



### **What is Reflective Journaling**

Reflective journals are personal records of students' learning experiences. Students are asked to record learning-related incidents during the learning, and more often, just after they occur. Entries in journals are prompted by questions about the learning experience, assignments, exams, lectures, and events. They record the student's own ideas or thought processes about what happened. Journals are then submitted to the instructor for assessment. (Adapted from: Northern Illinois University, Faculty Development and Instructional Design Center)

### **Why Practice Reflective Journaling**

Journaling is useful in providing insight into self-awareness - what you do (behaviors), why you do it (values, assumptions, aspirations), how you feel (emotions), and how you think. Journaling can expose contradictions, misconceptions, and conflict. Academic learning through continuous reflection promotes the development of knowledge, skills, and cognitive capacities necessary for students to deal effectively with complex issues. (Adapted from <http://www.webguru.neu.edu/undergraduate-research/structuring-ur-experience/reflective-journaling> and Eyler, J. (2002), Reflection: Linking Service and Learning—Linking Students and Communities. *Journal of Social Issues*, 58: 517–534)

### **Example of Questions for Reflection**

Depending on your individual nature, your journal can be either more or less structured in format and style. To be effective, the journal must be more than merely a written record. A set of guiding questions can be useful in facilitating critical reflection. For this reason, the following questions are offered as useful starting points in facilitating meaningful reflection.

- Briefly describe a situation or event that occurred this week that affected you as a student or your class as a whole?
- Why are you describing this situation or event - did you experience challenges in meeting it? Did you exhibit strengths? Did you learn something?
- Is there an overarching issue or problem here? What is the potential value here?
- What were you feeling at the time of the situation or event?
- What were you thinking at the time of the incident? Did you have any preconceived ideas? New insights?
- What was good or bad about the event or situation?
- (How) Has this experience challenged your assumptions, prejudices, or biases?
- What specific possible solutions have you been able to identify to the problem?
- (How) will this experience alter your future behavior, attitudes, or career?

(Adapted from: <http://www.webguru.neu.edu/undergraduate-research/structuring-ur-experience/reflective-journaling>)

### **Types of Reflections**

**Observations**—Writing about what you actually saw or your viewpoint on a particular event. For example, *“At the Chille millennium Game Jam I saw hundreds of students designing and developing their own video games from scratch.”*

**Questions**—Upon reflection, you could ask the question, *“Why do most of the mixed male-and-female teams choose dark themes while the guy-only teams have lighter themes?”*

**Speculations**—After thinking about the situation, you could reflect, *“Maybe it’s possible that the mixed teams try to overcompensate so as not to appear to be ‘soft’. Or, maybe the all male teams over-compensate so as not to appear so testosterone driven!”*

Self-awareness—At this point a you may place yourself in the situation by considering the ramifications. *“I really don’t think I would overcompensate one way or the other. I think I’m aware of where my sensibilities are as a designer and can be okay saying ‘hey, I like this style!’”*

Integration of theory and ideas—By reflecting on theories or ideas about cultural norms you have connected the experience with what you have learned. You might write, *“Social norm theory explains that particular group members think other group members want them to be something they’re not.”*

Critique—This is where you can self-reflect on or “critique” the situation by writing, *“I can now reflect on my own experiences to see if I really change my design decisions because I’m trying to avoid being a stereotype.”* (Adapted from: Northern Illinois University, Faculty Development and Instructional Design Center)

### **How Accomplishment is Measured**

Journals will be assessed based upon the following criteria:

- Journal entry length matters little as long as expectations are covered.
- Identification (5%):  
(A) Name of student clearly written on either the outside cover, inside cover, or first page and subject and date clearly identifying each entry; (B) Name of student clearly written on either the outside cover, inside cover, or first page, and subject and date clearly identifying most entries; (C) Name of student written somewhere, and subject and date clearly identifying about half the entries; (D) Name of student written somewhere, and subject and date on a few of the entries; (F) No name of student written anywhere, and/or no subject or dates on the entries.
- Frequency of Entries (35%):  
(A) The equivalent of three to four entries per week (B) two entries per week (C) one entry per week (D) the equivalent of one entry every ten days to two weeks (F) less than one entry per two weeks.
- Context of Entries Relative to the Student Experience in Visualization (25%):  
(A) Entries are concerned with a broad mix of courses, projects, exhibitions, talks, student group activities, and Viz culture; (B) Entries are predominantly Viz-centric, but have a slight mix of non-viz material and/or are limited to a small scope of Viz experiences; (C) Entries are about an even mix of Viz-oriented material and other and the scope of Viz experiences is limited; (D) Entries are predominantly non-Viz related and the scope is limited; (F) No Viz-related entries.
- Insight and Revelation of Entries (35%):  
(A) Significant self-awareness, reflection, and critical thinking demonstrated; (B) Most entries demonstrate self-awareness, reflection, and critical thinking, but some are almost all observation; (C) About half the entries demonstrate self-awareness, reflection, and critical thinking and about half are primarily observation (D) Most entries are primarily observation while some demonstrate self-awareness, reflection, and critical thinking; (F) No evidence of self-awareness, reflection, or critical thinking.

### **Example Journal Entries**

#### Very Good Examples

5, Sept. 2019                      Practicing Drawing

Just done with my third day of Drawing for Viz. While I’m happy with my first drawing, my second drawing made me frustrated. Knox told me to not get discourage and that I just need to practice. I’m struggling with an artistic problem in academics! Worse, I think I’ve been doing this for years: I care too much about grades. I want to achieve, but I think I’m more concerned with creating work

based upon check-boxes than I am with actually moving my work forward. I worry about how this will hurt me in Viz. I need to find a way to let it go and get real.

25, Oct. 2019      Notan Drawing

I tried to go to the AIGA meeting today...missed it. I ended up spending hours working on ideas for the notan project. After all that time I threw everything away because the ideas didn't work on paper like they did in my head. It happens to everyone, I suppose. I guess I'll get my head in a different space and try again. Maybe sleep will lead to better ideas. The ones I had were just too jumbled and flat...maybe...Hard to tell for sure, but not good. I'll be better after I think over it some more.

11, Oct. 2019      DreamWorks Talk

Earlier tonight I attended a talk by artists from DreamWorks. Since I'm not sure yet what I want to do after I graduate I thought this would be a good way to learn more about how animation works. I have been leaning more toward design/art and I still want to do that, but they made their work sound so exciting. The technical parts still worry me, but it's made me think more.

### Not So Good Examples

23, Sept.      <no title>

I went to dinner with my aunt and uncle today. They live here in town. No, this has nothing to do with Viz, but the expectation that I do something Viz related every <expletive> day is a little obnoxious, to be honest. Anyway, they gave me a bunch of food and snack to take back to the dorm. Some good stuff. Don't know what I'll do with the basket.

15, Oct.

Perspective drawing are...interesting. Accuracy is cool. Kind of limiting, too.

<no date> <no title>

I think there was a visiting artist's talk today. Krista told us about it. I thought about going but needed to do laundry. *(note to self: I wrote this at the end of the semester while just trying to make up enough stuff to get a decent journal grade...can't really remember things I did...it's getting late and the journal is due tomorrow...maybe Tim and Miguel won't notice).*