

Reflection

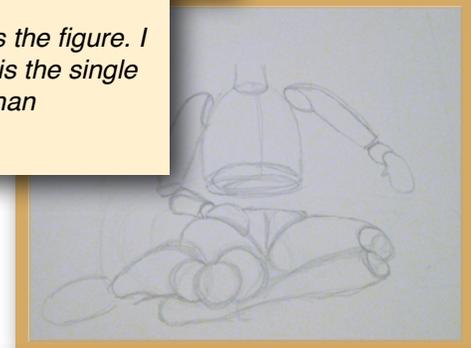
Reflection

I started going to college as an art student and so for my Student Choice I chose my favorite art class--Figure Drawing. I am a shy kind of person and on the first day of class I was as nervous about sitting down and drawing a naked person as I could be. I had the advantage of knowing the teacher from other art classes that I had taken in the past and--low and behold--he surprised us by bringing in a skeleton. Using the skeleton we learned how to draw from the inside out and the anatomy that all artists should know.

After weeks of learning how and where muscles attach and bones move I was feeling good about the class. I could understand more of what I was looking at and I was finally getting my angles and proportions right. Then the dreaded day came when we had to draw a naked person. The first five minutes of class was awkward, but as I started drawing and had to focus on the angle of a line or the length of an arm, I realized that I wasn't embarrassed anymore.

I have done a complete one-eighty. One of my favorite things to draw now is the figure. I think that as I progressed through this class I realized that the human body is the single most beautiful thing in the world and nothing is more important to an artist than understanding beauty.

Reflection and sketch by Jacob Meyers



“First, reflection is a process of change. In the language of physics, reflection is the phenomenon in which energy is returned after impinging upon a surface...What we see, in reflection, is never the thing itself, but a reconfigured version. When we reflect, we in effect break an experience into pieces then reassemble the pieces into a new form.”

--Rebecca McClanahan

Reflection can be described in various ways: musing, self-evaluation, metacognition, meditation, contemplation, consideration, rumination, etc. Intentional reflection can take on many forms: memoirs, personal essays, reflection essays, video diaries, documentaries, lab reports, research journals, etc.

Regardless of the name or form, reflection requires the thinker/writer/creator to think critically about learning and connections they make among experiences. It involves discovery: what is known (knowledge) and unknown (perplexity)? Where do both abstract and concrete learning take place? Dewey and other theorists argue that in inquiry is the foundation of meaningful reflection.

Reflection provides time and space for people in all disciplines to place their work--either in draft or final form--into broader personal or intellectual contexts.

Some Thoughts...

- * Reflecting on your teaching/learning characterizes it.
- * Teaching/learning is a conversation: reflection is how you determine its meaning.
- * Reflection can be a source, expression, and motive. It is not simply an afterthought.
- * Reflections are not spaces/places for rants or raves. They must move beyond the mere urge toward self-expression. Instead, they must be fueled by self-investigation.
- * The story behind the story of teaching/learning can be discovered and told through reflection.
- * Reflection can/should bring up more questions than it answers.
- * Reflection helps determine what you know and discover what you don't. This is the art of problem-solving.
- * Looking back and recounting the struggles, problems, risks, failures, and successes of teaching/learning answers the “so what?” question, and poses the question anew.

Sample Reflection Prompts

Summative Reflection

- In what ways have you improved as a writer/artist/scientist/etc.? What brought about those improvements? Point to specific experiences, readings, assignments, or discussions in this course.
- What did you learn by creating the signature assignment? Be specific.
- What was your biggest accomplishment in the course? How did the signature assignment and other course elements help you reach it? Be specific.
- What skills did you master in this course? How are they reflected in the signature assignment and other course work? Be specific.

Process Reflection

- What problems did you encounter in completing the signature assignment? How did you troubleshoot them, if you did?
- Talk about the aims and strategies that led to the completion of your assignment. How did your thinking about it evolve over time (point to specific experiences while working on the assignment)? How did the assignment evolve (or not evolve) with your thinking (again, point to specific experiences) about it? What went according to plan and what surprises did you encounter? What still needs work?
- What risks did you take in the assignment/course? Be specific.
- Outline the steps you took to complete the signature assignment, and tell me about your thinking at each step.
- Write about your learning process throughout this course and what it felt like at different stages until you mastered certain skills. Discuss skills you are still developing.

Evaluative Reflection

- What are the strengths and weaknesses of your signature assignment? Explain while making specific references to your work.
- Discuss your best work for the course and explain why it's your best. Be specific.
- Discuss each piece of work for the course and touch on the strengths of each. Be specific.

Reflection on Learning

- Make connections between what you studied in this _____ course with what you've learned in other courses at SLCC or before. Make specific references to your work in this class and in the other courses. How did what you learn in the other courses enhance what you learned in here, and vice versa?
- What does your work on the signature assignment illustrate about you as a learner? Be specific.
- Take a look at SLCC's learning outcomes for General Education at the end of this syllabus. Note that while no specific course helps students move toward achieving all of those outcomes, each Gen Ed course is supposed to help you make progress in achieving as many of those outcomes as are relevant to the course. Making specific references to your work in this course, tell me how you have progressed toward achieving at least three of those outcomes.
- Reflect on how you thought about (course topic) before you took this course and how you think about it now that the course is over. Have any of your assumptions or understandings changed? Why? What assignments/activities/readings were influential in this process? How will you approach (course topic) differently in the future?
- What aspect of the signature assignment made you want to learn more about _____? Why?
- Reflect on what you have learned about _____.
- Outline a chronology of significant events and "Aha" moments during the semester. Why do these events and "Aha" moments stand out? How did they help you develop as a student inside and outside of the class?

Interpretive Reflection

- Paint a textual landscape of your learning throughout the semester. What learning and skills would you use as "landmarks" within this landscape? Why?
- Write a very short personal narrative (story) about the time you spent creating the signature assignment for this course. Include musing, scene setting, and dialogue. Include both your perspective as you created the assignment and your perspective once the assignment was submitted.

(Note: Reflections do not always have to be written.)

(Note also: Giving students a choice of several possible reflection prompts is a good idea.)