

Final Portfolio

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Self Evaluation

Where do I begin? As a writer, my biggest struggle may very well be knowing where to start, yet as soon as that spark ignites, the flow feels unbelievable. I can't wrap my head around it. Words begin to take shape as my thoughts flood on to the page, I maneuver through memories in my head, and it gives me sanctity. From a young age, I felt interconnected with writing -- it's always been my calling. Each summer, my mother would give me a notebook and since then, I haven't stopped writing. I feel blessed. My soul excites every time I gain support from family and friends, encouraging me to take this passion and give my life purpose, meaning.

I write to remember my experiences. I write to show readers the way I view this world: colorful, loving, and at times, surprisingly metaphysical. Language is erotic. I mold sound and syntax to create a rhythmic sensation; creativity grabs hold of me, twisting the gears in the lock box known as my mind. There's something about ink and the way it's able to manipulate my secrets to pour out like silk. Give me pandemonium, I'll sell you poetry from the tip of my tongue. Show me gold, I'll melt it to match the thoughts that drown me. I'm obsessed. I work with words, it's my own personal obligation to better my talent and persistently use it to my advantage.

I want to write as long as the thoughts inside my mind are chaotic. This class has helped me further my self-discovery because when given the opportunity to work with other writers and mentors, I make sense of the mess inside my head. I progressively take the next step at becoming a better writer. I've been workshopping since I was fifteen, and since the beginning, I leave every workshop feeling excited and appreciated. Past experience has taught me the essential skills necessary for a workshop to flow as efficiently as possible; there needs to be a common ground where every participant communicates on the same page.

This semester, however, was remarkably different. I remember walking into Church Street, not knowing what to expect, but also very curious about the different types of notebooks that decorated each of the desks. I was surrounded by diverse thinkers, independent voices, poets who didn't even know writing is their identity. The girl next to me always seemed like the quiet type, but I swear her lungs are stronger than we think because she fires like a paintball gun, brilliantly chromatic, it's marvelous.

For days, I listened. For weeks, I began to recognize each of my classmates' writing style. I took their criticisms as compliments to the heart. In the past, I've always grown close to my peers within the workshop, establishing bonds that last outside of the classroom, and although I was distant with the majority of the students this semester, the few times I did interact with them made a difference in the

classroom. In fact, this course actually brought me to meet one of my now-closest friends, Nicole. Had we not met this semester, I truly believe the entirety of these past months would have been entirely metamorphosed from one experience to the next.

Similarly, one of my classmates, specifically my partner for the midterm assignment, challenged me to go outside my comfort zone with constraints that made writing poetry feel like a foreign language. I struggled, I stressed, but I pushed myself to finish only once I felt satisfied, which--believe me--took forever to find. For the first time, I worked outside the lines, and I discovered a form that allowed me to mimic the way our thought speed like a panicked train on tangled railways. I got twisted.

I grew comfortable with risk. This semester, I encountered more restrictions, limitations, constraints and constrictions, everything that challenges you as a writer to respond a certain way. Surprisingly enough, I enjoyed the variety of prompts because each lesson offered more than I expected. Structure requires you to change the way you think, guidance manipulates your direction. The outcome of each of assignments was a product from parts of my mind I had never accessed prior. I've always been a free thinker, but now I recognize that guidelines aren't there to take away your voice, but instead, amplify it.

I've always been overenthusiastic about imagery, synesthesia, and sound -- I feel like a creative maniac when my thoughts transform from conceptual abstraction to visual cogitation. This course reinforced the skills I already utilize while revealing new strategies along the way. I know that the first line isn't necessarily the starting point, that ending on an image is inviting. Words are capsules, each carries its own weight in meaning and each helps travel sounds downstream. Thanks to the work and progress I've made in this class, I now know all that and more; I only feel that my love for writing will continue growing. Let's see where this takes me.

Car Doors

When I was a child,
the sound of car doors meant
he was home.

Slam.

Tiny feet
tapping along the cold hardwood
to the door --
I could barely grasp the handle,
pressing my ear on the window,
listening for his car keys to jingle.

Slam.

When I was six, we crammed
my banana bike
in the trunk of his silver Chevy,
drove down to the boardwalk
where the air smelled of brine,
the fisherman were our friends,
his jacket was patched: USS Wainwright.
Commissioned in '66 he said.

I didn't know, couldn't notice.
I carried on
with grass stains.
Everything was fine.

Slam.

When I was twelve, he unboxed
an old notebook. I remember pages
decorated with the names
of foreign places: *Albufeira, Ipanema,*
Laos. I then crammed my head
with history books, I read that
Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder
is said to affect relationships.

I learned to curse
in Portuguese:
our native
romance language.

Coffee was brewed
no longer for two.
Neighbors never knew
what to say.
I still remember how
the wall shivered
as his picture was stripped
and the stomp of his heavy heel
vanished from the hall.

Slam.

Hopeless,
a car door hits the vehicle hard.
Startling. I'm tempted
to stare, to silence
the old growing curiosity.
I'm nearly quick
to casually glance,
yet I stop myself
as I always battle to do.

Slam.

I know better.