Essay 1: Truth Be Told – Family Research & Narrative

☐ proposal (1 page, 1 pt.) due Tuesday, January 22
☐ 10+ interview questions (1 page, 1 pt.) due Thursday, January 24
☐ interview responses / notes (2+ pages, 1 pt.) due Tuesday, January 29
☐ outline (2+ pages, 1 pt.) due Thursday, January 31
☐ rough draft (4+ pages, 2 pts.) due Tuesday, February 5
☐ meet with a tutor or me by Monday, February 11
☐ final draft (4+ pages, 10 pts.) due Tuesday, February 12

All of these must be typed using MLA format, except for the interview responses / notes (optional to type).

Topic

This semester’s textbook, The Best We Could Do, is a graphic-novel memoir of the author’s life as a Vietnamese-American. The book also tells the story of her parents and their experiences in Vietnam, during the war, and immigrating to the United States as refugees. Thi Bui combines images and words very effectively to portray family and social history.

In your essay, you will write about one of your family members or relatives. Interview your family member or relative (and maybe one other family member or close family friend), and write a descriptive, narrative essay (4+ pages, 6+ paragraphs).

Possible topics include a turning point, military service, a journey, an obstacle overcome, a personal challenge, a difficult childhood / adolescence, an interesting event, an adventure, or a story of immigration. You might even focus on a moment or day that significantly changed that person’s life; you can also connect the person’s personal history to the broader social history. The event should have made a significant impact on him / her and might relate to the idea of the American dream. Include direct quotations from the people whom you interview in your essay; you should take notes and possibly record the interviews.

Audience & Purpose

Assume that your reader is not familiar with your family’s story. The goal of your essay is to tell your family member’s story in an interesting way.

Required Reading

• selections from Writing Commons and other articles (posted on my website)
Structure & Content Checklist

- Write an informative yet creative title for your essay; write an inventive hook as well.
- Identify your family member in the introduction.
- Make sure your narrative thesis statement previews your essay’s significance or theme.
- Organize your supporting paragraphs carefully. Include clear topic sentences and transitions.
- You must incorporate descriptive details and two quotes from your interview in every supporting paragraph.
- You should add your own commentary or feelings to each supporting paragraph.
- Write a strong conclusion that wraps up the essay. You should mention the effect of the story on you as well.
- Edit and proofread your sentences so that they are as clear and correct as possible.
- Include a properly formatted works cited page with the interviews listed.
- Format your paper properly: double-spaced, one-inch margins, 12-point font such as Times New Roman.

Process – You must complete and submit all of the following with the final draft:

- Typed final draft & works cited page
- Tutoring receipt or my comments**
- Typed rough draft(s) & works cited page
- Peer review sheet
- Typed outline
- Interview responses & notes
- Typed interview questions
- Typed proposal & any other prewriting notes

** You must visit a tutor or my advice hours for this essay.

- Bring your assignment sheet, notes, and draft with you when you see a tutor at the Language Success Center.
- Please feel free to visit my advice hours (MW 11:00 a.m. – 12:30 p.m. & TTh 11:00 a.m. – 1:00 p.m.) or email me (neil.watkins@chaffey.edu) at any point in your writing process.

Proposal Questions – 1 page, typed, due Tuesday, January 22

1. Whom do you plan to write about? Why have you chosen this family member?
2. What do you already know about this person?
3. What do you need to find about him or her?
4. What do you want your reader to learn or understand from your essay?
5. What obstacles or challenges might you face as you write? How will you overcome those?
6. When & where will you write the essay?

Students’ Advice for Essay 1

“Follow the professor’s instructions, go to his website, and read his notes and the sample essays. They are really helpful.”

“Don’t procrastinate and start early. Take every step of the essays seriously. They really help when writing the rough draft and final essay. Don’t be intimidated by the length of the essays. The proposals and outlines help break up the work to do so by the time you write the rough draft, you’ll already know what to write.”

“Remember to write visually; descriptive details will give your essay dimension and a vivid sense that readers love.”

“Do not be scared to let your emotions show in your work!”