**Literacy Narrative** **– Audio Essay**

Proposal Memo due **Nov. 21** / Rough Draft due **Dec. 5** / Final Draft due **Dec. 12**

**15%** of final grade / Length: **3-5 minutes recorded** (no more, no less)

**Purpose:** In this assignment, you will examine your literacy in much broader ways than your basic ability to read and write. Imagine your literacy in terms of how you react to and interpret language in particular ways, and how you produce and use language to achieve certain kinds of goals. You will write and record a short narration recounting a significant literacy event or development in your life. In the broadest sense, this assignment asks you to reflect in some way upon the roles that reading, writing, and community have played in your life—to consider, in other words, how you became the literate person you are now and are still in the process of becoming.

**Directions:** By creating or retelling a sequence of occurrences (that relate to your literacy development), you will be using narration for a specific purpose: to argue a point, create a mood, or provide an example. Whatever your purpose, you'll need to determine exactly what point you want to make—a general point that you'll bring to life with specific relevant and representative examples. You will also want to keep a specific audience of listeners in mind as you write and record. Therefore, the key to writing a successful narrative is to choose the most important details, characters, and dialogue to make certain that the setting, point of view, and organizational pattern work to your advantage.

As a class, we will visit the Media Commons where you learn to record and edit audio using

GarageBand. You will write a script for your narrative, but the final product will be a recorded (and edited) audio essay. We will talk about the process of composing a text to be listened to rather than to be read. Carefully consider how you deliver your narrative in this medium. What do you gain—or lose—by speaking this piece aloud?

As you plan and draft your narrative, pay careful attention to the following:

* Purpose: You should have an aim in mind as you write your narrative: to argue a point, to create a mood (maybe entertain), to instruct, inform, explain, or to provide cultural or philosophical commentary, blame, praise, and so forth.
* Audience: Your memoir should be tailored for a specific audience—think about what you want your reader to learn from reading about your event.
* Scope: You probably will not be able to explain the entirety of your literacy education in one essay. Choose one particular scene or a few connected scenes (a specific assignment or challenge, a memorable conversation) as a focal point.
* Selectivity: Be especially strategic in deciding which features of the experience (which details, characters, settings, and dialogue) you want to emphasize and which ones you should ignore if you are to achieve your desired purpose.
* Detail: Make vivid the various “scenes” that make up your narrative. You may want to conduct some naturalistic research in order to fill out some of these details. If you can, talk to friends or family members who remember the scene, look at photographs, and think about ways to incorporate those descriptions in your narrative.
* Dialogue: How can you use the voice of specific characters effectively within your narrative? Think about how you might communicate tone, attitude, and emotion as you create dialogue. (The use of dialogue is not required, but I encourage you to experiment with it!)
* Arrangement: Consider organizing your narrative as a series of scenes that are strung together by transitions—as opposed to “this happened then this happened then this happened” as if everything is equally important. Narratives are normally organized chronologically, but sometimes it’s effective to violate that expectation: do you want to start with an arresting moment from the middle of the story—and then circle around to explain what came before and after?
* Vocal Delivery: Keep in mind that you are composing for the ear. Adjust your writing so that listeners can understand the relationships between your ideas, even when they can’t see the sentence written on a page. Pay careful attention to your tone, pitch, speed, volume, etc. Be sure that your vocal delivery helps communicate your message effectively.

**Topics to Consider:**

* Describe your process of learning a new skill (or, in other words, learning a new literacy). This could be the story of how you learned to read, write, or how to speak a new language. It could also be the story of how you learned a new technical skill, or how you learned to communicate with a particular group of people. Consider challenges as well as successes. Have a clear sense of what a listener might gain from hearing your story.
* Think about a time when you felt like language became a barrier. Perhaps you visited another country where you didn’t know the language, or perhaps you found yourself amongst a group of people who spoke a language differently from the way you knew it. Perhaps you experienced a setting in which people were using terms or phrases that were unfamiliar. How did you handle the situation? How did it make you feel? What steps did you take to overcome the barrier?
* Think about what you hope to gain from your undergraduate education. Make notes about the series of steps that lies ahead of you. What would you sacrifice, or what might you be sacrificing, for this education? Write a narrative that recounts your gains as well as any losses (such as losing touch with certain friends or family) as you become an educated citizen. (You might also want to include some reflection about what it means to be an educated citizen).
* Draft a narrative that traces the educational progress of a parent, relative, or close friend. Develop a thesis statement early on, making sure that each incident in the narrative supports the thesis. Consider what this person gained-and lost-in the process, as well as what you have learned from their example.