



25% of course grade; due 10/29

## Project 2: Concept and Culture

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### Project 2:

Choose a concept drawn from a particular culture (one of the examples I'll be using in our discussion is a Scottish clan) that is interesting to you and write a researched essay explaining it to a general audience.

You may choose any cultural concept you like, real or imaginary. It can be drawn from your family life, from other cultures you want to understand better, or even from a work of literature. Choose a concept you know well, or an unfamiliar concept that you want to learn more about.

So, should you choose something you know well, or something that's new to you? And how should you find out more about it?

- If you choose a topic you already know something about, you may find you are more comfortable playing the role of an expert. To play the expert role, consider using concepts or cultures that you know very well (but be prepared to do adequate research to avoid a "tourist approach" to other cultures.)
- Despite that, there are some dangers with writing about the familiar: What you write may be telling readers what they already know, or you might get bored, and it might show. Some of the most exciting, interesting concepts we've read about came from students who went and found something new. How do you find a place if you don't already know about it? Here's how they did it: They found some magazines in the library and started looking for articles that sounded interesting.
- Whether you decide to find an unfamiliar concept or to explain someplace you already know something about, you should have a focused *subject area* when you start your research. The subject area you are interested in should lead you to a starting place for your research. If you have a clear idea of the subjects you're interested in, skimming through magazines on those subjects—or browsing the subject catalog—can often be illuminating.

One of the keys to making this assignment interesting is figuring out what a typical audience would already know—and not know—about the subject. Try to home in on the aspects of your concept that might be surprising or illuminating to typical readers. If you think they've never heard of the concept, then everything will be new. But if they already know some things about the concept, you need to be more clever: Are any of their assumptions or beliefs about the subject likely to be wrong?



You must integrate research into this document, in the forms of both quotes and paraphrases, and must cite all sources in MLA style, providing both in-text and bibliographic citations.

This project should be 900 to 1,500 words in length. You will also produce a one-minute video illustrating the same concept.

## **Turning it in:**

This writing project will be the centerpiece of your second portfolio (which must also include a reflective overview. See below for more on that!).

The portfolio will be due on Thursday, November 29<sup>th</sup>, and is worth 25% of your final course grade. Approximately half of the portfolio grade will come from the reflective overview, and the other half from the project 2 document.

You will hand the portfolio in electronically by emailing it to me ([dlackey@twu.edu](mailto:dlackey@twu.edu)) before class on the due date UNLESS we choose, as a class, to publish these collectively, on a website. If that is the case, your work will be due to our site before class time on the due date, and your reflection will be emailed to me, along with a link to your “concept” post on our site.

When emailing in work, please use the subject line: ENG 1013.25 Portfolio 2, and remember to give your files names that identify both the author and the project! (My suggestions are: yoursurname\_project2.doc, and yoursurname\_Reflection2.doc.)

## **Reflective overview:**

In this class, you will never hand in **just** the project document. Instead, you will hand in a portfolio comprised of the current project document and a sort of cover letter, called a reflective overview. In this critical, thoughtful, and carefully edited reflection of approximately three to five pages, you are to explain your work and learning during this project cycle. As we approach the end of this portfolio period, I will help you develop a list of prompts to guide you in considering various aspects of this project, but just as each of you have your own unique reading/writing/research and learning processes, what you cover in your reflection, and how you do so, will also be quite individual. An understanding of the purposes of this type of writing is therefore more useful than a list of prompts.

One way to think about the purpose of your overview is to persuade readers that your performance for the period of the project should be evaluated in a certain way, earning a certain grade, with ample reasons to support your claims. This piece is meant to help you demonstrate your performance as a learner/researcher/writer, but also to help your reader understand the kinds of work, engagement and learning that you went through.

Report on and evaluate the different processes you used in various parts/stages of each assignment, explore what and how you learned, and evaluate whether/how what you've done/learned will be (or not be) useful to you (for this class and others, and in your day-to-day life). Remember to be more than descriptive about your work—be reflective *and* analytical. Explain the text you've created. How? Why? What works? What doesn't?

Include a section in your reflective overview that serves as self-assessment. Based on the expectations for the project/the course, what grade do you think it should earn, and why? Please list concrete reasons from the assignment, your readings, and/or the learning goals articulated in our syllabus to explain why this grade is appropriate.

Because it is such an important piece of writing, this reflective overview will be the result of multiple drafts and peer review. It will represent careful, college level writing. Obviously, with this much to accomplish, the overview is important. Effective overviews will be carefully developed, well organized, and clear.