

Writing a Reflective Essay

HSS8120 Creative Digital Practice

In this session I will

- Remind us of the task
- Compare reflective and other types of essay
- Discuss the structure and content of reflective essays
- Talk about submission procedure

Over this semester you have been introduced to a number of areas of creative digital practice and its methods. These have included **media art practice, media archaeology, Research through Design** and next week you will look at **ethnography**. Some of these methods will be new to you. We wish you to produce a **reflective** which positions your work (present past and/or future) in response to it. Your essay should be appropriately referenced and you should consider how you can demonstrate the below points (from the handbook), i.e. that you:

- have an introductory understanding of the combined history of art and computational technology.
- have an understanding of different contexts for creative digital research.
- are able to contextualise your work within the theoretical and creative history of creative digital practice.
- have developed your understanding of how your work is informed by existing Research through Art and Design and creative practice.

SOME BASICS

A good essay demonstrates an ability to:

- understand the question
- select appropriate reading sources
- develop a central idea, sustaining the argument from beginning to end
- use evidence and examples to support your arguments
- analyse, synthesise and critically evaluate material from different sources
- explain issues, theories and debates
- use sources appropriately in the text and construct a list of references
- write clearly, accurately and effectively, using a good range of grammatical structures and vocabulary
- write in an academic style

<http://www.ncl.ac.uk/students/wdc/learning/essays/writingessays/>

Writing reflectively for the purposes of an assignment should not involve merely describing something that happened. Nor does it mean pouring out everything you think and feel in a totally unstructured way. Reflective writing requires a clear line of thought, use of evidence or examples to illustrate your reactions, and an analytical approach.

A good REFLECTIVE essay should:

- Include both descriptive and analytical writing
- Build a thread or narrative through your experiences: there should be a *point(s)*

<http://www.ncl.ac.uk/students/wdc/learning/essays/writingessays/>

Reflective writing is:

- your response to experiences, opinions, events or new information
- your response to thoughts and feelings
- a way of thinking to explore your learning
- an opportunity to gain self-knowledge
- a way to achieve clarity and better understanding of what you are learning
- a chance to develop and reinforce writing skills
- a way of making meaning out of what you study

Reflective writing is not:

- just conveying information, instruction or argument
- pure description, though there may be descriptive elements
- straightforward decision or judgment (e.g. about whether something is right or wrong, good or bad)
- simple problem-solving
- a summary of course notes
- a standard university essay

<https://student.unsw.edu.au/reflective-writing>

Past experience	Description	Reflection
The gist of what you are reflecting upon:	The physical environment. Answer questions such as: who was there, what did you do, where and when was it.	What did you expect to happen? What actually happened? What did you learn and discover? What were your feelings? What would you change?
<i>I volunteered at an animal shelter.</i>	<i>The shelter was located near a veterinary clinic. I volunteered with 10 other people...</i>	<i>I thought the job would be boring but there was always a lot to do. Working at a shelter was a very enriching experience...</i>



COMMON PROBLEMS FOR CREATIVE PRACTITIONERS

Creative practitioners *may* not be used to:

Insert answer here

But on the other hand they can:

Insert answer here

“To genuinely focus on the ways in which material performs acts, we must escape from the, implicit or explicit, notion that its agency is limited to an initial provocation which is then carried forward by human actors who then produce interpretation among themselves. Materiality does not ‘fade away’ while we conduct our analyses or interact with objects. This fact is demonstrated through further aspects of research undertaken in the production of *Null By Morse*: In an early development of the work, the signal lamp was hand operated and the piece conceived of as a performance (in this case literally as distinct from being ‘performative’). My colleague and I both learned Morse Code through practice sessions during which I noticed that the iPhone app would ‘misread’ our individual transmissions in quite consistent ways. I had discovered a problem with our ‘Morse fists’.”

Schofield, T. (2014). *Materiality and Making in Experiential Ecologies*. Newcastle University p116.

PARTS OF A REFLECTIVE ESSAY

Typically a reflective essay has

- Introduction (set scope and aims)
- Experiences and observations
- Discussion and analysis of those (brings in other theories)
- Conclusions/Future work

- Scene setting: The introduction usually opens with a statement about the general area of research, highlighting its importance, interest or relevance.
- Research background: This is an overview of key studies that are directly relevant to the issue being investigated.
- Establish motivation for the essay

INTRODUCTION

What experiences (classes, making, research outside class) will you discuss?

From what perspective will you discuss your observations?

EXPERIENCES AND OBSERVATIONS

What other theories help you relate ideas together?

What threads can you draw through the sessions?

DISCUSSION AND ANALYSIS

How might this affect your work in the future?

What do your observations and the analysis lead you to think?

CONCLUSIONS AND FUTURE WORK

CITING YOUR WORK

CITATIONS SHOULD BE

- Included! (otherwise it's either bad work if it doesn't refer to anything or worse, plagiarism if it does but doesn't acknowledge this)
- Specific (include page numbers etc)
- Regular in style/formatting
- Diverse in type (i.e. no just newspaper links)
- Scholarly as well as creative
- Created by a citation manager (if you want to save yourself a headache). Mendeley is free

SUBMISSION FORMAT AND PROCEDURE