LOverman/Fall 2012

English 115

**PROGRESSION 1: Depicting Identities**

**Reading and Responding to Texts**

This progression’s essay requirement asks you to explore ***an idea*** from *Convergences* and/or *Wings* and to analyze that idea in light of these questions:

* **What are the larger implications of this idea?**
* **How does another text that you have read or viewed in this course or elsewhere affect the way you think about the idea?**
* **What do you have to say *about* this idea?**
* **How has your own experience influenced your thinking?**

Essay I should explore these questions to help deepen your own – and your reader’s – understanding of the borrowed idea.

*By the end of this progression, you should understand the following key terms:* ***idea****,* ***summary****,* ***reconstruction****,**and* ***evidence****. You should also understand the basic concepts of* ***connecting*** *and* ***larger implications****. You will be expected to follow* ***MLA documentation*** *and to perform basic* ***surface editing****.*

**EXERCISE 1.1:**

**Summary and Reconstruction**

This exercise involves reading, which, if done actively, can help you learn about writing itself.

Keep up with the way you respond to the work as you read and study it. Mark phrases or images that strike you as interesting or important in some way. Think about the way the writer uses language to convey ideas. But most important, record your thoughts about what you are reading. Make marginal notes or keep a reading journal. You are trying to find out what the works might mean.

**Task:** Summarize or reconstruct one of the readings in *Convergences*/*Wings* we have done for this progression. A summary (reader-based) or reconstruction (writer-based) presents the essence of the original text, and the essence obviously includes the essay’s controlling idea(s).

**Requirements:** Your summary should be about 100 words (no more than one double-spaced typed page). This summary calls for MLA documentation; at a minimum, you must include a “Works Cited” list. If you quote key phrases or clauses from the work, parenthetical documentation is also required.

**Due:** see Weekly Schedule

**EXERCISE 1.2:**

**Letter to Author**

This exercise asks that you shift your attention from *what* the work means to *how* it means. You want to begin to understand how the writer led you to understand the work’s *idea* — the one you highlighted in your summary.

As an active reader, you jotted down your initial reactions to various aspects of the work. Revisit the work again now, and go beyond those initial jottings — respond in a more detailed fashion to what the writer says and does. Pay particular attention to passages that provoke or trouble you and to passages that seem central to the work’s meaning.

As you read this time, try to read two ways at once, paying attention to what the writer is saying and to how he or she conveys the idea.

**Task:** Write a letter to the author of a particular piece in *Convergences/Wings* of the work that grabs you the most. As a way of generating that letter, think about features of the work that still puzzle you; think too of how the works most striking features helped you come to terms with the idea. Bring your concerns together in a letter, seeking not to praise the writer but to earn the writer’s praise through your engaging, thoughtful analysis of the striking features of the work. Try to elicit a response (without asking for one) by saying something about the idea.

**Requirements:** Your letter should be two to three double-spaced pages long. A letter will not usually include either parenthetical documentation or a bibliography. You must make clear in the text of your letter what essay you are writing about, what phrases, images, or ideas you are discussing. Remember that the author is not expecting this letter; telling him or her that you are writing to satisfy a class requirement will not do the trick.

**Due:** see Weekly Schedule

**EXERCISE 1.3:**

**Letter to a Friend or Family Member**

For this writing exercise, consider how you might connect the authors of the works in *Convergence/ Wings* to contemporary society.

**Task:** In a letter to someone not in this class, explain the *connection* you have made between the piece in *Convergences/Wings* and the culture you are situated within. As you compose that letter, think about ways to use *evidence* to interest your reader in the connection: you might, for instance, tell a story that will ground the idea in a common understanding. Think about what evidence the reader will need to be told so that the connection will make sense. Establish sufficient context for understanding.

**Requirements:** Your letter (or *epistolary* essay) should be two to three double-spaced pages long. A letter will not usually include either parenthetical documentation or a bibliography. Consequently, you must make clear in the text of your letter what you are doing, what text(s) you are writing about, what phrases, images, or ideas you borrowed. The recipient is not expecting this letter and will have no idea why you are writing unless you somehow make it clear. Again, don’t tell your reader that you are satisfying a course requirement. Get into the letter some other way.

**Due:** See Weekly Schedule

**ESSAY I**

**Task:** Examine what you have written thus far:

Step back from that early work and consider how you might write a more thoughtful, organized essay. Take that ***idea*** from our first exercise (the summary) and analyze it in light of these questions:

* What are the ***larger implications*** of the idea? How does another text that you have read or viewed in this course or elsewhere shape the way you think about the idea? How does your own experience influence your thinking? **What do you have to say *about* this idea?**

You want to deepen your understanding of the idea by working out its ***larger implications*** against the backdrop of the text that set this whole process in motion (*Convergences/Wings*). That text provides the foundation for your work, but the deepening will come through your thinking, aided by the ***connections*** you make between the idea you borrowed from your author of choice in *Convergences/Wings* and the ***evidence*** you will draw from some other text(s) that you have read.

**Requirements:** This essay should be 5-7 double-spaced pages and calls for ***MLA documentation***; you must include a “Works Cited” list at the end of your essay. When you quote key phrases or clauses from the work, you must provide parenthetical documentation. Follow the guidelines in your online syllabus Projects Helpful Links section covering MLA.

**Due: See Weekly Schedule**