

SOAN 324: Reflection Paper Guide

The assignment:

This assignment complements the Learning Contract that you wrote when the class began in January. There, I asked you to write a 2-3 page summary of what you want to get out of this course, plus another 1-page evaluation of the ways that you already know how to learn. I asked you to lay out your personal goals for the course in three areas:

- Content learning
- Expanding your range of learning strategies
- Personal growth

For your reflection paper, I want you to evaluate your learning in each of these three areas and to reflect truthfully about how well you have been able to meet the goals that you set for yourself. Here is how I phrased this on the syllabus:

“At the end of the semester, you will write a 6-7-page paper giving your personal reflections on what you learned from this course in all three areas. I am particularly interested in your personal growth and in your willingness to expand your range of learning strategies. I want you to challenge yourself with this course, both intellectually and in terms of your skills.”

Details:

As with the Learning Contract, this assignment is about you, not about my expectations.

- You identified what content you wanted to learn. Have you learned it? What have you learned about hunger and homelessness in America that you did not expect to learn? How do you feel about that learning? What more do you need to know?
- You also identified your core learning strategies and chose one or more other strategies that you hoped to improve. How has that gone? What have you learned about your own learning style(s) – both things that you expected and things that you did not? How might you further improve your skill set? What learning skills do you want to work on next?
- Finally, you identified some areas in which you wanted to grow. Some of you wanted to improve your public speaking skills. Some wanted to develop more empathy for others. Some wanted to learn to listen better, to work well in groups, or to get out and meet new people. As I said at the beginning, your particular choice does not matter. The question is: What did you work on and how has that gone? Compared to the beginning of the semester, how have you grown?

There are, remember, no right answers to these questions. There are only shallow answers and deeper ones. Please write about these matters as deeply as you can. Deep engagement earns you the best grade.

Then, as a favor to me, ask yourself the question that I posed to you on the first day of class:

“How well have I learned to take responsibility for everyone’s learning, including the instructor’s?”

I’ll be very interested in reading what you have to say.