

## **Personal Experience Essay**

**Context:** This is the first writing assignment of the semester. Its purpose is to help students investigate in depth their experiences with social injustice to critique and confront oppression binaries. When students, mostly white males, express the lack of experiences with social injustice, I direct them to write about their experiences as privileged bodies. That direction also helps them investigate and confront oppression binaries. In preparing students for the assignment, I assign readings of various personal essays that tackle issues of racism, sexism, ableism, homophobia, and so on. These essays serve as examples to introduce issues of oppression and also provide students with models to inspire their own essays. Students produce 4 drafts for this assignment: the first one is draft#0 that the student author is required to revise on their own with peer or teacher feedback.

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### **Assignment Sheet**

Awareness of self-experiences is essential in understanding how one's social identity evolves and how that impacts humans' interactions in the world. This week you have read/viewed samples of personal experiences where authors inquired into their life experiences about language, social identities, social (in)justice, politics, and culture. Likewise, for this assignment, you will dig deep into your own life experience to write a personal experience essay to investigate the details and meanings of a personal experience related to (in)justice. A personal experience might be one where you were subject to injustice or about (in)justice that you observed happening by or to someone around you. The experience could also revolve around your experience as a privileged body that benefits from an unjust system and what that experience means to you. The main point is to have a strong personal connection with the issue of social (in)justice that impacts your life. You need to be invested in inquiring critically about that experience. At times, identifying such an issue might be very challenging, but we live in a world that definitely impacts us in one way or another. Therefore, I am sure that you all have interesting experiences to inquire about and analyze for yourselves and also for an audience who is likely to learn something from that experience. If you're having trouble coming up with a topic for your essay, please make an appointment with me to brainstorm it together.

## **General Guidelines and Labor Instructions (# labor hours)**

Please keep a record of your labor while working on the essay. Count any activity that you do out of the classroom time from today until you submit the essay's final draft. I'll ask you when you turn any draft about the number of hours that you spent to turn in that draft. This documentation of labor will help you reflect on your own writing labor, and will help me revise the course agenda to accommodate students' time needs.

Here are some guidelines and aspects to think of as you compose and revise the essay:

### **The Exigence (itch):**

Think of a problem that you seek to respond to through this essay. This problem might be an occasion, an incident, a question, or something confusing to you that you wish to discuss or find an answer to. Go back to the personal essays that you have read/reviewed recently and try to figure out the exigence in each. Re-visiting these essays might help you think of the exigence that motivates you in writing your essay.

### **The Main Message and Purpose:**

Think of the key ideas that you wish to present to the readers in this essay. What do you want the readers to feel, think, or do after they read the essay? This should help you focus your ideas to compose an influential essay. Go back to the personal narratives that you have read and viewed, and try to find the purpose and main message of each.

### **The Targeted Audience:**

Think of whom you want to read this essay and keep them in mind while you write it. This will help you write in a style that appeals to your targeted audience(s) (readers). Go back to the personal essays that you read, and try to figure who is the targeted audience of each.

### **Visuals:**

The essay should include visual elements such as color, various font types and sizes, and pictures to help you articulate the essay's purpose when words alone are not adequate.

### **Length:**

The essay should be at least 2000 words in length.

**Medium:**

The essay should be presented as an MS Word or PDF document. If you feel fine publishing your essay publically on a website, I'll be here for extra help.

**Note:** To help you plan for your essay drafts and turning them in on time, I suggest that you think of all the small tasks that you need to do and when you plan on doing them. The below table is how I suggest you organize your work plan.

<b>Due Date</b>	<b>Personal Experience Essay Draft/ Peer Assessment/ Group Conference</b>

Dr. Kefaya Diab is an Assistant Professor at the Writing, Rhetoric, and Digital Studies Department (WRDS) at the University of North Carolina at Charlotte (UNCC). She identifies as an activist-teacher-scholar. In her research, Dr. Diab currently works on her monograph “Theorizing a Sense of Agency in the Arab Spring (2010-11),” where she theorizes how a sense of capability emerged among Arab revolutionaries from rhetorical ecologies informed by religion and culture in the region. At this time, she is preparing for a documentary film about the Tunisian revolution (2010-11) "A Revolution of Emotions," which investigates the role of emotions in pushing actions of resistance forward in Tunisia. The film offers a counter-narrative to what mainstream Arab and Western media widely circulated during their coverage of the revolution. Dr. Diab’s work has appeared in the WAC Clearing House Open-Source Book: Sexual Harassment and Cultural Change, in Writing Studies, Composition Studies Journal, and Paideia-16 Textbook. Her most recent article “The Rise of the Arab Spring through a Sense of Agency” appeared in the Rhetoric Society Quarterly (RSQ) Journal, and was awarded the 2022 Charles Kneupper Award. As a teacher, Dr. Diab embodies a critical pedagogy informed by Paulo Freire (1996) where she challenges her students to analyze problems in the world around them and respond to transform

reality into a socially just one. She implements community-based learning and anti-racist labor-based writing assessment approaches adapted by Asao Inoue (2019).