

## **Essay 1: Career Narrative**

An imagining/visioning paper powered by story-telling.

### **Purpose**

This first essay is an opportunity for you to flex your story-telling skills and start to transition to academic structures. You should consider your personal experiences as evidence to justify your main focus: the projected path through the completion of your degree or certificate. You will

- Devise your path through completion of your degree or certificate.
- Analyze the relationship between purpose, audience, and author in a college level essay.
- Apply critical thinking strategies to your own life.
- Engage readers while remaining truthful — this paper is nonfiction.

### **Writing skills you will focus on**

- Introduction, body, conclusion
- Paragraph flow
- Linking words and transitions
- Description
- Dialogue
- Process analysis
- Basic signal phrase and summary

### **Prompt**

Your textbook, *They Say I Say*, focuses on the idea that we all enter many types of “conversations” during our life; we listen to others, and, in turn, “put in our oar” and respond to what others say. This first formal essay assignment is an invitation to explore how your education and intentions can lead to a better future.

Though difficult, imagine your life ten years from now. Where will you be and what will you be doing? What will be meaningful in your life? What is your “American Dream”? How will you impact your community in a positive way? Predict and discuss how you will connect to your family, your communities (social, workplace, geographic, etc.), your region, your nation, and the world.

Some of you may envision a life primarily centered on work and family. Or, some of you may also envision having significant relationships within a larger community (volunteering, church, political activities, etc). There is no one way to approach this paper, and there is no correct response or focus. Your life is your own, and your ambitions and dreams are not going to be critiqued in any way, shape, or form.

## Process

*Discuss how you might get to where you want to be in ten years. What types of endeavors should you pursue to get to where you hope to be? What kinds of commitments might you make? What do you see as issues and critical conversations that will concern us as a civilization? Which conversations will be important for you to enter? What do you see as your responsibilities and activities?*

Take some time to organize your thoughts. These are big questions, and very few people can respond before thinking through their values and purpose. Please do not write about subjects you think I want to hear. Put simply: do not try to hack this assignment. My focus will be on your writing/composition.

## The assignment and guidelines

Write a 3 - 5 page essay using double-spaced, Times New Roman Font in 12pt font. You may exceed that number of pages if you cannot imagine communicating your ideas without including additional essential information. Part of this paper will need to include a *description* of how you envision your life ten years from now and how you will get there. ***However, you need to make sure that a significant part of your essay includes reflection on why you will make these choices:*** What values and beliefs will guide your decisions? How will your choices reflect your own “American Dream”?

- Begin with a brief, engaging opening. How can you start in a way that makes readers want to keep reading? You might choose to put readers in touch with a situation from your childhood that influenced your interest in the career that you will be discussing.
- Organize your essay in a way that is clear and easy for readers to follow. You might try a couple different approaches, but the following structure is often effective:
  1. Create an introduction that lets readers know specifically what job you are aiming for. (1 to 2 paragraphs max.)
  2. Then devote several paragraphs to helping readers understand how you have arrived at your decision to head in that direction. (30% - 40% of the paper.)
  3. From there you should discuss the turning point moment, or influential person, that helped get you on the right path. This will be a paragraph where you move from not focusing on your goal to bringing it to the forefront.
  4. From there you should discuss what steps you will need to take and why you will be taking them. It will be helpful to include specific examples from your field or community that will allow readers to understand why these are the right steps. (30% - 40% of your paper)
  5. Craft an ending that provides readers with a satisfying sense of resolution. (Maybe a paragraph or two.)

Possible audiences to consider: Scholarship application reviewers or other people who might need help focusing on how they plan to become intentional about their next ten years.

Make sure to edit your paper carefully for focus, unity, evidence, coherence, and grammar.

**Include a reference to at least one article about your chosen field.** Integration of a simple citation and brief summary will suffice. We will be talking about this in class and this will prepare you for the next major essay

Format your paper according to the MLA guidelines covered in the MLA chapter of the Little Seagull Handbook.

This assignment has been adapted from the materials of Chris Riseley.