

Reflection Guidelines

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Why Reflection/ Self-Reflexivity?

In our modern world, it's no longer enough to merely experience an event or phenomenon, or set of facts through course content. We also need to *reflect* on the activity or information, following a model of experience, reflection, analysis, and action. Through *guided reflection*, we gain •a deeper understanding of the meaning associated with an experience, event, phenomenon, or facts; •a sense of personal growth, and •an enhanced sense of social justice, personal values, and civic action. If the reflection takes place in a course, there is often a broader appreciation of the discipline. Reflection also helps us articulate links between our personal experience -- and theories, ethics, and values from the areas such as media studies, critical pedagogy, and/or social change.

Brazilian educator Paulo Freire describes the importance of “praxis”: “reflection and action upon the world in order to transform it.” One form of reflection, **Ignatian Contemplation**, considers Experience, Reflection, and Action: **Experience:** *Pay attention to the experience – what is going on?* **Reflection:** *What does the experience say to you?* **Action:** *What would you do differently? The same? What additional action should you take?* All of these inform our understanding of the importance of reflection, theoretical frameworks surrounding the concepts, and practical ways to include reflection in our daily lives ... and course assignments.

Freire, Paulo. 1970. *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. Trans. Myra Bergman Ramos. New York: Continuum, 1989.

Higgins, John W. 1997. "Paulo Freire and Social Transformation." *Peace Review* 9.4: 571-577.

Available at: www.mediaprof.org/academic/writings/Higgins.Freire_PeaceReview.1997.pdf

Dervin, Brenda and Lois Foreeman-Wernet (with E. Lauterbach), eds. 2003. *Sense-Making Methodology Reader: Selected Writings of Brenda Dervin*. Cresskill, NJ: Hampton Press.

How to Respond in a Reflection assignment:

If you're assigned to provide a “Reflection section” in an assignment, below are some possible areas to explore. Of course, it depends on the action, reading, experience that you're being asked to reflect upon... so adapt it accordingly. The idea is to get you to think more deeply about the nature of the experience.

In a section clearly labeled “REFLECTION,” provide your Thoughts/ Ideas/ Emotions/ Questions/ Connections, etc. about the reading, event, phenomenon, or experience: Below are some examples from an internship course that included service learning:

- What do you think and feel? What are you learning about yourself? Does this experience confirm or challenge your personal values? What about your sense of community and sense of service? Do you think your actions had any impact? What more needs to be done? What would you change in this situation? How have you changed? Explain and discuss in detail.
- Connections: How does your experience relate to the topics addressed in class and in readings -- this class and others you've taken? What, if any, questions are you left with that you might explore further? Explain and discuss in detail.

Some Questions to Promote Self-Reflection

Reflection

- *What happened? What did I experience, read, learn, etc.?*
- *How did I feel?*
- *What does that say to me?*
- *What difference did it make to me?*
- *What difference did it make to my community?*
- *What personal growth did I experience through this?*
- ***What leads me to my observations and conclusions? (Explain deeply and thoroughly)***

Connections

- *What connections can I make between*
 - the experience or information AND
 - my thoughts, ideas, confusions, questions, feelings AND
 - outside stuff:
 - things I've read, or heard from other classes or sources or people
 - theories, ideas, evaluations, comments, etc. AND
 - things I've experienced myself in the past
- And, ALWAYS: ***What leads me to my observations and conclusions? Explain in detail!***