

JOURNAL WRITING GUIDE

Overview

Periodically, your teacher will ask you to submit a reflective journal, in which you respond to issues discussed in class or in course readings. Sometimes, your teacher will ask you to include particular items in your journals; at other times, it will be up to you to make journal entries, either in response to a stimulating discussion or as a weekly reflection.

Specifics or Logistics

Keep your journal entries brief and focused—two to three paragraphs—as these are not essays or major papers. In some cases, journal entries may be numbered responses to directed questions; at other times, they may be creative entries (letters to one's self, stream-of-consciousness writing, or thought experiments/analogies). Over the course of 17 to 18 weeks, the journal writing will add up; be careful not to let this consume you or detract from your other studies!

Your journal should be a detachable hard copy from your notebook or binder, so you can periodically hand it in to your instructor to read.

Evaluation

Journals are marked out of 15 marks: 5 marks for thinking (interconnections; depth of inquiry; creativity); 5 marks for knowledge (accuracy of information and ideas); and 5 marks for communication (neatness, spelling, and grammar).

Journal Portfolio Assessment

Your mark is based on the best two or three journal entries for midterm, and best four or six for the final mark (i.e., you drop your low marks).

Ethics

Authenticity

There are ethics involved in journal writing and assessment, in that you are being asked to offer genuine reflection instead of simply constructing your narrative voice in the likeness of the assessor (i.e., making yourself out to be a thinker you think your teacher will like).

Fairness or Tolerance

By the same token, the assessor must endeavour to be tolerant of a wide range of opinions and styles of thought (i.e., show tolerance for ranges of reasonable eclecticism).

Etiquette

It is also important that your journals not become an arena for ridiculing classmates, or the instructor, though it will often be appropriate to use the comments of others as a catalyst for your own reflections. It is fair to contest what others say, including or especially the remarks of the instructor, but do so in a respectful manner: as you would want to receive feedback from others. Avoid vitriolic language when speaking of others' ideas.

Privacy

It should be safely assumed that the material in your journal will not be shared with other teaching staff or students. Your teacher may ask you to voluntarily share something you have written in your journal.

