

Summary of Formal Writing Assignments

Over the next 16 weeks, you will complete four formal writing assignments and a final project. All of this writing will be workshopped and revised before being submitted to me for review. All writing in its final form should be of publishable quality—of such a quality that someone would PAY you for it. No hunger artists here, remember?

An Article for Each of the Department's Publications

Since the inception of this course, the students of our department have collaborated to produce two in-house publications to serve our faculty and students: *The Writing Life* and *The English and Comparative Literature Newsletter*. Take home the copies of past issues that I have given you today, look up the copies that are on the website, and review them: define the purpose of each publication, the types of information covered, the style and forms used in each. Be prepared to discuss our issue next week at our first two production meetings.

Article for the Writing Life (1000 words).

As the title suggests, *Writing Life* is a magazine that explores the intersection of the words *writing* and *life*— so the title of the magazine resonates grammatically: writing and life; writing of life, or about life, or out of life; our lives as writers, and that could include the life of the writing we do, or the life of writers, writing life as lived or living as a writer. The magazine is published by the English and Comparative Literature Department for the students and faculty, all of whom are writers, and so interested in writing life.

To this set of resonances, I propose we add another—that we collaborate this term to explore, in our first writing assignment, a single topic: the intersection of *sight* and *insight*. Again, placed side-by-side the words resonate, and the question emerges: what is the relationship between these two words that share the same base? In this issue, then, we will engage our audience in a series of articles all of which explore the relationship between sight and insight in writing life.

You can construct our topic for this issue as a word table:

| | |
|---------|-------|
| writing | sight |
| insight | life |

Your first informal writing assignment will begin with today's in-class freewrite on the words in this table. I will expect a typed one-paragraph pitch for a story idea (concept, form, and length) for our first production meeting next Monday.

Sample Pitch #1 for the *Writing Life: Sight and Insight* Issue

I propose a 1000-word "think piece" exploring "ekphrasis" as a mode of writing. I will research contemporary essay writing to find examples and look for published interviews with authors who discuss the intersection of sight and insight, and the experience of ekphrasis. The essay will reach toward a definition of form that emerges from this kind of writing experience.

Sample Pitch #2 for the *Writing Life: Sight and Insight* Issue

I propose a 1000-word interview essay exploring sight as a locus for insight: to what extent is insight grounded in sight? I will interview faculty and student writers in the department to discuss their own invention processes, to determine what link, if any, there is between sight and insight.

Sample Pitch #3 for the *Writing Life: Sight and Insight* Issue

I propose a 1000-word profile of Sam Maio, SJSU Creative Writing professor and poet. The profile will explore the sources of imagery in his poems as they emerge from his life and develop through his writing process. The profile will be based on interviews conducted with the subject, conducted after I read his published works.

Sample Pitch #4 for the *Writing Life: Sight and Insight* Issue

I propose a 1000-word personal essay to explore the relationship between sight and insight in my own writing: my essay will play with the relationship between eye and I, between the eye that sees and the I inspired by sight to insight. What does this process of eye-to-I writing look like from the inside? What does it produce on the page?

Article for the English and Comparative Literature Newsletter (ECLN) (1000 words).

The English and Comparative Literature Department houses lots of programs and projects, offering its members a wide range of opportunities to develop their intellectual lives: The Center for Literary Arts, The Career and Professional Writing Program, the Creative Writing Program, the Writing Center, the Secondary Education Program, Reed magazine; there is a new student-faculty writing group; and there are all the fruits of our intellectual labors: an online journal of Asian American literary studies, a growing list of faculty and student publications. All of these programs and activities generate the news of the Department of English and Comparative Literature. We report on that news.

In our first two production meetings we will come up with the general list of news beats to be covered for the newsletter, and you will each sign up for a news beat. To prepare for this part of our meeting's agenda, you will need to peruse old issues of the *ECLN* and brainstorm at least 3 stories you could cover this semester. Final assignments will be confirmed once preliminary research has been conducted (see schedule: October 3).

Drafts of Two Articles for Publication in Periodicals

Your readings will include several essays published in recent periodicals. Your assignment will be to research and draft two such essays yourself—for specific audiences/periodicals:

- Profile Essay (3 pages, typed single-space)
- Feature Article (5 to 8 pages, typed single-space)

Final Revision and Analysis of Article for Final Publication Project (*article: page count determined by submissions guidelines of the publication you are soliciting; manuscript typed single-space; analysis: 1 page, typed single-spaced*).

Our goal this term is to help each other produce at least one publishable piece and find it a home—then send it off. This final project will also be submitted to me for evaluation as your final project. This part of the coursework will ask you to produce the following:

- a revised draft of one of the essays that you've workshopped in your small groups and that I've commented on and evaluated
- a final version of that same essay, which incorporates the comments from our workshops together as a class in the last 4 class meetings
- a query letter to the editor of the publication to which you are submitting the article
- a one-page analysis (typed single-space) that explains how your article is suited to the publication that you are submitting to (audience, purpose, content, format, style)

If you think that this looks like a painful amount of writing-work, you may in fact be a writer:

A writer is someone for whom writing is more difficult than it is for other people.

~Thomas Mann