Reading, Research, and Reflective Journal

These journals are intended to help you develop yourself by writing. Get a notebook and start journaling there by handwriting thoughts, feelings, interests, and connections. No rules. Go. Write. Draw. Create. Grow.

There is mostly untapped and seemingly unlimited potential for self-development and self-growth through the practice of journaling. If done as a regular commitment or an everyday practice, journaling helps you grow as person by realizing who you are, what you think, how to align these aspects with a research process as well as how all of it relates to the course readings and discussions. Journaling can feed your research growth, prepare and align your mind and body for agency, and steal time from “work” to hear your soul or life-force. Journals also have a way of producing internal moral collisions even the most evidenced arguments by the most accomplished professor cannot. You make the decision to grow each time you journal. Now, moving from your written journal to a typed submission will develop your scholarly prowess. By inviting you to reflect on each week’s reading, listening, and/or viewing materials, we make connections differently by writing in addition to reading or discussing ideas.

Here’s the process for this class’s journal requirement: Ask yourself, what am I drawn to in these prompts? What did you write in your journal? Then develop those ideas against the course material. Type this journal entry in a private google doc (shareable with me given editing access). Then, when you want to submit an official journal submission, you share it with me as a google doc by email. Just email the google doc link to the page, give me editing access, and I will provide feedback. Every entry goes on the same google document for the entire semester.

Starting in week 2 (January 24-28), students that complete at least seven journal entries receive an A grade for the Journal requirements in this class. All entries to the prompts are due on Fridays at 8am. To qualify as an entry, a journal entry should minimally be 6-10 paragraphs (1-2 pages single spaced). You are in charge of what you submit through a single google doc that we pass back and forth every time you have an entry.

Because you must only complete seven entries, you do not need to write every week. The assignment is meant to be flexible to help you work around the course load and the ongoing pandemic. Choose to write in weeks where you are most engaged/have the most questions/feel the need to share something really special (because this is how a person’s research desires ignite). Journal entries will follow a specific format outlined below. The idea is to connect our materials in class and link your response to the weekly prompt, experiences, research, and contemporary events. They are due each week on Fridays at 8am. See the dates below. You submit the journal entries as a google doc (make sure I can edit) between you and me.
Where to Journal:

-Google docs!

This requires access to Google docs, which KSU has. If you do not have access to Google docs, let me know and we can make alternative arrangements. The idea is to have one document where you will write all of the entries throughout the semester. Then, we pass this link of work back and forth all semester. The idea is you each use one google doc between you and I as your journal. See the format section above for more details.

Format of Journal Entries:

At the beginning of each journal entry please include the latest entry at the top, include the date and the week for which you are writing, the topic, and whether or not I can share the content of your journal entry with the class.

For example:

Journal number: 1-7
Date: X/XX/2022 Week: 3
Topic: “Failing States?”
Share: no/yes

Write 6-10 paragraphs (1-2 single spaced) to address that week’s prompt. In addressing the prompt, make sure you answer as many of the questions as you can by relating them to your reading/listening/viewing assignments. You can also use any reputable source you want as evidence in your journal as well.

At the end of an entry, you may offer a question or two that would like to raise during class discussion. These could be short phrases or full on questions. Use this as a tool to prepare for discussion.

There will also be a section where you can detail/record your progress on your self-love project.

Sharing your journal entries – what does this mean?

Sometimes you might be writing about personal experiences, feelings, thoughts, etc. Keep in mind that I will be reading every entry so please make sure you are comfortable with what you are sharing with me. You, ultimately, control what I read. You are not obligated to tell me anything personal. Nevertheless, in this journaling process, it is not beyond the realm of possibilities that you will share something that is private that you wish to keep between you and me. This is 100% acceptable. I want these journals to be a space where you can reflect on the course and the reading in whatever way works for you (within the wide parameters of the prompt). If this means you do not want to share these reflections with the class, just let me know at the beginning of each entry.

To be clear – I will never share the full journal entries with the class or anyone else. However, if I get a chance to read them before our discussion, I will sometimes use your responses to illicit comments during the class discussion. For example, If you make an insightful point connecting reading or find a great example in the media that relates to our discussion, I may ask you to share
this and in order to do so, I will likely reveal what it is you had wrote about. This is why I ask for permission to share on each entry.

**Grading the journal entries**

I will credit the journal entry submissions based on **commitment, engagement, and insight**. If you are one week late with an entry, you get a B for that entry. If you are two weeks late with an entry, you get a C for that submission. Past two weeks, I will not credit late submissions.

– **A grade:**

* Commitment: All entries are completed and provide enough material to satisfy the prompt by reflecting on the material and showing thoughtful consideration of the task.

* Engagement: The entry clearly engages with the relevant course material or research task and uses the space to help further the writer’s understanding and their learning experience.

* Insight: The entry considers issues or questions for which there is no clear-cut answer and tries to make connections between the course material and their own experience. The entry addresses or contains complex, paradoxical and/or contradictory ideas.

– **B grade:**

* Commitment: Most entries are complete (no more than two-three missing) and/or some of the entries are incomplete or superficial—they merely summarize material or comment on a topic in an uninspired way.

* Engagement: The entries show some attempts to further understanding of the learning experience, but some seem like they are done just to complete the assignment.

* Insight: The entry engages with course materials and attempts to make connections between the course, the prompt, and their own experience but this is sometimes unfocused or relies too much on summary.

– **C grade:**

* Commitment: There are less than six entries completed and/or some entries are superficial.

* Engagement: Entries barely engage with the course materials or topics or make any attempt to further understanding.

* Insight: Entries seems formulaic and forced with no real benefit to the writer.
Journal Prompts:

Week 2 (Friday, January 28/Feb 11): Intention

What does self-care or self-love mean to you? What do you think your self-care routine will look like over the next three months? If you are new to a daily-ish practice, what have you noticed since you began practicing? Based on the ACMHE Tree, what are some of the contemplative practices you want to try this semester? Lastly, what intention would you like to set for this class/semester?

Week 3 (Friday, February 4/ Feb 18): Love and Violence

Are you a violent person? After considering his week's material from MLK and the system of normalized annihilation we live in, can love and violence ever be combined? How has your thinking shifted about a love ethic as well as the use of violence? What changes did you notice? Do you think your self-love routine affects your reflection on the material? How? Of course, you can also consider the foundations of the universe in your answer or not. It is up to you. This is your journal to use to discipline your thoughts about our world/experience of life.

Week 4 (Friday, February 11/Feb 24): Self-Care Practices and Social Violence

We have come to the point in the semester where we begin to reflect back on our intention for the semester, we have been practicing self-love routines that work for us, and viewed the interconnectivity between foreign and domestic policy. How are your routines looking? What is working? What is not working? Does the self-care help? How? What do you notice about it? What has changed about you since we began the semester?

Then consider at least one idea that you arrived to this class with in January that you have seen change as we have been on this journey together. What and how did perspectives change for you? Can self-love routines be a way to combat the violence all around us? While I want you to focus on your individual experience thus far, I am also curious as to whether you believe at this time that self-love could work on a large social scale. Basically, do we have the power to stop social, institutional, and personal violence?

Week 5 (Friday, February 18/ Mar 4): What Makes you Angry?

This week we explored the incremental collapse of our humanity when we engage with violence over time on this river of life. We also thought about how the violence our government uses abroad affects our society. Since violence can emerge from anger, it is necessary to interrogate our anger. Humans get angry. It is ok. What is not ok is that our anger has no escape or we are trapped in a state of unrelenting anger. Is your anger connected and produced by the false promises, lies, and unmet expectations of our system? Pankaj Mishra argues it leads to nihilism, people wanting to tear down the system, and social violence.

What makes you angry? When do you feel yourself gripped with anger? Do you notice yourself trapped in your anger? Is it connected to a structure within our Enlightenment states? How do we
offset the anger we feel because of the system we live under? What steps can we take? If one remains angry over time, do you think this could have violent repercussions in your life? How can we be in the world where anger is the norm? How do we create a less angry society?

Week 6 (Friday, February 24/ Mar 11): A Love Ethic

How does bell hooks’ deep interrogation of love resonate with your ongoing process this course? How does she define love? What are the characteristics of love? How did this work change your perspectives about love? How did her exploration of love change you?

Can the expansive love that bell hooks writes about save you? How? What would a political system based on love look like? How would it differ from our current system of capitalism and its products: poverty, racism and militarism?

Week 7 (Friday, March 4/ Mar 18): An Education of Liberation

How did you understand Paulo Freire’s Pedagogy of the Oppressed within the many journeys of our course? What were the most important, satisfying, and meaningful points to you? Which of Freire’s arguments spoke to you? Why? How did this book’s arguments change what you thought about “Education” before you had engaged with it? How did this book change you? What does Pedagogy of the Oppressed mean to you?

Week 8 (Friday, March 11/March 25): The Panther Model

Analyze the Black Panther Party’s social programs such as the Free Breakfast Program. How does the Panther Model diverge from the usual or conventional political assistance (say a NGO)? How is an NGO and what the Panthers did different in terms of the system? What makes the Free Breakfast Program mutual aid and how is that different than regular charity? Examine in as much detail as you feel is necessary how the politics of the Free Breakfast Program overlay onto a map of self-love and mutual aid. Another way to say it – How is the Free Breakfast Program illustrate a love ethic in the world?

Week 9 (Friday, March 18/April 1): The Politics of Care

The authors of the collective indicate the carelessness dominates our societies because of the focus on profit-making as the only engine. We are then treated to a progressive, utopian view of what a society, state, and economy of care would look like? What is the history behind carelessness? When can we determine the world began living this way? What are the gendered aspects of care? What are the class/economic aspects of care? What kind of state and economy would we need to center an infrastructure of care? What does that look like?

Week 10 (Friday, March 24/April 8): Mutual Aid

What is mutual aid and what makes it different from other forms of assistance? How does mutual aid relate to the concept of solidarity? Describe the decision-making process Spade recommends for mutual aid groups. Why is it important? How can we effectively and sustainably “scale up” mutual aid networks to reach a point where everyone has what they need? How does this differ from governments scaling up? When looking at organizations to get involved in, what sorts of qualities can you look for to determine if the organization in question is a mutual aid group as opposed to a charity?
Week 11 (Friday, April 1/April 15):

Week 15 (Monday May 2): **Catching-up**

Pick one of the one weekly prompts that you missed the two-week deadline on. You can submit any original journal entry from any of this semester's prompts for regular credit.