

# Writing Project 1: Autoethnography

## Background and Overview

So far in our course, you have started to see that you belong to a set of communities, and these communities—their rituals, practices, and various phenomena—are closely tied to your identity. This relationship naturally raises various questions: How do you experience your community? What communal rituals, practices, traditions, behaviors, and/or objects have influenced your understanding of your identity? What does it mean to define your identity through your relationship to these phenomena?

To explore these questions and others related to them, you will compose your first major writing assignment—an autoethnography. To write this autoethnography, you will select a specific habit, ritual, or behavior (what we are calling a “cultural phenomenon”) you practice and investigate it. Doing so will help you discover what this activity says about you, your personal experiences, and the ways those personal experiences connect to the experiences of others.

The autoethnography is both an easy and a difficult form of writing. It is easy because, we are writing about what we know: ourselves. It is difficult because we must communicate the significance of our experience to our audience, making a connection between our own experiences and those of our readers. We must confront the hard truth that an event is not significant just because “it happened to me.” The event must offer some take-away value, and the writer who writes about the event must be able to answer the question “so what?” The answer to this question is the primary insight of the autoethnography, or the ultimate point that you are trying to make. Autoethnographies are not just chronological narrations of events; they communicate the event’s meaning and leave readers with a dominant impression of what it might have been like to experience it themselves.

For example, you might explore

- your methods of transportation. Do you walk, ride a bike, drive, or take a train to work/school? Why? What might your routine say about your identity or culture?
- your preferences for certain types of food. What do your choices say about your beliefs?
- your reading habits. Do you read the newspaper over coffee? Do you read before bed? What do you read? Why? What might these habits convey about your age, class, or social group?

## Requirements and Deliverables

1. In your essay, you should select one habit, ritual, practice, or behavior and reflect upon this “phenomenon,” articulating why and how it has been significant for you. How have you been shaped as a person within your larger community by this activity?

2. Whatever your topic habit, ritual, practice, or behavior, your essay should be informed by close observation and provide a level of detail through example, anecdote, and explanation, which enables a reader to relate to your understanding of the action and its significance. It should provide significant insight into what has made/makes you who you are by including detailed descriptions of places and events while explaining the significance of these events to the formation of your own beliefs and behaviors.

3. Your essay should be written with an audience in mind: it should be organized in such a way that a reader can follow your thinking and reasoning from paragraph to paragraph and within each paragraph. This organization should lead your reader to your primary insight or ultimate point in a clear manner; in other words, your primary insight should help structure your paper.

4. Your essay needs to include and integrate at least one multimodal element. You could include pictures, sounds, or even hyperlinks to other resources, but you must make sure that your reader understands why you are including these elements and why including them enriches your piece of writing. Consider what media beyond text might reinforce your main idea to readers, convey in another way the significance of your autoethnography, and/or appeal to your readers from a different register.

5. Your completed essay should have a title and be at least 1200-1500 words in length.

### **Project Submission**

- Rough Draft: Your rough draft will be submitted for peer review and to your e-portfolio.
- Revised Draft: Your revised draft should be uploaded to your e-portfolio.

### **Tips:**

- Get started early.
- Review this week's materials and discussions.
- Set a writing/research schedule and stick to it.

Writing Project #1 – Autoethnography (Levels of Achievement)

**Writing Project #1: Autoethnography Assessment Rubric**

1 = poor, 2 = fair, 3 = satisfactory, 4 = good, 5 = excellent

Criteria	1	2	3	4	5	Comments
<p>Presents and explores one habit, ritual, practice, or behavior and reflects upon this activity, articulating why and how the activity has been significant for the writer.</p> <p><b>Outcomes:</b> Rhetorical Knowledge; Critical Thinking, Reading, and Composing; Processes</p>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
<p>Uses anecdote, example, and explanation to present the significance of the phenomenon to the writer’s own identity.</p> <p><b>Outcomes:</b> Rhetorical Knowledge; Critical Thinking, Reading, and Composing; Processes</p>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
<p>Organizes the essay with the reader in mind by using structured paragraphs and by building to a primary insight.</p> <p><b>Outcomes:</b> Rhetorical Knowledge; Critical Thinking, Reading, and Composing; Processes; Knowledge of Conventions</p>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
<p>Meaningfully incorporates at least one multimodal element.</p> <p><b>Outcomes:</b> Rhetorical Knowledge; Processes</p>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Overall	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	

Writing Project #1 – Autoethnography (Levels of Achievement)

Criteria: Use of Habit, Ritual or Practice	1	2	3	4	5	Comments
<p>Presents and explores one habit, ritual, practice, or behavior and reflects upon this activity, articulating why and how the activity has been significant for the writer.</p> <p><b>Outcomes:</b> Rhetorical Knowledge; Critical Thinking, Reading, and Composing; Processes</p>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	

5: excellent	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● presents one habit, ritual, practice, or behavior with clarity and objectivity</li> <li>● thoughtfully reflects upon this activity and directly describes its influence in shaping the writer’s identity</li> <li>● clearly articulates why and how the activity has been significant for the writer</li> </ul>
4: good	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● presents one habit, ritual, practice, or behavior with clarity and little bias</li> <li>● reflects upon this activity and begins to address its influence in shaping the writer’s identity</li> <li>● articulates why and how the activity has been significant for the writer</li> </ul>
3: satisfactory	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● presents one habit, ritual, practice, or behavior with clarity and some bias</li> <li>● reflects upon this activity and acknowledges its influence in shaping the writer’s identity</li> <li>● articulates why or how the activity has been significant for the writer</li> </ul>
2: fair	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● presents one habit, ritual, practice, or behavior with some confusion and bias</li> <li>● reflects upon this activity and but does not acknowledge its influence in shaping the writer’s identity</li> <li>● begins to articulate why or how the activity has been significant for the writer</li> </ul>
1: needs significant work	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● it is not clear that the writer presents one habit, ritual, practice, or behavior</li> <li>● there is no clear reflection upon the activity or its relation to the writer’s identity</li> <li>● the activity’s significance is not addressed</li> </ul>

Writing Project #1 – Autoethnography (Levels of Achievement)

Criteria: Use of Examples	1	2	3	4	5	Comments
<p>Uses anecdote, example, and explanation to present the significance of the phenomenon to the writer’s own identity.</p> <p><b>Outcomes:</b> Rhetorical Knowledge; Critical Thinking, Reading, and Composing; Processes</p>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	

5: excellent	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● provides numerous anecdotes, examples, and explanations with many details</li> <li>● includes descriptions of places or events with numerous details</li> <li>● highlights the writer’s own beliefs and behaviors with a good deal of critique</li> </ul>
4: good	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● provides some anecdotes, examples, and explanations with some detail</li> <li>● includes descriptions of places or events with some details</li> <li>● highlights the writer’s own beliefs and behaviors with some critique</li> </ul>
3: satisfactory	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● provides a few anecdotes, examples, and explanations with a few details</li> <li>● includes descriptions of places or events with a few details</li> <li>● highlights the writer’s own beliefs and behaviors with a little critique</li> </ul>
2: fair	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● provides very few anecdotes, examples, and explanations with very few details</li> <li>● includes descriptions of places or events with very few details</li> <li>● highlights the writer’s own beliefs and behaviors with very little critique</li> </ul>
1: needs significant work	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● does not provide anecdotes, examples, and explanations with any degree of detail</li> <li>● does not include descriptions of places or events with any degree of detail</li> <li>● does not highlight the writer’s own beliefs and behaviors with any critique</li> </ul>

Writing Project #1 – Autoethnography (Levels of Achievement)

Criterion: Use of Organization	1	2	3	4	5	Comments
Organizes the essay with the reader in mind by using structured paragraphs and by building to a primary insight. <b>Outcomes:</b> Rhetorical Knowledge; Critical Thinking, Reading, and Composing; Processes; Knowledge of Conventions	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	

5: excellent	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● articulates a primary insight that the paper builds to in a clear manner</li> <li>● paragraphs always stay on topic and never change main ideas</li> <li>● the audience can follow the paper’s organization with no difficulty</li> </ul>
4: good	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● articulates a primary insight that the paper builds to in a mostly clear manner</li> <li>● paragraphs almost always stay on topic and almost never change main ideas</li> <li>● the audience can follow the paper’s organization with little difficulty</li> </ul>
3: satisfactory	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● articulates a primary insight that the paper builds to in a somewhat ambiguous manner</li> <li>● paragraphs sometimes stay on topic and sometimes change main ideas</li> <li>● the audience can follow the paper’s organization with some difficulty</li> </ul>
2: fair	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● articulates a primary insight that the paper builds to in an ambiguous manner</li> <li>● paragraphs rarely stay on topic and often change main ideas</li> <li>● the audience can follow the paper’s organization with moderate difficulty</li> </ul>
1: needs significant work	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● omits a primary insight or includes a primary insight generally unrelated to the paper’s content</li> <li>● paragraphs do not stay on topic and very often change main ideas</li> <li>● the audience can follow the paper’s organization with great difficulty</li> </ul>

Writing Project #1 – Autoethnography (Levels of Achievement)

Criterion: Use of Multimodal Elements	1	2	3	4	5	Comments
Meaningfully incorporates at least one multimodal element and explains to the reader its significance within the paper. <b>Outcomes:</b> Rhetorical Knowledge; Processes	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	

5: excellent	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● incorporates at least one multimodal element</li> <li>● the multimodal element strongly enriches the piece of writing</li> </ul>
4: good	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● incorporates at least one multimodal element</li> <li>● the multimodal element generally enriches the piece of writing</li> </ul>
3: satisfactory	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● incorporates at least one multimodal element</li> <li>● the multimodal element somewhat enriches the piece of writing</li> </ul>
2: fair	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● incorporates at least one multimodal element</li> <li>● the multimodal element barely enriches the piece of writing</li> </ul>
1: needs significant work	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● there is no multimodal element that enriches the piece of writing</li> </ul>