Composition 1A **The Personal Essay**

**Overview:** Your first take-home essay assignment will be to write a personal essay, as described in the text. This will come out of your own experiences and reflections about those experiences. This is a wide-ranging genre, used not only by people writing memoirs but also in many professional fields to explore many subjects and to enlighten, inform, and move readers.

**Details:**

* **Topic:** Ideally, you should write about an incident that you are still figuring out, not a story you’ve already told and told. Good essays can spring from reflections about an event, an object, a place, or a person.
* **Audience:** Your choice, but it must be ***specific*** (for example, not just “young people” but “young people who are considering taking up a musical instrument”) and appropriate to your topic, style, thesis, and purpose.
* **Forum:** Where the piece would be published, broadcast, or delivered as a speech. Be as specific as you can (not “a newspaper” but “*The Spartan Daily*”).
* **Method:** You will both **show** the reader what you are talking about (using concrete details about sights, sounds, smells, tastes, and tactile sensations) and **tell** them what meaning you found in the experience, balancing both elements. There should probably be a story (things that happen), not just discussion.
* **Format, length:** MLA format, (see p. 312 of your text), 1300 words.
* **Criteria:** Depth & originality of thinking, richness of descriptive detail, development, organization, grammar, style, format.

**Procedure:**

1. **Topic proposal:** Write a BRIEF “sales pitch” describing what you like to write about. It should identify Topic, Audience, and Forum, as described above, and your thesis and purpose, that is, what point you want to make and why. THIS IS GRADED. **Due:**
2. **Peer Review:** Bring TWO copies of your rough draft to class and be prepared to discuss it with a classmate and fill out a peer review sheet. This is graded, so do not skip it. If some unforeseen calamity prevents your attendance, you must get a peer review outside of class, but you won’t be able to make up the points you missed. Your project will be docked 20% if you don’t get one. **Due:**
3. Turnitin.com: After the peer review, and your final revision, submit your paper to Turnitin.com, following the instructions on the course Web site. Then print out your final draft and hand it in at the BEGINNING of class. Include your rough draft and peer review sheet (filled out). Please put these in a manila envelope with your name on the outside. **Due:**
4. If you are unclear about any of this or get stuck at any point, ASK ME! Here’s my email address again: julie.sparks@sjsu.edu.