Using Reflection to Promote Students' Writing Process Awareness

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Introduction

Writing in a process is an ongoing and integral part of every writing course, but when I was a new teacher, I also saw it as a subject in its own right: "the writing process," a topic to whose explicit discussion I would devote one day early in the semester of each first-year writing course I taught. Though I envisioned myself as a teacher who let students make their own choices, my classroom method of talking about writing processes did not allow for as much student agency as I would have liked. In those classes, I would begin the designated process day by telling students what "the writing process" is: a way of thinking about writing as a collection of activities rather than as one activity that results in a final written product. I would draw a diagram on the board that included column headings for prewriting, writing, and revising, and I would ask students to help me fill in strategies in each column. And then I would start disclaiming. I would explain that such a writing process is not linear. I would explain that each writer's process is different. I would stress that the list we were compiling on the board was a suggestion, not a prescription. Yet these disclaimers weren't enough to overshadow the overall message I was sending: that "the

writing process" was a formula to follow, a set of steps to which student writers either did or did not adhere.

I knew my students knew about writing in a process already because they had things to say when I asked for their contributions to the list on the board. But I began to see that these students lacked a sense of ownership of their own writing processes. They were enacting what Nancy Sommers would call the role of the Everystudent and playing to the Everyteacher ("Between" 29). These students were repeating what past teachers had told them a writing process should consist of in order to placate their current teacher's questioning about the same.

I began using reflection in the first-year writing classroom to remedy this situation and to get students thinking about the idea of a writing process in ways that would inform the investigation of their own processes. When I asked students to reflect on their writing processes, I started to see a level of engagement with the idea of a writing process that I had not been able to achieve by hosting discussions of "the writing process" in an abstract sense. In this article, I demonstrate how the use of reflective writing assignments in first-year composition facilitated students' understanding of their own writing process strategies. I first discuss the theoretical roots from which reflective practice among student writers grows. Next, I employ my students' voices to demonstrate that reflection allowed these students to become aware of and to make decisions about their own writing processes. Finally, I offer tips for teachers who wish to bring reflective writing into their classrooms.

Reflection and Student Learning: Theoretical Roots

Composition teachers recognize that writing and thought are inextricably linked, and scholars in the last few decades have paid particular attention to this connection. Janet Emig's discussion in "Writing as a Mode of Learning" exposes the connection between writing practice and the exercise of thought. Emig demonstrates how tenets of successful learning, such as engaging in activities related to the material being learned and reproducing that material in some way, are emphasized in writing, an activity that combines both a product and the process necessary to achieve that product (124). Emig's discussion relates to learning of any kind: by writing about a subject—by engaging with that subject in writing's various forms and activities—students can learn about the subject, regardless of what the subject is.

We can extrapolate from Emig's discussion an indication of the learning potential that reflection has to offer. Emig argues that "[s]uccessful learning is … engaged, committed, personal learning" (126). When students are asked to reflect on their learning, they are being asked to enact each of these features of successful learning. Reflection asks students to engage with their own learning processes by thinking about and commenting on them. Reflection asks students to make decisions—commitments—about where their learning processes will go in the future and how they will move in that direction. Reflection is also necessarily personal because the processes on which students reflect are their own.

Emig includes a figure in her article in which she lists several "Successful Learning Strategies" and the aspects of writing with which they correspond. One learning strategy she cites as effective is "self-provided feedback," and she argues that this strategy is possible through writing because writing "provides [a] product uniquely available for *immediate* feedback (review

and re-evaluation)" and "provides [a] record of evolution of thought since writing is epigenetic as process-and-product" (128). Emig's point is that reflection leads to learning and that writing is a useful vehicle for reflection. Emig is not making a case here for reflection on writing itself, which is my focus within this piece. Rather, she is making a case for why writing can enable the reflection necessary to facilitate learning about any subject. By extension, I argue that writing is likewise an apt vehicle through which students can learn by engaging in reflection about their own writing processes.

Donald Murray echoes and extends Emig's discussion of writing as a way to learn in *A Writer Teaches Writing*. Like Emig, he equates writing with "thinking," noting that "[t]he act of writing is an act of thought" (3). While Emig focuses on the ways that the activities of writing enable learning, Murray argues that the written text itself becomes a teaching agent. Beyond the learning potential of the act of producing writing, then, the writing that is produced has something to teach. Murray writes, "The writing surprises, instructs, receives, questions, tells its own story, and the writer becomes the reader wondering what will happen next" (7). Murray introduces the written product into the writer's process as an agent of its own that, once written, speaks back to the writer and informs continued writing. This notion of the written product as a separate agent in the writing process positions the product as an artifact, something from which the writer can mine new insight or advice on how to proceed. A writing-as-artifact viewpoint necessitates reflection, because the writer can only glean information from his or her writing by examining it or thinking about it—hence, by reflecting on it.

A writer's engagement in reflection about his or her writing process is a form of metacognition, or thought about thought. In "Is Teaching Still Possible? Writing, Meaning, and

Higher Order Reasoning," Ann E. Berthoff identifies metacognition as key to teachers' work with student writers. She calls humans' "capacity for thinking about thinking" a "chief resource for any teacher and the ground of hope in the enterprise of teaching reading and writing" (743). Additionally, Berthoff writes, "Our job is to devise sequences of assignments which encourage conscientization, the discovery of the mind in action" (755). Berthoff's suggestion is that teachers can facilitate learning by facilitating reflection. By encouraging students to think about how they are thinking—or, in just one example, to reflect on how they are writing—we can help students to better learn.

The potential ascribed to metacognition in Berthoff's article is revisited in Linda Flower's work with student writers' cognitive processes. In "Cognition, Context, and Theory Building," Flower explores the ways that writers make decisions during their writing processes and finds that the context of a writing activity affects those decisions made during writing (288). Recognizing that context affects writers' thought processes in this way leads Flower to offer the possibility that "metaknowledge and awareness of one's own process [could] play a role in expanding the cues students perceive and the options they entertain" (289). Though Flower does not study whether metacognition indeed plays this role, her implication is that metacognition is the key to enhancing students' learning about their own writing processes. Flower's claims about the role of metacognition indicate the possibility that students who reflect on their writing processes could have the impulse to make decisions about their processes as a result of reflection.

In a related investigation into the ways that student writers make decisions during their writing processes, Nancy Sommers finds in "Revision Strategies of Student Writers and

Experienced Adult Writers" that students are less aware of process strategies and of how to use them than teachers may hope. Sommers writes:

> Too often as composition teachers we conclude that students do not willingly revise. The evidence from my research suggests that it is not that students are unwilling to revise, but rather that they do what they have been taught to do in a consistently narrow and predictable way. On every occasion when I asked students why they hadn't made any more changes, they essentially replied, 'I knew something larger was wrong, but I didn't think it would help to move words around.' The students have strategies for handling words and phrases and their strategies helped them on a word or sentence level. What they lack, however, is a set of strategies to help them identify the 'something larger' that they sensed was wrong and work from there. (383)

Sommers argues that students don't know how to revise beyond word- or sentence-level issues, such as spelling, word order, or grammatically correct usage of language. Even those student writers who feel that "something larger [is] wrong" are not familiar or perhaps not comfortable with writing process strategies that would allow them to do something to remedy the problem.

Sommers' findings indicate the presence of a larger issue, beyond students' halting abilities to revise their work in the ways they want to: rather, students don't have a sense of agency or ownership of their own writing processes. When, as Sommers indicates, students write and revise in the ways "they have been taught," they are writing for teachers, not for themselves. By only keeping teachers' goals in mind and lacking any real sense of how and why they are attempting to reach those goals, student writers are absent from their own writing processes. It is

because students do not feel a sense of ownership about their own work—a sense that this writing is mine, and I want it to end up a certain way, so I will explore the avenues to ensure that that result happens—that they are unable to identify ways to revise beyond word- and sentence-level issues.

Throughout these pieces by Emig, Murray, Berthoff, Flower, and Sommers, we can see indications of the potential that reflection holds for students to learn about their own writing processes. Kathleen Blake Yancey addresses this potential directly in *Reflection in the Writing Classroom*, in which she describes the usefulness of students' reflection on their own writing processes. She writes, "Descriptions of process … can be useful precisely because as first-person accounts, they provide a *record* of what happened; the record begins to make visible what heretofore was invisible. As important, in making this record, students begin to *know* their own processes, a first and necessary step for reflection of any kind" (26-27). Yancey advocates students' writing about their own processes because such writing has expository value. When students write about their processes and produce the record that Yancey mentions, they create a means by which to investigate what is going well and what isn't. As Yancey explains, reflection causes "the classroom [to be] a place where students can speak on their own behalf *so that they too can begin to see how they learn*" (42). By reflecting on their own writing processes, students are showing both their teacher and themselves who they are as writers and what works well for them in their writing. Thus, assigning reflection is a means by which teachers can give students agency within their own writing processes.

Peter Elbow and Pat Belanoff also advocate students' writing about their writing processes and offer ways to bring theoretical perspectives on reflection into classroom practice.

In their textbook *A Community of Writers: A Workshop Course in Writing*, the authors advise students to keep a process journal in which a writer records his or her writing activities and successes or failures within those activities. Elbow and Belanoff write, "The best time to do process writing is right after you have been writing. The goal is to find out what really happened" (14). Like Yancey, the authors encourage reflection as a way of exposing what is actually going on, in the student's opinion, when the student writes. The authors also give students the assignment of composing a writer's autobiography in which each student investigates his or her progress as a writer by answering questions such as "What important incidents do you remember from past writing experiences?" and "Try to isolate specific steps in your writing process … Which of these give you the most trouble? the least? the most satisfaction? the least? Why?" (419, 420). The combination of a process journal, a series of shorter reflections composed in connection with individual writing sessions, and a writer's autobiography, a one-time, in-depth exploration of the self as a writer, prompts students to engage in ongoing reflection about how they write and how they write best.

Using Reflection to Teach the Writing Process

I began using reflection in first-year writing courses with the goal of helping students to become aware of and, in turn, improve the effectiveness of their own writing processes. The evidence I relate here comes from my experience using guided reflective writing assignments in a first-year writing course at Duquesne University titled Thinking and Writing Across the Curriculum. In this course, students were asked to compose informal, 300-word responses to weekly writing prompts (Appendix A). Students completed their reflective writing on a blog on

Blackboard, a course management program, and each student's blog entries were visible only to me and the individual student. (All the ideas presented here can be applied to reflective writing done in hard copy.)

Students' reflection on their writing processes began before I brought up the idea of a writing process in the classroom. In the second week of the semester, I gave students a blog prompt (Appendix A, Week 2 topic) that asked them to reflect on what the term "writing process" means and to think about how they use a writing process.

The resulting blog entries revealed that students were familiar with conventional writing process strategies—they already knew traditional categorizations of prewriting, writing, and revising, as well as strategies that could be placed within each. The blog also showed me that students could easily identify their own writing process choices when asked. One student, Carly Miller, wrote in detail about the steps she takes to write a paper. She concluded by writing, "Probably the biggest thing about my writing process that I hope to change is that I usually wait until the last minute to start writing my essays. To change this I think I will try to make a schedule for myself and set smaller deadlines so I don't have to be under pressure the night before things are due" (Miller, **"**Post on September 5"**)**. Carly's level of reflection was typical of students in the class. Though it didn't seem that many of the students had thought closely about their own writing processes before, when prompted, they were able to reflect critically on what they tend to do when given a writing assignment.

A number of students identified weak spots in their own processes and discussed ways to improve upon them. Justina Johnson reflected on her penchant for editing while she writes:

> I'd like to consider my writing process as a thorough one. If I am not satisfied with the idea, or syntax I would like to use to express my idea, I will not write anything…I may have a thought in mind that I would like to write about, but that thought may change several times within the first paragraph of whatever it is that's being written…I am constantly editing my work…I edit while in the process of writing as well as several times after. **(**"Post on September 5"**)**

Like Carly, Justina seemed comfortable using the reflective writing assignment to analyze her experiences as a writer and to identify characteristics common to her writing.

After students had reflected on their understanding of the writing process, we had a class discussion on the topic. I still put the columns on the board, and I still asked students to add strategies to each column. This time, though, I was not asking students to talk about "the writing process" in an abstract sense or to share what they had learned from past teachers. I was asking students to talk about how they actually write. As a result, we were able to have an open conversation about what worked well for writers in the class in general and how an individual writer can find a process that works for him or her.

The most effective part of this exercise came in the following week, after students had completed their first formal writing assignment. After writing their first paper, students received a blog prompt (Appendix A, Week 3 topic) that asked them to reflect on what writing process they had actually used to write the paper and whether they listened to their own advice from the previous week.

In these follow-up blog responses, the benefits of reflective writing began to take effect. Students had "a-ha moments" in which they either commended themselves for following their

own good advice while discussing the benefits it produced, or chided themselves for ignoring their own advice while discussing how their papers didn't go well as a result. Carly, who had reflected the week before on her tendency to wait until the last minute, returned to the subject of procrastination:

> I feel like I spent more time taking notes and preparing to write the assignment than was necessary, and didn't leave myself enough time to actually write it, so I started to panic when it got to Monday [the day before the assignment was due]. I started early, like I wanted to, but I didn't actually start writing the essay until Sunday night and wasn't finished writing until Monday, which made me start panicking. Next time I think I will want to start actually writing at least two days before it is due. (Miller, "Post on September 12"**)**

Like Carly, Justina returned to a previous subject and discussed her habit of editing her work extensively while writing:

> I followed the process that I wrote about in last week's blog, which wasn't really much of a process at all, it consisted mostly of editing…Although I included more than just editing in the actual process I used to write this paper, editing was still a major aspect of it. In doing this I realized that as helpful as editing is, it can be a setback if you edit constantly, which is exactly what I did. It slows the process down. (Johnson, "Post on September 12")

Many other students followed the same pattern as Carly and Justina, looking back at their previous blog and then comparing their thoughts on the blog to their practices in writing the first assignment.

Interestingly, a number of students' post-assignment reflections were more related to the timing aspects of the writing process—of *when* to take certain steps of a writing process—than to the strategies employed within a process itself. When reflecting on their writing processes prior to the formal assignment, a number of students had discussed specific strategies, such as brainstorming or outlining. Post-assignment, though, students seemed more aware of their writing process timelines, as seen in the following examples.

Prior to writing the formal paper, Chris Busser wrote, "When I think about the writing process, I think back to the basic steps that were taught to me in elementary school…While these techniques and habits are all good ways to write a better paper, I don't actually use them that often" ("September 5"). After his paper had been written, Chris discussed getting started on an assignment, a topic he hadn't addressed in his pre-assignment reflection:

> For the first writing assignment of the year, I think my rhetorical analysis essay went pretty well. It didn't take me as long as I thought it would to get back into the swing of how to put a paper together…However, much to my own disappointment, I have yet to break my habit of waiting till the last minute to write a paper…Therefore, the thing I'd like to do differently is change when I start my assignments. (Busser, "September 12")

Chris hadn't discussed this issue of procrastination prior to writing his paper, but reflection helped him to recognize it after the fact.

Another student, Laura Bardman, also addressed the question of when to start a paper along with other basic steps in her writing process. She wrote:

> In middle school we were told our writing process had to start with brainstorming then outlining then many drafts, peer editing, teacher editing, and finally the final copy. During high school I stopped using this process because I was a procrastinator and waited until the night before a paper was due to really start writing it. I have noticed so far this year that I am not procrastinating as much. (Bardman, "Blog 2")

Although she reflected on procrastination, Laura did not give herself any direction on how to avoid procrastinating on her upcoming paper. After writing her paper, Laura began her blog entry by returning to the topic of procrastination, saying, "Writing the paper went so much better than I thought it would. I started my paper three days before it was due. I can't remember the last time I started a paper that far ahead" (Bardman, "Blog 3"). Though neither Chris nor Laura gave themselves advice on when to start a paper, both found the timeline aspect of the writing process important to reflect upon after their papers were written. These two examples show further evidence of students' critical reflection along with their awareness of their own writing processes and practices prior to and following the completion of a formal writing assignment.

While the writing process was a focal point of these reflective writing assignments, it was not the only subject on which students were asked to reflect. Over the course of the semester, I asked students to reflect on the components of various class assignments, on their overall progress in the course, and on their adjustment to college life in general. The writing process, though, was a topic to which I guided students to return more than once. In particular, I asked students to return to the topic at the end of the semester by rereading all of their blog entries and

then discussing how reflective writing had affected either their writing process or their work in general.

In the semester's end reflections, nearly all of the students said that reflection had had a positive effect on their work, in most cases because reflection prompted them to think about and improve upon the ways they approached course projects. The following examples reveal the progress students discovered in reviewing their own reflective writing.

Several students, such as Emma Brodfuehrer, found that reflection had a positive effect on their writing in the course. At the semester's end, Emma wrote, "Overall, I have to say that this process has been very helpful to reflect on my writing process. It gave me an opportunity to write about my writing process and by seeing it in print, really allowed me to reflect fully on the techniques I use" (Brodfuehrer). From Emma's comment, it seems that a student may perceive written reflection examined "in print" as more valuable than reflection that occurs during class discussion or in a verbal exchange with an instructor.

Carly had a discovery similar to Emma's, citing reflection as the impetus for improving her writing process: "The blog helped my writing process significantly. It helped me think about it. I had never actually thought about my writing process, I just did it. This helped me to actually think about what I was doing. It also gave me a chance to fix things that weren't working for me and notice things about my writing process that were ineffective" (Miller, "Post on December 5"). As Carly explained, the writing process was an unexamined facet of her academic experience prior to reflection.

Like Emma and Carly, Marla Veschio noted that reflection allowed her to evaluate the effectiveness of her process strategies. Marla wrote in her semester's-end reflection:

> In some of the blogs, I wrote about my writing system, and how I planned to write certain papers. I feel that this helped me to brainstorm and get a good idea of exactly what I wanted to write about…I also feel that the blog entries have slightly changed my writing process. I feel that after writing about my writing process, I figured out what was effective and what wasn't. (Veschio)

As Marla's and the other students' blog entries indicate, reflective writing prompted students to closely examine their writing processes and to consider ways to change or improve upon their current processes as a result.

Tips for Assigning Reflection

Crafting reflection as an integral part of a course syllabus with purposefully defined parameters will ensure that this course tool offers the most benefits to students. The following tips for assigning reflection can help ensure its smooth addition to a writing course.

First, make reflection an integral part of the course rather than an afterthought. In order for students to buy into reflection, they need to see that reflection is a regular, ongoing part of their learning in a course.

Second, state clear learning objectives for reflection in the course. Make sure that students understand why they are being asked to write reflectively and what is expected of their reflective writing. For example, have a brief discussion on the question "Why are we blogging in this class?" Talk with students about how reflection allows them to think critically about how they write in addition to giving them the chance to brainstorm for course projects and acquire low-stakes writing practice.

Third, promote critical thinking explicitly in reflective assignments. Talk in class about what it means to reflect critically on a topic. In such a discussion, I talk with students about the differences between journal writing, or general writing about an experience, and critical, analytical writing, or reflection: the difference between "I went here, I did this" and "Why did I do that? What did it mean? What am I going to do as a result?" I also direct students to keep these three questions in mind when reflecting: What? So what? Now what? This set of questions, which has its roots in David Kolb's work on experiential learning, is used frequently in reflection practice in the field of service learning.

Fourth, give feedback. If students have to produce writing, they should know that their writing is being read. On Blackboard, the blog's comment function allows an instructor to respond to student blog entries. In my class, I write brief comments in response to every entry, and students have the ability to respond to my comments with further thoughts or questions.

Finally, include a payoff. The first semester that I tried reflective writing, students received a check mark in their Blackboard grade book for each blog entry they completed. The next semester, students who completed a blog entry received a grade of 2 points. The difference between a 2 and a 0, as opposed to a check or the absence of a check, seemed to propel more students to complete their blog entries on a regular basis. Reflection doesn't have to be worth much toward a course grade, but it needs to be worth something for students to do it.

Conclusion

Adding a reflective component to any writing course, and in particular to first-year courses, can help students become aware of their current writing practices and work to use more

effective writing process strategies. As I mention in the introduction to this essay, when students approach the idea of a writing process by repeating what they've previously learned, they do not claim ownership of their own writing processes. Reflection allows students to develop agency as process writers—to understand how and why they make choices in their own writing processes and to consider how they might make choices differently in the future. Though a student's work will likely be assessed by a teacher in a writing class, the agency that students gain through reflection gives the student the opportunity to assess his or her own learning outside of grades and teacher feedback. My student Emily Smolak wrote in one of the semester's first reflections, "I do not think the first paper was my best work because I had to stretch for information, but in class today I heard some points on the article's argument that I hadn't thought about before. Therefore, I think for the revising stage of my paper, I will definitely have those ideas to think about and expand upon" (Smolak). By assessing her own learning so far, a student such as Emily is able to take the next step and recognize her own role in the learning process. Likewise, a student who receives a low grade on a paper has the opportunity in reflection to consider the reasons behind the grade and to plan what to do differently the next time.

I am not suggesting that reflection will necessarily lead to such self-assessment and decision-making. However, by integrating reflective writing assignments into a course, we create an environment in which such learning and decision-making about one's own writing processes is possible. As my student Justina wrote of her experience with reflective writing, "Once it's there, it's there. You can't take it back in. It's on paper, or screen. You have to think about it then" (Johnson, "Post on December 5"). Reflection gives students the chance to examine and to claim ownership of their own writing processes. By asking students to reflect on the ways they

write, we can show students that each writer's process is valid and valued, regardless of whether it fits into those columns on the board.

Appendix A: Blog Topics

Note: Students were not asked to complete blog entries in weeks 5, 8, 11, and 15 of the semester due to their completing comparable assignments to participate in the class's online discussion board in those weeks.

Week 1: What is your relationship with writing? What have you used writing to achieve in the past? What about critical thinking—what was the last thing you thought critically about? What goals are you setting for yourself this semester in Thinking and Writing? What do you hope to get out of this class?

Write a reflective blog entry, 300 words in length, in response to one or more of the questions above. Don't just go down the list and answer the questions. Think about them carefully, and explore your thoughts fully. Blog entries are informal, so they don't have to conform to any set structure. However, you should read your entry over before posting it to ensure that it doesn't contain any typographical, punctuation, or grammatical errors. Blog entries are due by Friday at 5 p.m. in the week they are assigned.

Week 2: One of our goals for this course reads, "Students will write with a focus on process rather than product." What does the term "writing process" mean to you? What is your own writing process like? (You might even think of a simile or metaphor for it.) Are there aspects of your writing process that work and that you'll use in this class? Are there aspects that aren't effective and that you'd like to change in this class? Moreso, how do you plan to improve upon your writing process in this course?

Remember that you don't have to answer every question—in fact, you will get more out of your blog entry if you find one or two questions to focus on and see where your thoughts take you. The structure of your entry can be informal, but you should read your writing over for clarity and typographical, punctuation, and grammatical errors before posting it.

Week 3: Note: Write your Week 3 Blog entry after writing your Rhetorical Analysis Draft.

This week, you wrote your first formal writing assignment for Thinking and Writing. So … how did it go? Take some time to think critically about how you approached this writing assignment, what worked, what didn't, and what you would do differently.

You may also want to re-read last week's blog entry about your writing process. Did you follow your own advice? Why or why not? Finally, what will be your first step when it is time to revise

and expand your essay? What will you do to stay interested in your topic, and how do you plan to further critically analyze your chosen article?

Remember that you aren't expected to answer every question above and that you should read your entry over for clarity and typographical, punctuation, and grammatical errors before posting it. The Week 3 Blog entry is due by 5 p.m. on Friday, Sept. 12. Every blog entry should be 300 words in length.

Week 4: It's the fourth week of the semester. In some ways, you may be set into your semester routine already. In other ways, this semester (or this year in general) may still feel very new to you. How are you balancing school and life so far this semester? What changes exist in your schedule or life from last year to this year, and how are you adapting to those changes? What challenges do you expect to face as the semester continues? How will you face them?

A few notes: For this week, you may or may not think about the blog topic in the context of Thinking and Writing. You may choose to write something more personal, or you may choose to think and write about your academic schedule. This is your chance to use the blog to think critically about your life—in the moment—and how it's going.

Week 6: A few people commented on the anonymous class evaluations that they'd like to do more fun, creative things in class, so we're going to have a little fun with the blog this week.

Option 1: For this week's blog, think about the inquiry writing assignment you're working on, and write a fictional story or poem that metaphorically depicts your inquiry process. Your story or poem can be completely fictional…it doesn't have to have anything to do with "inquiry" or research, or a writing class. In other words, you'll be presenting your inquiry process implicitly, by creating a parallel creative depiction of a similar process. Have fun with this! Remember that the blog helps you reflect on and think critically about your progress in this course…it doesn't matter if your creative attempt is "good" or not. (If you write Option 1, there is no word-count requirement.)

Option 2: If you'd prefer not to write a story or poem, you can write an explicit version of the same idea. What is your inquiry process? How are you approaching the current writing assignment? What roadblocks are you encountering (or what you do you expect to encounter), and how will you overcome them? What is interesting to you so far about your inquiry process? Why? (If you write Option 2, the normal 300-word length requirement applies.)

Week 7: Think of one television commercial that has caught your attention recently. (You may want to find the commercial online, so you can watch it a few times as you think about it.) What is the commercial for? Describe what happens or what is shown in the commercial. Think about what argument the commercial is making. Then, use your blog entry to discuss how the argument works, what it is promoting, and whether you think it is effective.

For example, beyond the actual product or service the commercial is advertising, what else is the commercial "selling"? Does the commercial seem to advertise or place value on qualities of life other than the actual product at hand? How is it promoting these qualities? What reaction do you have to the commercial as a consumer? How do you think people in other age groups would react?

Week 9: Pick one piece of art from *Life on Mars: The 2008 Carnegie International* and provide the artist's name, the piece's name, the materials used, the year the piece was created, and a brief visual description of the piece. Spend some time studying and thinking about the piece of art you choose. Then, write a two-part response to this piece of art that includes 1) an explanation of your reaction to it and 2) a discussion of the piece as an argument.

In the first part of your entry, describe your response to the piece of art you've chosen. Do you like it? Why or why not? What emotions does it invoke for you? Does it remind you of any other piece of art you've seen in the past, or any type of art (loosely defined) you've created?

In the second part of your response, think of the piece of art as a visual argument (recalling Ch. 4). What argument is the piece making? How? Is the argument effective? Explain your ideas.

Week 10: We're two thirds of the way through the semester. What have you learned? For this blog entry, pick one of the following sets of questions to write on:

1. Think about Thinking and Writing so far this semester. What has been the single most important thing you have learned in this class so far? How this lesson helped you in this class? How has it helped you in others? How will learning this new thing be beneficial (or detrimental) to you in the future?

2. Think about your semester as a whole—all your classes and everything outside of class. What has been the single most important thing you've learned this semester? Is it an academic lesson? Why is it important to you? How will learning this new thing be beneficial (or detrimental) to you in the future?

A few notes: Keep in mind that your blog entry is a piece of reflective writing intended to benefit you through critical reflection. What will be the most useful for you to reflect on?

Week 12: In class, we've begun talking about the final course project: an argument persuading Duquesne's seniors what to do after graduation and why. What ideas do you have so far? What do you plan to say to these seniors? How will you get their attention?

Your final project draft is due in less than two weeks, and this blog entry will help you brainstorm and gather ideas for that draft. Use your blog in a way that will help you get your ideas going. For example, you could use this blog to discuss the ideas you have so far, or you

could use it to start writing your introduction and experiment with how to grab your audience's attention.

Week 13: As you begin working on your final project draft, you'll notice that this assignment has a component that the other assignments in the course haven't had: you have to find at least five relevant and credible secondary sources, and you have to *incorporate* material from these sources into your writing. In class on Nov. 11, we'll discuss what it means to incorporate (rather than "drop in") source material. For this blog entry, reflect on how you are (or how you plan to) use secondary source material in your final project and how that material will help make your argument persuasive.

Here are some questions to get you thinking: What types of secondary source evidence are you using in your argument? How are you using this evidence? How will you make it an integral part of your argument? How will it help persuade your audience?

Week 14: For this week's blog, read through all the blog entries you've written this semester. You've written reflectively nearly every week for the last 3 months. What effect, if any, has reflective writing had on you or your academic work?

Below are some questions to get you started. Remember that you don't have to answer all (or any) of these questions. Feel free to blog in general about the effects reflective writing has had on you this semester.

Many of the blog entries have asked you to reflect on your own writing process and plans. In particular, look at your blogs for weeks 2 and 3. Has your writing process changed since then? How? Has writing reflectively affected your writing for this course in any way? Has it affected your writing for other courses?

Has writing reflectively affected your academic work in areas other than writing? How?

Have you found reflective writing to be useful to your academic success? Why or why not? Will you choose to use reflective writing in the future? For what purpose?

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