**Essay 1: The Personal Essay**

Personal Essays are one of the major modes of essays available to all writers. Their purposes vary, but they are always centered on a writer’s exploration of her or his own experiences. Writers often use these experiences to explain some aspect of their view of the world.

**Assignment:**

For your first essay, you will write a personal essay. The essay should be written in the first person (using “I”) and should draw solely on your own experience for examples. No outside research is necessary for this paper; however, if you choose to use one of the prompts below and refer to the inspiring piece in your paper, you must cite it using MLA format and in a separate Works Cited page (that does not count toward your final word count).

Write a coherent, concise essay of between 400 and 600 words answering one of the following prompts, taken from *The Bedford Reader*:

- Write an essay that gives a detailed definition of *home* by using your own home(s), hometowns(s), or experience with home(s) as supporting examples. Use Anna Quindlen’s essay “Homeless” as a model. This essay should answer the question, What is home?

- Write an essay exploring one of the traditions you wrote about in your first journal entry. Focus on the details of the tradition as well as on the significance it holds for you and for any other who participate in it with you. This essay should answer the question, Why do you keep participating in this ritual?

- Harold Taw wrote his essay “Finding Prosperity by Feeding Monkeys” for *This I Believe*, a National Public Radio series in which individuals speak of the principles by which they live. Write your own belief essay about a specific value or belief that you try to live by. Like Taw, make your philosophy concrete by telling a story that shows it in action. Visit [http://thisibelieve.org](http://thisibelieve.org) for examples. This essay should answer the question, What do you believe?

- Think of an occasion when, for whatever reason, you were acutely aware of being different. How did you react? Did you try to hide your difference in order to fit in, or did you reveal or celebrate your uniqueness? Write a brief narrative about this time and discuss what you learned from it about yourself and/or about others. Use Amy Tan’s “Fish Cheeks” as a model. This essay should answer the question, What is/was it like to be different?
The essay will be evaluated based on the following criteria:

1. Organization: The essay should be clearly organized around a main thesis, or point. If you are confused about what a good thesis is, please review page 37 in *The Bedford Reader* for clarification. The essay should flow well; use transitions between paragraphs.

2. Clarity: The essay should make its point clearly, without distracting errors in grammar, punctuation, spelling, formatting, or language. Never use 15 words when 5 will do. Do not use words for which you aren’t confident of the meaning. Writers are highly encouraged to make use of their required grammar books and the resources available at the LBCC Writing Center early and often.

3. Fulfillment of the assignment: Your essay should be well thought-out and well presented. It should be insightful and complex. It absolutely should not be a rehash of what’s available in the textbook. Essays that deviate widely from the above or approved topics cannot receive a passing grade. Essays that fail to reach the minimum word count cannot receive a passing grade.

4. Revision: Any essay that doesn’t show signs of revision and proofreading will not succeed. Signs of not proofreading include: switched words (“form” instead of “from”), missing words (“we went the beach”), random characters ( ), and text-speak (“we went 2 the beach” or 😊).

5. Consideration of audience: This is a personal essay, but it is also an academic paper. Avoid unnecessary use of informal language and slang except as absolutely necessary to demonstrate an example.

6. Formatting: The essay must stick to the guidelines in the syllabus.

**Deadlines:**

**Due** in class for peer editing: Tuesday, January 19. Bring three printed copies of your essay to class on Tuesday. I will direct a session of peer editing, which will provide you with feedback from which to make final edits and revisions. You will take these comments home with you after class and use them to make final tweaks to your essay.

**Bring all copies of comments from others back to class with you on Thursday.**

The final essay and comments you received from others are due to me on Thursday, January 21. If you want to print your essay and receive hand-written comments on it, please bring it to class with you on Thursday. If you submit electronically, I must receive the paper by 4:30 p.m. on Thursday at jenn.kepka@linnbenton.edu. You’ll receive a response from me when it’s received.