

HOW TO WRITE QUALITY JOURNAL ENTRIES

WHY ARE YOU WRITING JOURNAL ENTRIES?

Journal entries are based on the idea that you write to learn. Writing forces you to be actively engaged with the material you were just learning, to reflect on it and write about the result of that reflection. Your journal reflects your personal thoughts and beliefs—you should feel free to write exactly what you are thinking without fear of being judged.

One of the biggest hurdles with journal writing is making the leap from simply summarizing what you learned to reflecting and thinking about how that material applies to you. It is not enough to merely regurgitate information without answering the “so

what?” question. Why are you writing this down? Why did this information give you an “ah ha!” moment or why did you find it interesting or useful? Your journal is one place to intentionally make connections between what you know or hope to gain and what you just learned. Your journal is a place to raise questions and it is a place for critical analysis and evaluation.

In your journals, we will be looking for evidence of thought, reflection, and individual thinking about the connections between class material and your lives. For example, you may have just learned about the importance of getting

involved as an undergraduate. How do you hope to accomplish that, personally?



We will be looking for careful thinking, rather than superficial or summary writing. Develop an idea, rather than listing numerous unconnected thoughts. Finally, we will also be expecting basic readability in your journals.

WHAT WILL MAKE JOURNAL WRITING EASIER?

Write regularly! We are not expecting you to write after every class period, but that would be ideal. We give options for what you could write about after every class. Even if you don't hand it in, choose a topic and write for a little bit on it.

Making specific connections will also make writing easier for you. Don't try to cover everything—pick one issue or topic and expand on it. Your journal should not recap an entire class period.

Write entries that are engaging. Use specifics! Be interesting!

Finally, take the prompts seriously. Think, reflect, then start writing. See what flows from your mind to your pen (or computer, as the case may be!).

FORMAT OF CLA 1001 JOURNAL ENTRIES

- *Include your first and last name*
- *Include the date*
- *Write the topic that you chose for the entry*
- *Give the word count*
- *Type your entries in MS Word and attach them to an email to your instructors.*
- *Use 1-inch margins and 12-point font*
- *Write a minimum of 300 words*

JOURNAL WRITING DON'T'S

- *Don't ignore basic rules of grammar and punctuation*
- *Don't wait until the last minute to write your entries*
- *Don't confuse journal with diary.*
- *Don't focus too much on feelings—rather focus on the course material and what you are learning.*
- *Don't merely describe or summarize. Take it to the next level!*