

ENG 104: Climate Change Fiction Reading Journal Assignment

Materials: You will need one full-sized, college-ruled spiral, composition, or loose-leaf notebook. This notebook should be reserved just to use as your reading journal.

Why keep a reading journal: Your reading journal will be a place to try out and explore ideas concerning our readings, lectures, and discussions without worrying too much about being evaluated. The point of the journal is to develop a regular, habitual practice of figuring out what you think of our course materials. If you add to your journal consistently and regularly, you'll find that you will deepen your thinking and enhance your ability to make connections between different texts and ideas, and between the readings and your own life. By writing regularly in your journal you will also have a wealth of material and ideas to draw from when posting on the blog, writing essays, and preparing for quizzes and the midterm exam.

Requirements: You will make at least two kinds of entries in your journal: in-class entries and out-of-class entries. Each of these entries should be **dated** and given some sort of **title or label**. Here are some sample titles: "Odds Against Tomorrow and the Promises of Speculation," "Rachel Carson's Emotional Appeals," "Why Climate Change Terrifies Me," "The Cost of Not Acting on Climate Change," etc.

1. In-class entries: During some of our class meetings, I will ask you to write for a few minutes on a specific question. We'll use these in-class entries to stimulate or conclude a discussion. Thus, you need to bring your journal with you to class every day.

2. Out-of-class entries: Every week this semester (including holidays) you should write in your reading journal **at least three days a week**, roughly corresponding to the three days of class each week. These entries should be **at least 300 words (about one page or so) in length** (but, of course, may be longer) and they should engage with the week's reading in some way. Occasionally, I will provide a specific question to think about, but the topic for most of these entries will be of your own choosing. Minimum # of outside-of-class entries per week:

Week 1: two entries
Week 2: three entries
Week 3: three entries
Week 4: three entries
Week 5: three entries
Week 6: two entries
Week 7: three entries
Week 8: three entries
Week 9: three entries
Week 10: one entry

What should an entry look like: Feel free to write in the first person. Your journal response might include your general reactions to the literary work, questions you have about it, your reactions to topics from class discussions, or revisions to your earlier thinking after having the benefit of additional time for reflection. Possible specific approaches include: looking at a passage, episode, or even single sentence from the reading that puzzles, moves, or upsets you; considering the significance or motivations of a character from one of the stories that we read; comparing different readings to each other; debating with me, or a fellow student about an idea from discussion. I also encourage you to connect the course material to your own life experience.

It's ok to think about how you felt reading a particular text or whether you enjoyed it or not. Just make sure always then to ask yourself, *why*? What is important is *why* you found a particular text appealing or unappealing, *why* you had a particular emotional reaction, *why* you agreed or disagreed with particular aspects of a text. Responding to these second level questions can refine your thinking about literature, your knowledge of yourself, and your values.

Specific suggestions:

- One key to being successful when writing journal entries is to let the words flow quickly. Disregard spelling and punctuation; just be sure you can make out what you have written at a later time because I may ask you to share a general sense of a journal entry or you may want to return to an entry to revise it.
- As you write a journal entry, please remember the goal is to produce as large a quantity of words and ideas as you can, to see where your thinking takes you. Disregard spelling and punctuation; just be sure that what you write is legible.
- At first, expect to sit a bit, waiting for the ideas to come. If you are patient, in time your mind will begin to generate content that your pen can record. A twenty to thirty-minute writing session can yield from half a page to several pages of writing, depending upon your mood and perseverance.

Grading: At various points during the semester, I will collect your journals, check that you have completed all the entries, and read a few entries chosen at random. In evaluating your journals, I will not be grading your writing, nor will I be critiquing your ideas. I also do not expect that you write comprehensively about all of the course reading. Rather, I will be looking for these things:

1. Regularity of entries: Are there the minimum number of entries for each week (see schedule above)?
2. Length of entries: Are the entries 300 words or longer and do they include the date and a title or label?
3. Appropriateness and vitality of entries: Are the entries relevant to the course and written clearly? Do the entries demonstrate serious efforts to come to terms with ideas from the course reading and/or our class discussions of those readings?

Sharing your journals: Because we can learn a lot from each other, from time to time I will ask you to share sections of your journals with other members of the class.

Note: It may be tempting to see assignments such as this course reading journal—assignments that an instructor won't be grading as formally as an essay or exam—as less important. Nothing could be further from the truth with this assignment. Your enjoyment and understanding of our readings, as well as your improvement in literary analysis, in writing, and in critical thinking, will be a direct result of the time you put into this assignment. Please see it as a course priority because this assignment will truly be self-rewarding: those who dedicate themselves will enhance their writing and reading skills; those who don't, won't.