

Essay 5 Assignment Sheet: Reflective Essay

Donath -- English 102

For your last essay assignment of the semester I am asking you to analyze the text of your own life experience. We will follow feminist criticism's recent attention to the aspects of identity (in addition to gender) that shape (and are shaped by) individuals' responses to societal expectations. What *is* identity? If gender presents us with some difficulties for making generalizations, identity as a larger category is quite a conundrum. While most of us agree that individuals cannot be boxed into simplistic categories, we can also agree that individuals are never outside of social categories. In thinking about your own identity, you will examine and complicate your individuality not only within the context of your personal experiences, but within the context of cultural and social norms.

Assignment:

Write a four to five-page essay about a conflict you encountered that has affected or changed how you see yourself, how others see you, and/or how you fit into some group larger than yourself. Note that your essay should NOT consist of a description of your likes and dislikes, hobbies, personality traits, etc., but instead should address how you fit in some social landscape. It will be autobiographical, obviously, but it should be more than an autobiography; above all, your essay should discuss some aspect of your identity that is surrounded by some sort of tension. Consider the many issues raised in the texts we read for our identity unit—and those we discussed in class—as you think about your own identity. Also, you may want to model your essay on one of those texts, in particular: “Lucy, I’m Home”, “At Home in My Body: An Asian-American Athlete Searches for Self”; “My Brown Face”; “It’s Hard Enough Being Me” (1010-1012); “Goodbye, Saigon, Finally” (1013-15); and “Two Kinds” (1020-27). As usual, your essay should be double-spaced, in Times 12 font.

Important Dates:

F 4/25: Typed copy of Essay 5 due at the beginning of class.

F 4/30: PORTFOLIOS DUE*

**Talk to me if you anticipate that you will need an extension. (Optional revisions for all papers will be accepted; as usual, please underline changes/additions; staple original draft on back).*

Some Questions to Consider:

- What factors shape your identity? What aspects are particularly important for the way society perceives you and how you perceive yourself?
- How do some aspects of your identity become highlighted in certain contexts?
- With what aspects of identity have you experienced conflict? What lies at the heart of that conflict? How did you/do you/will you resolve that conflict?

?...gender, sexual orientation, biological sex, marital status, race/ethnicity, nationality, regional identity; social memberships; language(s), age; relations within family (2nd child, only child, orphan, experience with divorce); ancestral history, personal history, educational history, sexual history; occupation, economic status, social class; possessions; religious beliefs, social assumptions, personal values; desires, ambitions, talents; geographical surroundings, physical environment; the BODY: skin color, shape, physical disability, eye color/shape, hair color/style/texture, hygiene, health and access to healthcare...?