

HUMAN LIFE COURSE IN CONTEXT

(exercise developed by C. Darrah, modified by Jennifer Anderson)

Portfolio Assignments Guidelines

Read through this whole set of assignments in advance. They require thinking and gathering information so they cannot be written at the last minute. Portfolio assignments are a minimum of 800 words, double spaced 12 pt. font writing. A lot has to do with the particular assignment and your ability to write concisely and to provide concrete, detailed examples. All assignments must be typed, except for the chart requested in Portfolio #5. The answer to each question should be treated as an essay. The essay grading rubric is posted on the class web site.

Portfolio Assignment #1

1. What have been the important age-graded, history-graded and non-normative influences to date on your life course?

(Normative age-graded influences are those influences within the life course that are correlated with chronological age. For example, marriage and retirement are two normative age-graded influences. Ex. Puberty. Normative history-graded influences are those influences within the life course that are correlated with historical time and are experienced by the majority of a culture. For example,, wars and epidemics are considered history-graded events. Ex. Twin Towers Each member of a cohort (people in your age group) also continuously experiences different non-normative life events throughout their life course. These are things which are unique to your experience. Ex. Your parents took you to India).

2. When did they happen and how have they shaped your life? Ask your family members about your early life and parts of it you don't remember. Be specific and detailed, and write in complete sentences and paragraphs that have been edited and proofed.
3. What are the major transitions you have gone through? Were there *ruptures* in which you were doing one thing and then suddenly had to do something different? Why? Were there *interruptions*, such as to a career? Why? Were there *bridges* or gradual transitions to new stages of life (e.g. an apprenticeship is a bridge between school and work)? Why?
4. How is your life linked to particular other people? What are the major roles they have played in life? How are those roles defined?
5. What are the most important things that someone should know about who you are in order to really understand you? Can you think of an incident or occasion that really expresses or demonstrates your important qualities?
6. Do you believe that you belong to or have one or more cultures? If so, try to describe it/them? What are your core values and where did they come from?

Portfolio Assignment #2

Imagine your own life ten years in the future. Think about your work, your family, and your community.

1. Write an optimistic but realistic scenario for your future. Ideally, what will you be doing? Ideally, what will your relations be like with other people? Try to be as detailed as possible. Remember to be realistic: No "I won twenty billion dollars in the lottery and don't work and have zillions of people at my beck and call."

2. Write a pessimistic scenario for your own future. What if things don't work out as you hope? What will work be like? Family? Neighborhood? Etc. Again, be detailed and realistic. Do not try to finesse this exercise with, "An asteroid hit me, so that the end of the story."
3. What will tilt your actual life toward the optimistic or ideal scenario instead of the pessimistic scenario? What can you do affect what happens?

Portfolio Assignment #3

This assignment provides you an opportunity to think about your skills and knowledge and how you could use them. The paper may be written as an elegant narrative or a series of lists--your choice. But please use complete sentences, even if you are writing in list form. Do not use single words.

1. Identify your favorite transferable skills (i.e. ones that you can transfer to diverse settings) using the attached list for ideas. These should identify what you like to do with THINGS, PEOPLE, and INFORMATION/IDEAS. They should also express something of your style in doing them (quickly, flexibly, responsibly, constantly, etc.).
2. What kind of PEOPLE do you like to use these skills with, both as clients/customers and as co-workers? For example, old people, Democrats, thin people, college graduates, Spanish speaking people, etc. Why?
3. What kind of THINGS do you like to use these skills with? For example, plants, animals, wood, machinery, food, etc.
4. What kind of INFORMATION/IDEAS do you like to use these skills with? Think both of the form of the information (e.g. books, interviews, computer printouts, pictures, etc.) and the content of knowledge or subjects.
5. What are your preferred OUTCOMES from your work? Outcomes are the results of your work. For example, corny as it may sound, your instructor prefers work which brings more information into the world, work which increases peoples' abilities to make decisions, etc. I have also enjoyed work that produces more beauty (landscaping contractor), and always, work where I make most of the decisions. Think of the immediate and long-term outcomes of your work.
6. What are the minimum and maximum (realistically!) financial REWARDS you desire from a job? What other rewards or satisfactions would you like to get from your work?
7. How do you think your answers to the preceding questions will affect your life course? How do you think they connect to your own idea of a good life?

Grades will be assigned based on completeness (i.e. that you address all the questions), thoroughness (i.e. that you develop full responses to each question), and creative specificity (i.e. that you do not settle for boilerplate answers that reflect no thinking about *your* unique abilities).

Portfolio Assignment #4

Imagine that an anthropologist had selected your high school for her research into the lives of students and that you were selected to be interviewed. Introduce the reader to your school and then answer the following questions:

1. What were the important assumptions and values that you think the school was conveying to you and to other students? Assumptions are claims about how the world is, and values are claims about how people should be. Be sure to provide some examples.
2. What strategies did you use to succeed and graduate? What compromises did you have to make? How did they work—or not? What were some other strategies that you saw being used? What do you think were the impact of these strategies on you?
3. What conflicts or tensions did you experience between your personal and cultural values (on the one hand) and the strategies you had to employ to graduate? What have you done about them?

Portfolio Assignment #5

College is a major part of early adulthood for many Americans and careful planning can help you get the most from it. College fits into your larger life, including family obligations and earning money, and thus planning for college is a larger matter than just choosing the right courses. The following assignment is designed as a tool to help you plan a college career that helps you determine and then realize your goals in life.

Take a large sheet of paper (or make a computer table) and make a set of columns labeled freshman, sophomore, junior and senior. Note that if you take more than four years to graduate—and most students do take longer—each column will include more than one year. If it is easier for you, label the columns by academic year: e.g. 2007/2008, 2008/2009, etc.

Down the left hand side of the page label the following rows: COURSES, EXTRA-CURRICULAR, LIVING ARRANGEMENTS, WORK/MONEY, and SOCIAL OBLIGATIONS. If you wish to add additional rows that capture some important part of your life then do so.

1. COURSES = Those courses you have taken, are taking, or plan to take in a given year.
2. EXTRA-CURRICULAR = Those activities you are involved in through the university but outside of class.
3. LIVING ARRANGEMENT = Where and with whom are you living?
4. WORK/MONEY = What are your sources of income, what job(s) will you hold, and how many hours do you plan to work?
5. SOCIAL OBLIGATIONS = What obligations to friends, family members, co-workers, etc. will affect your career in college? Include recreational activities here.

Fill this matrix in as best you can and really **THINK HARD** about the future time periods for each row. Answer the following questions when you are done:

1. What factors are drawing you deeper into the university so that you graduate in a timely manner? Put differently, what keeps you in the university on track to graduate?
2. What factors threaten to drive you away from the university so that your graduation is greatly delayed or you leave the university? Put differently, what drives you out of the university so you do not graduate?
3. What will you do to control the threats? Please be very specific and detailed.

Reminder: Get whatever information is available from your major department that can help you with your planning. Submit this material with the assignment.