

Guidelines for the ePortfolio Reflective Essay for Arthurian Legend

Now that you have collected all your artifacts, it is time to write your “reflective essay.” This is not meant to be a simple compilation of your journal entries. You should use them as a springboard to consider both similarities and differences between the culture depicted in your chosen culture and medieval English and French culture as seen through the lens of Geoffrey of Monmouth, Chrétien de Troyes, and *The Lancelot-Grail Cycle*.

Naturally, if you have been examining material about Arthurian Legend in other cultures, you will find many points of correspondence in plot, character, and theme, and if you have been researching actual history (e.g. of Japan or the Middle East), you might also find that the historical persons and events are comparable to the Arthurian stories you’ve read, but, while it is perfectly legitimate to point out such correspondences, that is not the main point. You should be reflecting on the *cultural values* that are implied by those events, people, or stories and how these compare to the themes in the Arthurian literature you have read. This will take some extrapolation and speculation on your part. Here are some cultural values that you should consider, all of which are important to varying degrees in what we have studied so far.

Courage
Honor
Reputation
Loyalty
Warfare
Treatment of adversaries
Religion
Women’s role in society
Love
Family vs. Individual Obligations
Public vs. Private Behavior

Don’t feel limited to this list; if you see other concepts to discuss, feel free.

As you write your essay, **be sure to refer specifically to journal entries** in which you think you did a particularly good job of at least pointing to such correspondences, preferably of analyzing them. When you “publish” your ePortfolio, the “artifacts” will include the reflective essay and all the journal entries to which it refers.

Citation format should be MLA (you will be citing both your journal entries and the source material you discuss in them).

Length: 1,000-1,250 words (4-5 pages in 12 point Times New Roman font)

Due: Monday, April 29, 2013 by TAPS

Civilizations and Cultures Courses

Instructions for Students: Preparing to Write the Reflective Essay

As a student in a Civilizations and Cultures course, you have been asked to reflect on your learning experiences periodically throughout the semester. The goal of this approach—a theory of reflective learning advanced by 20th century educational philosopher, John Dewey—is to cultivate a habit of mind that enables you to articulate not only *what you know*, but also *how you came to know* it. In this culminating assignment, you are invited to **write a reflective essay that will lead you to contemplate the connections between what you have done (e.g., assignments in the course) and what you have learned—and ultimately how both have influenced you or your thinking about the culture you have studied.**

As you undertake the process of this final reflection, you'll find it helpful to spend some time responding to the questions below which are designed to help you generate and discover a compelling and viable thesis/focus to develop in the reflective essay.

Step 1: As you reflect on the cultural communities you have been studying, take time to generate specific examples in response to each question below. Some might find it useful to make lists, map clusters of ideas, or write short paragraphs.

- What are the various cultural products, practices, and/or perspectives of this community (or communities)?
- What activities and assignments in the course have facilitated your learning about the culture(s)?

Step 2: Once you have generated some ideas in response to the questions above, decide what you believe to be the most distinctive feature of the culture(s). You may identify more than one distinctive feature of the culture(s) on which you'd like to focus. Or, you may identify a distinctive feature which changes over time. Remember that what makes a culture *distinctive* may be something that it has in common with another culture, or it may be something that makes it different than others. Which one(s) stand out as significant in your mind, and why? Your goal is to articulate *what you have come to know* about the culture(s) that you can present as significant in some way.

Step 3: With this distinctive feature (or features) in mind, identify the course activities and assignments (that you've collected as artifacts) which have informed and shaped your understanding of the culture(s) in this particular way. Consider these experiences in relation to one another. What thread of understanding of cultural products, practices, or perspectives might one or more of them serve to illustrate? These are the artifacts that you'll present and analyze as you discuss the process of your learning, or *how you came to understand* the distinctive trait(s) of the culture you studied.

Step 4: By this point, you should have some sense of the ideas you'd like to present in the essay. After reading the formal writing prompt for the reflective essay assignment, try to express in a nutshell what you want to say in the essay, and why it's worth saying. You could do this by writing down a couple of sentences or by talking with a classmate or your instructor. After you get some feedback to the ideas, you're probably ready to start writing the initial draft of the essay.