CREATIVE WRITING ASSIGNMENTS

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Malcolm Knowles (1984) defined four principles of andragogy:

1. Adult learners must be involved in the planning and evaluation of their instruction.
2. Adult learners bring to the learning environment experience that should provide the basis for the learning activities.
3. Adults learners learn best when their learning is immediately relevant to their lives, whether professionally or personally.
4. Adults learn best when the learning is problem-centered and applied rather than simply content-focused.

Meaning-making is the foundation for adult learning (Merriam & Heuer, 1996).

Considerations for Creative Writing Assignments

* Write instructions that clearly explain what you are looking for but leave room for students to direct their own learning and make their own meaning.
* Offer choices of the presentation medium (e.g., written paper, PowerPoint, poetry, journal, blog, etc.).
* Provide a grading rubric.
* Allow for multiple drafts (with instructor and/or peer feedback) and encourage revisions.
* When possible, offer resources such as pre-writing worksheets and sample assignments.
* Remember that written work does not need to be graded for learning and meaning-making to take place.

Examples of Creative Writing Assignments

* Developmental biographies
* Collages
* Scrapbooks
* Photography journal
* Blogs
* Found poems

References

Knowles, M. S. (1984). *Andragogy in action*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Merriam, S. B., & Heuer, B. (1996). Meaning-making, adult learning and development: A model

with implications for practice. *International Journal of Lifelong Education, 15*(4), 243-255.

**Developmental Biographies**

To explain the exams for our class, I am going to work backwards and start by explaining the final exam. The product that you submit for your final exam will be a developmental biography of sorts. It may be an auto-biography, a biography of someone you know or a famous person, a biography of a completely fictional character that you make up, or an amalgamation. Each of the three exams will be a section of the biography. You will get my feedback on each exam and be able to edit the work in progress before submitting the final product (final exam).

For each exam, you will write a section of the biography and incorporate developmental concepts or theories. The course and textbook are arranged chronologically through the developmental periods, and each developmental period is broken down into physical, cognitive, and socioemotional development. Each exam will include several developmental periods. For each developmental period, you must incorporate a physical, cognitive, and socioemotional concept/theory, as is shown on the exam worksheets at the end of the syllabus. For exams 1, 2, and 3, you will submit just that section of your biography. For the final exam, you will submit the entire biography (prenatal period through death) in one document. **Please be sure to complete the table in the exam worksheets and include it in your document when you submit your exams.** This helps me identify the concepts you intended to cover. All exams should be submitted via the drop boxes on Blackboard.

I am not giving you a page requirement because depending on your writing style and the concepts you choose, you may need more or fewer pages. I’m much more concerned with quality, critical thinking, and your ability to make meaningful applications than I am with hitting a particular page length. In the past, some students ended up with a final biography of eight pages while others wrote over 20 pages.

To help you organize your biography, I have included a worksheet at the end of the syllabus. I encourage you to use it to help you prepare to write each section of the biography, and please include the completed table when you submit your exams.

**Exams 1, 2, and 3** will be graded based on the following rubric.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
|  | **Points Earned for Section** | **Points Possible for Section** |
| **Content:** Your biography covers the assigned units and appropriate concepts/theories for those units |  | 10 |
| **Explanations:** Concepts and examples are clearly explained in your own words; you demonstrate your understanding of the concepts/theories through appropriate application |  | 50 |
| **Organization:** Your biography is organized in a way that makes sense and includes logical transitions |  | 10 |
| **Mechanics**: spelling, grammar, and punctuation do not affect readability of the project |  | 5 |
| **Total** |  | **75** |

The **final exam** will be graded based on the following rubric.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
|  | **Points Earned for Section** | **Points Possible for Section** |
| **Content:** Your biography is complete and covers the all assigned developmental periods and appropriate concepts/theories for those units |  | 20 |
| **Explanations:** Concepts and examples are clearly explained in your own words; you demonstrate your understanding of the concepts/theories through appropriate application |  | 60 |
| **Organization:** Your biography is organized in a way that makes sense and includes logical transitions; each developmental period flows into the next, making for a cohesive developmental biography |  | 10 |
| **Mechanics**: spelling, grammar, and punctuation do not affect readability of the project |  | 10 |
| **Total** |  | **100** |

**Scrapbook Project**

We observe evidence of development all the time. This project aims to allow you to identify how the concepts of life-span development are involved in the things you come across each day. For those of you who consider yourselves to be creative or artistic, this assignment encourages you to use media that you often do not get the opportunity to use in academic work.

Assignment: You will create a scrapbook of 10 examples that demonstrate life-span principles. Your scrapbook may include the following (and must include at least four types – meaning that you may not do all song lyrics or all TV shows, for example):

* Newspaper articles
* Magazine articles
* Comic strips/cartoons
* Books (adult or children’s)
* Your own life experiences (no more than two)
* Articles from an academic journal
* Essays
* Pictures
* Poems (someone else’s or your own)
* Song lyrics (someone else’s or your own)
* Movies
* Television shows

For articles, pictures, cartoons, poems, and short essays, include the actual item (or a copy) in your scrapbook. For books, TV shows, longer essays, movies, journal articles, and personal experiences, summarize them in a paragraph. For song lyrics, you may either include a copy of the lyrics or a summary of them. You may also choose to include a recording of the song or a link to it, although this is not required.

For each of the 10 entries, you must write at least a paragraph, but no more than a page, explaining the concept the entry relates to and how it relates. For example, do not just write, “This poem is an example of drug use.” You must explain what it shows about drug use and how it is important to development. You are encouraged to include your personal assessments and opinions, and writing in first person is acceptable.

All sources must be cited. Please cite each source on the page of the entry (at the bottom of the page that includes your explanation paragraph). You should include the following information:

* Articles: Magazine/newspaper/journal, title, author, date, page number
* TV shows: Title, date
* Movies: Title
* Cartoons, pictures, and poems: Source, author, date, page number
* Books: Author, title, publisher, date
* Internet: Website address
* Song lyrics: Title, artist, composer (if known)
* Essays: Author, title, book title, editor, publisher, date

Format: Your scrapbook must contain 10 separate entries. Be sure you note the limitations listed above and include at least four different types of entries from the list above. Include a cover page that indicates the theme of your project. Use a format that presents the information in an interesting way. Be creative! Your scrapbook may be elaborate or simple. Some examples of how you might present your scrapbook:

* the 10 items with accompanying narratives presented in a binder or folder
* the 10 items glued to fun or colorful paper with the narratives attached
* a true scrapbook with stickers, letters, etc.

It is up to you how to present it – just be sure that it is interesting and organized.

Please pay attention to spelling, punctuation, and grammar, as these will be graded.

Topics: Some examples of possible topics include:

* Nature versus nurture
* A particular limitation of cognitive development (e.g. childhood egocentrism, imaginary audience)
* Coping with death or loss
* Physical, psychological, or socio-emotional problems that affect development (e.g. high school dropout, eating disorder, infertility, child abuse, learning disability, divorce, etc.)
* Gender role development
* How a new baby changes family dynamics
* And many, many more…

**Grading Rubric for Scrapbook Project**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Criteria** | **Points Earned** | **Points Possible** |
| **Basic requirements**: 10 entries related to a theme, four different types, cover page, etc. |  | 10 |
| **Narratives**: explain each entry and how it relates to life-span development |  | 50 |
| **Presentation**: neat (not sloppy or “last minute,”) organized, and easy to follow |  | 15 |
| **Citations**: included for each entry in a proper format |  | 10 |
| **Mechanics**: spelling, grammar, and punctuation do not affect readability of the project |  | 15 |
| **Total** |  | **100** |

**Developing a Psychological Lens**

One of our themes for the semester is to be more aware as we go through our day-to-day activities. During my schooling, I noticed that as I took certain classes, I developed a lens related to the course through which I began to view the world. For example, when I took a class called “Race, Class, and Gender,” I became very aware of these constructs in the world around me. Introduction Psychology lends itself to developing a psychological lens. Psychology is happening all around us, and if we become more aware, we will notice it. This project will help you become more aware of the many influences of psychology in our lives and allow you share them in a creative way. Have fun!

Part 1: Taking Pictures

Throughout the semester, notice what is happening around you. As we learn about different topics in Psychology, where do you see evidence of these things happening around you? As you start to notice psychology happening around you, take a picture. Use the camera on your phone, a disposable one the drug store, or a fancy one – it’s up to you! (If anyone does not have access to a camera, please let me know. We will make arrangements to ensure you have one to use this semester.) It may be helpful for you to keep a journal as well to remind you why you took the picture, how it struck you as being related to psychology, and how you felt when you took it. As we near the end of the semester, you should have a collection of photos to use for the next part of the project.

Part 2: Compiling the Pictures

Go back through all of the pictures you took. Pick your favorites – at least 10, but no more than 20 pictures. Put these pictures into a format you can present to the class – a poster, collage (digital or paper), scrapbook, PowerPoint or Prezi – it’s up to you! Along with your visual presentation, you will need to include the following for each picture:

* Describe the photo through your eyes. Why did you take it? What does it mean to you? How did you feel when you took it? How do you feel looking at it now? (Your journal might come in handy here.)
* What psychological concept does the photo depict? Explain the concept in your own words and how that concept is portrayed in the picture.

Part 3: Presenting the Project

This project serves as your final exam for the class. You will bring your completed project to our final exam period on May 17th from 11:00-1:00. Everyone will have a chance to share his or her project.

Grading

This project is worth 150 points and will be graded based on the following rubric.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Criteria** | **Points Possible** |
| **Psychological explanations**: accurately explains the related psychological concepts and clearly explains how the concepts are depicted in the photos | 50 |
| **Reflection:** your meaningful reflection about why you took the photo, how you feel about it, and what it means to you | 30 |
| **Presentation**: neat (not sloppy or “last minute”) and organized | 10 |
| **Mechanics**: spelling, grammar, and punctuation do not affect readability of the project | 10 |
| **Total** | **100** |

If you include fewer than 10 photos, you will automatically lose eight points per missing photo.

**Collage Project and Paper**

*“Art distills sensations and embodies it with enhanced meaning.” ~*[*Jacques Barzun*](http://www.art-quotes.com/auth_search.php?authid=3359)

We each make meaning in different ways, two of which are art and writing. For this project, I am asking of you to use collage-making and writing as ways to make meaning of the intersections between Coates’ book and concepts in developmental psychology.

The Collage (50 points)

For this part of the project, you will create a collage on paper/poster board by cutting out and pasting pictures and words. I am leaving the instructions somewhat open-ended because I want you to make your own meaning out of this project. Your collage can be a collection of pictures (your own or ones you find in media sources such as websites, magazines, and newspapers) and/or words. You may decide to use dimensions such as color, texture, and placement of the objects to demonstrate how you are making meaning.

Please pick a theme from Coates’ book. While you are not limited to just these, here are some possible themes: racism, sexism, violence, poverty, education, the body, privilege (perhaps white privilege), the American dream, parenthood (in particular, fatherhood). Your collage should be a collection of images and/or words that show how you have made meaning of that particular theme.

The Paper (100 points)

I would also like you to write a paper to go along with your collage. This paper should address all of the following (although you can organize your paper in whatever way makes sense to you):

* What theme does your collage portray? What story does your collage tell? How did you decide what pictures or words to include and exclude? (10 points)
* Consider the different areas of development we have studied this semester (physical, cognitive, socioemotional). How do these areas of development show up in your collage? (20 points)
* How does the theme intersect with development? For example, how could race/racism (or sexism, or violence, or education, etc.) impact one’s development? Be specific here, citing *Between the World and Me* and our textbook to support your claims. Spend some time fleshing out this section. (30 points)
* Consider these related concepts that are discussed in our textbook: cohort effects and history-graded influences. How do these concepts influence the way you make meaning of the theme you chose? For example, how does being a member of your generational cohort influence the way you view race, sex, education, etc.? What historical events have happened in your lifetime that have impacted your views? (20 points)
* When you consider Coates’ book and your collage, in what ways do you hold privilege or are you empowered? In what ways do you feel marginalized, oppressed, or disempowered? (10 points)
* What was it like doing this project? You might address the methodology you used to complete this project and/or the thoughts and emotions that arose as you worked on it. (10 points)

While I am not assigning a page limit, I anticipate that for you to discuss these points completely and meaningfully, this paper will be no fewer than three pages. Please be sure your paper addresses these questions in a way that allows you to make meaning out of this project.

**Blog Project**

(Please note that there are several folders on Bb to help you with this project. There is a folder on activism resources and one on blogging.)

Part of my teaching philosophy is that my job is to help my students have both the information and means to make a difference in the world. This semester, I want you to become actively engaged in activism. It is important to recognize that activism is broadly defined and can include a wide range of activities. Some examples of activism might include:

* Learning about a proposed law or social issue
* Calling, emailing, or writing to your legislators or starting a letter-writing/postcard campaign
* Creating, signing, or sharing a petition
* Starting a website, Facebook group, newsletter
* Attending a local march or demonstration
* Boycotting a particular company or product
* Wearing clothing with a slogan or logo that shows support or disapproval of something/someone
* Educating others about an issue (making pamphlets, organizing an event, organizing a discussion about a topic, etc.)
* Planning or walking/running in a march or race for a cause

The Project

1. To begin this project, you will set up a blog. There are a number of free websites that allow you to create a blog. Some are more user friendly than others. Some easier ones to use are Wordpress and Blogger. We can spend a bit of class time on this. You are also welcome to come to my office hours to get assistance.
2. Your first blog post should be an initial reflection. How do you feel about this project – excited, nervous, or some other feeling? What do you know about activism? How do you feel about activism? Have you been involved in activism before, or is this new for you?
3. Over the course of the semester, you will engage in 10 activist activities. For each of these activities, you will write one blog post. Each post should include the following:

* What activist activity did you do? Be sure to clearly and completely describe what you did. For example, if you went to a march, what was the purpose of the march? What did you do there? Or if you called a local representative, whom did you call and about what issue?
* Consider the issue to which your activist activity pertains. How does that issue relate to human development? Does it relate to physical, cognitive, or socioemotional development, and how? For example, if you called your legislator to voice your opinion about healthcare, how does access to healthcare impact someone’s development?
* Include a brief personal reflection of your participation in the activist activity. How did you decide on that particular activity? How did you feel while doing it? How did you feel after doing it?

You are also welcome to use pictures in your blog. Have fun with it!

1. Your final blog post should be a final reflection. You can refer to your initial reflection and see how your thoughts and feelings have stayed the same or changed. Do you think you will continue to be involved in activism after this class? If so, how? If not, why not?

Submitting Your Project

Your complete project is due on May 4th. To submit your project, please go to the Blog Project drop box on Blackboard and submit a link to your blog.

Grading

This project will be graded based on the thoughtfulness and thoroughness of your writing and will be calculated as follows:

* Initial reflection: 10 points
* Blog posts are worth 8 points each (10 posts total = 80 points). Point values for each post:
  + Describing the activity: 2 points
  + Relating the activism to human development: 3 points
  + Personal reflection: 3 points
* Final reflection: 10 points

Creating a Found Poem

1. Carefully re-read the prose text you have chosen, and look for words or phrases that stand out in the prose passage. Highlight or underline details, words and phrases that you find particularly powerful, moving, or interesting.

2. On a separate sheet of paper, make a list of the details, words and phrases you underlined, keeping them in the order that you found them. Feel free to add others that you notice as you go through the prose piece again.

3. Look back over your list and cut out everything that is dull, or unnecessary, or that just

doesn’t seem right for the poem you are writing.

4. Make any minor changes necessary to create your poem. You can change punctuation and make little changes to the words to make them fit together (such as change the tenses,

possessives, plurals, and capitalizations).

5. When you’re close to an edited down version, if you absolutely need to add a word or two to make the poem flow more smoothly, to make sense, to make a point, you may do so.

6. Read back over your edited draft one more time and make any deletions or minor

changes.

7. Check the words and choose a title—is there a better title than “Found Poem”?

8. Arrange the words so that they’re poem-like. Pay attention to line breaks, layout, and other elements that will emphasize important words or significant ideas in the poem.

• Read aloud as you arrange the words! Test the possible line breaks by pausing slightly. If it sounds good, then go with it.

• Arrange the words so that they make a rhythm you like. You can space words out so that they are all alone or allruntogether.

• You can also put key words on lines by themselves.

• You can shape the entire poem so that it’s wide or tall or shaped like an object.

• Emphasize words by playing with boldface and italics, different sizes of letters,

and so forth.