**Exploration of Rhetoric + Reflection in Real Life = “Essaying”**

“I am so clever that sometimes I don't understand a single word of what I am saying.” ― Oscar Wilde

Upon retirement in 1571, Michel de Montaigne spent his time in the French countryside reading and writing, where he claimed to be merely “*essaying*” – which in French means trying – a kind of exploratory, unresolved thinking on the page. Montaigne suggested that in writing about himself, he was also “undertaking a study, the subject of which is man.” Essays traffic in ideas, asking questions, and explaining thinking in order to help the reader become equally enthralled.

This paper is a true essay in the classical sense that the writer should discover, articulate and express personal insights as they intersect with and circle around a specific topic or moment experienced in RWS 305W. Writing consultant Katherine Bomer in her publication “The Journey is Everything” states “The kind of writing I am arguing for in this book: prose pieces that are personal, lyrical, literary, descriptive, reflective, narrative, expository, philosophical, political, spiritual…all of the above.” Your goal? To craft an essay that has room for everything – essays linger, arouse, question, travel, contradict, reveal and expose the mind.

**Successful essays will:**

* Be personal. Narrate you’re your own story/experience in first person, cultivate voice
* Set up the text, context and approach in a way that allows you to enter the conversation
* Use at least one class/college idea/moment as a “touchstone” – a foundation for your inquiry
* Explore the larger contextual elements (moment in history, geography, age, situation…)
* Possess a controlling idea, but also be creative, organic, logical – not formulaic
* Be honest and accurate – identify and name your ideas, places, moments, setting
* Possess a thoughtful, creative conclusion – good essay have striking beginnings and endings
* Include quoted credible sources (writers, current voices, critics, peers…)
* Use an epigraph to creatively contextualize your contribution to the conversation (see Wilde quote)

**Audience:** Your intended audience is up to you; it could be other RWS305W students (current or incoming), your

professor or any demographic you envision would benefit from your content.

**Purpose:** To grow through the act of writing, to pour yourself onto the page and write an essay you are proud of, to tell a story and play with words in a way that is engaging – to essay.

**Length:** 5-6 pages long, MLA format & works cited page minimum of three outside, quality sources

**Timeline:** Topic Conferences in SH 110C on 10/11 – 10/30

NOVEMBER T 13: In-Class feedback, bring two paper copies of essay to class, Volunteer essay

TH 15: PeerMark, Upload your Essaying draft for workshop from class start time to 11:59pm Sunday 11/18;

T 27/Th 29: Optional drop in conferring, draft feedback

**DECEMBER T 4:** **ESSAYING final draft due for a grade via Turnitin before class start time**

**Topic:** The field is wide open! The foundation for your topic could be one dynamic idea from a journal writing experience, one beautiful line from a reading, one random insight from lecture, or the intersection of all of these in a drunken conversation with your roommate. You must follow your own curiosity and thinking while *essaying*; search your journal entries for inspired moments or use ideas from your college journey to jumpstart your inquiry. Consider how your observations and experiences connect with your interests/field, challenge your values, or expand your understanding. You might go big (and reflect on your entire college experience) or go small (and analyze your growth in a mere 10 journal entries); the scope is up to you. Think about the connections you have made this semester in your life, writing, thinking and figure out what it might mean…