **return to your assignment tracker and look at your Y, N, L, and Alt scores for each of our four categories.** Remember that the tracker shows whether or not you have met the basic assignment requirements (baseline / B / 2); you are responsible for keeping track of any above and beyond work, and you should describe that work in your freewriting, if applicable.

Assess yourself holistically, thinking about both your tracker and your freewriting, and give yourself a score 0-3 in **each of our four categories.** You may use a .5 if you feel that your work falls between whole numbers. Use the following rubric as a guide:

0 = Most or all assignments are late, missing, or incomplete; something major has interrupted my ability to complete the work for this category.

1 = I would describe **some** of my work for this category using one or more of the following: **late, missing, incomplete, rushed, not my best effort**, I know I can do better, more thorough, or more thoughtful work. **Rules:**

- If a given category has any Ns, you cannot score yourself higher than a 1 for that category.

2 = I would describe **most** or all of my work for this category as **complete** according to the assignment's basic requirements, **on time, thoughtful, thorough, and respectful** of my own and others' time and ideas. Even if I struggled, I tried my best and **learned through the process**; I am committed to consistency and improvement. **Rules:**

- If a given category has more than 2 Ls, you cannot score yourself higher than a 2 for that category.
- If you have more than 3 Alts, you cannot score yourself higher than a 2 for community.

3 = I would describe **all** of my work for this category as **exceptional** in terms of thoroughness and attention to detail; I have gone **above and beyond assignment requirements** in the depth of my learning, the improvement or progression of my skills, my commitment to my peers, the scope of my writing or research, or along another axis that I have described in my reflective freewriting. **Rules:**

- To give yourself higher than a 2 in any category, you must describe in your freewriting and/or in the rubric box how **specifically** you have completed exceptional or above and beyond work in that category.
- If you did not complete the Community Text Letter assignment on time, you cannot give yourself a 3 for community.
- If you missed and/or had to be prompted to reschedule your writing meetings, you cannot give yourself a 3 for writing.

Category	Scores	If you are scoring yourself higher than a 2 in any category, please provide a few sentences or bullet points in the box below describing <u>specifically</u> how and why you have gone above and beyond assignment requirements in your work for that category. You can copy over from your freewriting if you have already written about that above and beyond work. You may also use this box to describe how or why you have struggled with work in a specific category or how you're planning to improve.
Community		
Textual Engagement		
Writing		
Reflection/Revision		
Total:		

Total scores translate to the following letter grades:

12	A	9	B+	6	C+
11	A-	8	B	5	C
10	B+	7	B-	4	C-
				3-0	D+ to F

Basic Requirements:

- Freewrite in your journal for ~40 minutes, spending about 10 minutes on each category.
- Assess your learning in each category holistically, using your freewriting, your assignment tracker, and the rubric.
- Complete the self-assessment twice, once at mid-semester (DUE F Oct 23 in your journal) and once at the end of the semester (DUE in the Final Portfolio F Dec 18 by 11:55pm).

Final Portfolio

At the end of the semester, you will construct a portfolio (hard copy; when complete, scan and submit a digital version as well) that enables you to reflect on and showcase your semester's worth of learning. As you collect your work, consider what you want to demonstrate to your reader: for practical purposes, your audience for the portfolio is me and your classmates, but it's worth thinking, also, **about who might need to know or be interested in your work beyond this course**. What you decide to showcase will shape your decisions about what to include and how you will describe these materials in your cover letter. So, do you want to show progress, growth, creativity, risk taking, steadfastness, perseverance, learning for the sake of learning, or some other purpose that I haven't imagined yet?

With your purpose in mind, you will assemble your materials, which will include:

- **A hand-written cover letter (~6-8 paragraphs):** in this letter, you will state your **purpose** (see below for suggestions) and then **introduce each item** in the portfolio and how it fits in to demonstrating that purpose. As you introduce each item, you'll also describe how it resulted from, benefitted from, or shows your work in one or more of our four categories: **community, textual engagement, writing, and revision/reflection**. Finally, write a broader paragraph or two describing the **most important thing** you learned this semester (wide open!) and describing what you're planning to carry forward after this class ends.
- **Class Artifacts:** at least four pieces of work from the course that help you demonstrate your learning; **these do not need to be revised**, though you may revise them if you wish (and describe what you changed and why in your cover letter). See below for suggestions about what to include.
- **Final Self-Assessment:** after assembling your artifacts and writing your cover letter, you'll take another look at your assignment tracker, and then think holistically about your work for the semester. **Freewrite (20-40 mins)** about any aspect of your work in our four categories (community, textual engagement, writing, and revision/reflection) that you feel your cover letter and artifacts **do not** address: describe any areas of struggle or above and beyond work or aspects of your learning that you would like me to consider. Finally, **use the same rubric you used at mid-semester to assign yourself scores 0-3 in each category** (rubric is reproduced below). Include your freewriting and your final assessment at the end of your portfolio.

Portfolio construction notes:

- Aim to make your portfolio **aesthetically pleasing**; you might acquire a binder to collect your materials or use poster board and ribbon to make a binder or use another method.
- You may choose to place your entire letter at the start of your portfolio, or you may include an introductory paragraph at the start and then intersperse your artifacts and paragraphs about them. Just be sure to include: 1. An introduction; 2. At least one paragraph about each artifact, describing why it demonstrates your portfolio purpose and

how it grew from our course work; 3. At least one paragraph about the most important thing you learned this semester.

- **Your letter must be handwritten;** your other materials may be any combination of handwritten or typed or photographed and printed. Consider writing a rough draft of the letter and then revising so that your final version is clean and clear.
- **Don't destroy your journal! (unless you're really sure you want to cut entries out)** You can cut up your work, or you can rewrite or simply take a photo and print any artifacts that you wish to include from your journal's pages.
- When you have completed your portfolio, use your phone to scan or take photos of the whole thing; combine these photos into a single .pdf file (ASK FOR HELP IF YOU NEED IT!) and **upload that file on Moodle by 11:55pm on F Dec 18.**
- **Turn in your hard copy portfolio in the box outside my office door by 11:55pm on F Dec 18.**

What is your purpose for your portfolio?

There is no right or wrong way to go about selecting a purpose to guide your portfolio construction; pick one that feels meaningful for you. Who, besides me and your peers, might need to know about your work for this class, and why? **Consider the following options**, but remember that they are just *options* that I've imagined; you might come up with a different purpose that suits your needs more fully than my ideas. Do you want to show....

- **progress or growth:** if you want your portfolio to show change over time in some aspect of your learning, you might elect to include an early draft (perhaps a journal entry, or first pass at a letter, or greenbook writing) and the final version. In your cover letter, you would then point out how your final version has progressed or grown from your early version. Or you could include a journal entry from the beginning of the semester and one from the end to show how you grew in textual engagement skills and you'd describe that growth in a few sentences in your cover letter. Or you might include your labor log (or an entry or two) and describe changes or growth in your approach to how, where, and when you work. Or you could include a question that your peer asked you in class or in a letter or that I asked you in a writing meeting that pushed you to move from x to y in your writing or thinking about our topics. Many other assignments or "artifacts" from the semester could help you show progress or growth.
- **creativity and/or risk taking:** perhaps you want to show your creative approach to learning: you might choose a journal entry that pushed out of your comfort zone, or a letter or collective essay component or topics in writing project piece that felt experimental, or your community text project that turned the assignment on its head, or a radical revision of earlier writing (your poem!), or some combination of these. Then you'd use your cover letter to describe how the artifact/s demonstrate your willingness to take risks or how creativity informed your learning.

- **steadfastness or perseverance:** perhaps you want to show how you stuck with a question or idea or problem throughout the semester: you could pick a few journal entries, an in-class activity, a letter, and a project component that show how you've been working on the same ideas (and deepening your learning about them) over the long term. Or, you struggled with some aspect of writing or literary study from the beginning of the semester, but have identified and worked all semester to improve (pick artifacts—labor log entry, journal entry, peer feedback, community text exercise, project component, poem, etc.—that show what and how so!).
- **learning for the sake of learning:** perhaps you want to show how you made an assignment your own or went above and beyond the basic assignment requirements because you wanted to (not because of grades). You could pick any assignment, big or small, in class or out, individual or group, that shows how you went down a rabbit hole, or pushed yourself in a surprising way, or learned beyond what you thought you would, and so on.

Another purpose, clearly articulated, will work just as well or better than these options: follow your instincts, and aim for the purpose that will best allow you to demonstrate your semester's worth of learning in your portfolio.

Final Self-Assessment Rubric:

After freewriting according to the prompt, **return to your assignment tracker and look at your Y, N, L, and Alt scores for each of our four categories.** Remember that the tracker shows whether or not you have met the basic assignment requirements (baseline / B / 2); you are responsible for keeping track of any above and beyond work, and you should describe that work in your freewriting, if applicable.

Assess yourself holistically, thinking about both your tracker and your freewriting, and give yourself a score 0-3 in **each of our four categories.** You may use a .5 if you feel that your work falls between whole numbers. Use the following rubric as a guide:

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Total scores translate to the following letter grades:

12	A	9	B+	6	C+
11	A-	8	B	5	C
10	B+	7	B-	4	C-
				3-0	D+ to F

Basic Requirements:

- **By 11:55pm on F Dec 18**, submit your complete, polished Portfolio in hard copy (in the box outside of my office door) AND as a single .pdf on Moodle. It must contain your:
 - Handwritten Cover Letter (~6 paragraphs; 1. purpose, 2. discussion of portfolio contents including connections to category work, and 3. the most important thing you learned)
 - At least 4 Class Artifacts
 - Final Self-Assessment (freewriting and assessment scores)