

A close-up photograph of a person's hand holding a red pen, poised to write on an open notebook. The person is wearing a white, textured sweater. The background is softly blurred, showing a wooden desk and a window with light coming through. The overall mood is calm and focused.

Looking Back,
Jumping
Forward:
Reflective Writing
in Course Design

January 3, 2024

Professional Development
Day

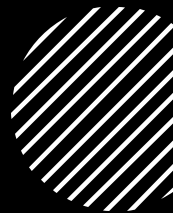
Goals of this presentation

- Introduce myself
- Introduce the purpose of frequent, reflective writing
- Provide a few examples
- Brainstorm ways to apply these practices in different courses
- Complete a short reflection of our own





A bit about me...



Assistant Professor of History



Research Areas – History of medicine, Early United States' History, History of science



This is my fourth year at Northwest



I teach courses of a variety of levels and sizes from our US history gen eds to upper division courses on specific topics and research methods.



Why Reflection?

And what can it look like?



Some Examples

I have incorporated aspects of reflective practice into most of my courses. I have three examples here at different levels and with different intentionality.

HIST 155 – Regular Structured Check-in

- Reflection papers associated with each unit
- Slowly builds writing confidence
- Builds communication skills
- Low-stakes and low-anxiety
- Instructor check-in on key concepts
- Part of a larger portfolio project

Unit 2 Reflection

✓ Published

Edit



Unit 2 Reflection

For each unit you are expected to complete a unit reflection of 1-2 pages double-spaced. When you are working on your reflection you should consider what you already know about a topic for the upcoming unit, how you know it, and what you expect to learn over the course of the unit. You must also look back and consider what you learned in terms of content and skills from the previous unit. You should use class themes and key questions to help you draft your reflection.

Specific Instructions

When completing your reflection you must include the following elements:

- **Heading** - Include your name, class title and section, assignment title, and date
- **Page Formatting** - Your page must have standard 1-inch margins, use a professional 11 or 12 point font (ex. Times New Roman, Garamond, Arial, Calibri), double space your paragraphs, indent for all paragraphs
- **Content** - The reflection paper must focus on this course, what you know about the topic we are about to discuss, what you think others might know, what you want to learn about the topic, and any questions you have about the topic or unit assignments
- **Length** - 1-2 pages double-spaced
- **Writing Mechanics** - All ideas must be fully formed in complete sentences. This is not formal writing (feel free to use personal pronouns, for example) but it must be grammatically correct and suitable for a college-level course.

Outcomes

This assignment has four outcomes, all of which align with broader Northwest Core Outcomes for this course. You should consider the outcomes as well as the rubric as you complete your assignment.

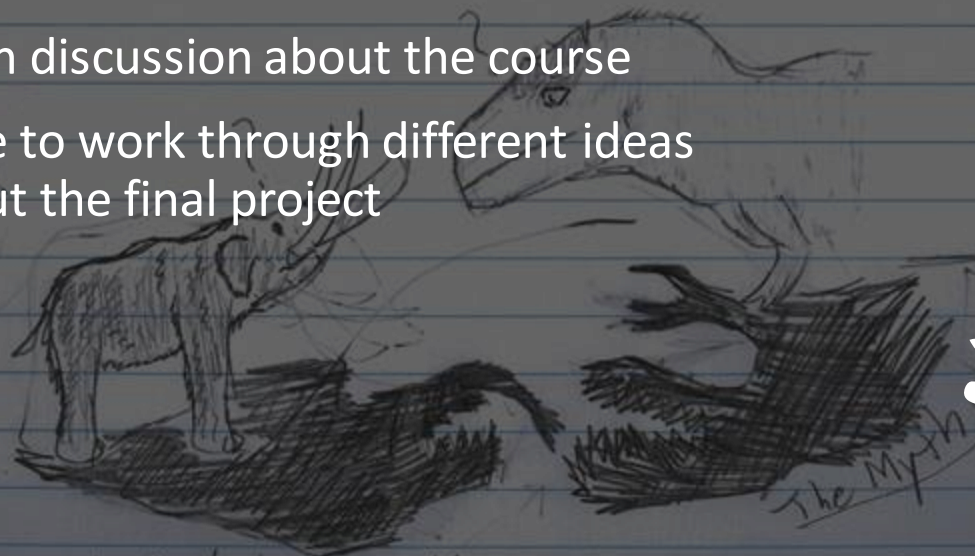
Reflective Journaling

- Adapting journals to meet the themes and outcomes of courses
 - Thematic journals for History of American Science, Technology, and Medicine
 - Commonplace books for Early American Republic
- Way to make connections between individual research projects and classwork
- Encourages reflection and academic exploration
- Creates space to pause and check in about course work



HIST 524 Commonplace Book

- Modeled after 18th century note-taking techniques
- Open discussion about the course
- Time to work through different ideas about the final project

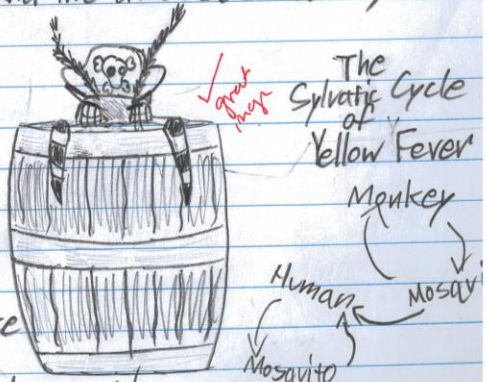


1. Semorini, Paul. *American Monster: How the Nation's First Prehistoric Creature Became a Symbol of National Identity*, 1st ed. New York: New York University Press, 2009.

This week's topic was the yellow fever epidemic in Philadelphia, specifically from 1793-1820. We first analyzed the nature and origins of the fever - to begin with, the fever's host would normally experience flu-like symptoms. This would last for a week and have a 50% to go away naturally and grant the individual lifelong immunity (like smallpox, but less so). For the unlucky half, however, they would vomit a substance whose texture and consistency resembled coffee grounds, see their eyes and skin turn yellow due to liver failure, and die. While yellow fever and its primary carrier, *Aedes triseriatus*, were originally stuck in West Africa, the Atlantic Slave Trade carried the pair to the Americas - Philadelphia, with its swampy terrain, abundant collection of stagnant water and garbage, and status as a trading hub, proved to be an ideal breeding ground. The city was, simply, forced to watch politicians flee, its White House become vacant, ships get marauded by pirating mosquitoes, and the disease's fatality rate rise to ten percent.*

*Ten percent... was actually pretty good for most yellow fever outbreaks.


Wednesday saw a class discussion on each student's findings from one of three primary sources. I had selected "Minutes of the Citizens Committee on Yellow Fever," a book recording the Citizens Committee's efforts to finance and supply Philadelphia's medical staff, carry out the wills of former Philadelphia residents, commission workers to create goods (such as bed frames) and services (coaching), etc. - the main idea is that Philadelphia and its residents were trying maintain law and order during a crisis.



One of my classmates read Richard Allan and Absalom Jones' narrative of the proceedings of the black people... which highlighted Black participation in disease control at Philadelphia while



Possible Applications

- Smaller micro-writing
 - Physical versus digital formatting
 - Reflection-based assessment
 - What could work for you?
- 

Take a minute yourself

Are there ideas that might work in your courses?

How can this align with pre-existing course and program outcomes?