

Reflective Writing Syllabus

Week 1

- Course introduction: reflective writing role in the EUFICCS curriculum, course objectives, class structure and organisation, re-writing process, final evaluation, instructor's role
- Discussion about the prompts distributed in the orientation sessions:
- Thoughts about the *Word of the Students'* video (past students' experiences)
- Thoughts about *Strangers* (ice-breaking game)
- First impressions about arrival in Siena, expectations about relationship with host-family and local community.

Prompts for the following week:

- Most visible lifestyle differences between Italy and their home country
- relationships between people: inside the programme, in the host family, around the city, between genders, female and male interactions, between locals and foreigners, between different generations
- how people interact and show their feelings and emotions (for example smiling, kissing, hugging, etc...)

Week 2

Quotes and guidance for the process of reflection and writing.

The instructor writes the first quote on the board and asks students how many of them share the quote's feeling or have ever felt like that. Brief open discussion. At this point the instructor writes the second quote on the board and explains that it represents the aim of the course.

1. "I don't do journaling" - Terry, response at the beginning of a term
2. "At first I was a little apprehensive about journaling. I prefer to keep it all bottled up. After this last term with classroom journal assignments, I am sold on using a journal. sometimes I want to tell life to slow down so that I can think and take it all in. I hope I maintain the self discipline to journaling so that I don't miss the journey." - Shannan, reflection at the end of the term.

Then the instructor asks students what they think the reasons are for writing with pen and paper and writes their list on the board. Following this list students are encouraged to discuss the reasons thus facilitating the reflective process.

Afterwards the instructor explains what the three basic writing principles are and how they support journal writing

1. Writing is thinking - Central to our understanding of our writing process and teaching students about journal writing is the idea that writing is thinking on paper. Oftentimes students believe that writing is what happens after they have all their thoughts organized in their mind. The wrong assumption therefore is to think that all they have to do is to sit down and transfer those thoughts to paper. There are several problems with this mindset. First, this means that students do not write papers as "drafts" but just "produce" the papers in their heads and put their ideas down on the page, often at the last minute. Second, given all the thinking it took to produce the ideas in the first place, the problem is that there is little room for adaptation or change. Teachers have no idea how a final paper was developed. So, journal writing can also become (if students are aware and are guided to think of this process) a gymnasium where to exercise the practice of writing as thinking on paper.
2. Practice builds fluency in writing and motivation to write - The second writing principle is that practice helps students to be more motivated to write and builds writing fluency, that in

the end is the ability to simply get words down on the page without editing. When completing a journal writing assignment students may end up writing more about a topic than they realised they know. They may recognise some connections between ideas that they did not appreciate before. These discoveries can surprise them and encourage them to continue the exploration and clarification of their thinking through writing. Peter Elbow (1973) states that, if it weren't for the "surprises", no one would be motivated to write. Surprises are the "A-ha! when writer look at what they have written and say to themselves "Oh! So, that's what was on my mind".

3. Students value journal writing when it is fully integrated into the course objectives and structure - Although course objectives are explicitly presented, students will achieve awareness through the course of the semester.

Prompts for the following week:

- Differences about technology, television, internet, social media between Italy and students' home country.
- Concept of time: task-oriented vs relationship-oriented societies, efficiency, leisure time, daily schedules vs daily routines.
- Different spaces: geographical and urban spaces, personal bubble, public and private space.

Week 3

Class journal sharing and discussion about the prompts given so far.

In the last twenty minutes, the instructor introduces students to the Autobiography of Intercultural Encounters (AIE) with the aim of exposing them to a different meaning of the concept of diversity in the European context.

Assignments for the following week:

- Complete the (AIE) at home.
- Article reading: *Diversity – the Evolving Language of Diversity* by Kathy Castania, (www.adl.org/sites/default/files/documents/Evolving-Language-of-Diversity-The.pdf)

Week 4

Role-play: students are encouraged to find a volunteer who can lead the discussion about the AIE in the way he/she thinks best in order to explicit the concept of diversity that emerges from the AIE itself.

The instructor facilitates the discussion through the following prompts:

- What did you learn through the others' encounters?
- Did your story change at all in telling it as opposed to reading it?
- Has your opinion changed about your encounter? Did you change your mind on the meaning or function of intercultural encounter?
- Reflect well on why you picked this experience.

Open discussion about the following prompts:

1. What does diversity mean to you? What does cultural diversity mean?
2. Where have you seen/observed diversity in your experience abroad? What have you seen/observed so far that represents diversity?
3. How do think locals perceive diversity? And your diversity?
4. Have you perceived local cultural diversity?
5. Through what senses (5 senses) do you perceive cultural diversity?

6. What are basic human rights?
7. In your perception, are there differences across cultures of what should be included as human rights? Give some examples.
8. How would you welcome someone in your home or country? How have you been welcomed here?

Class discussion about the reading assignment:

1. What comes first to your mind when you think about “Europe” and the “European Union”?
2. Do you think that the reflections on diversity in the article can be applied to the European context? If yes, why? If not, why?
3. Europe's motto “United in diversity”.
4. What do you think is/are the official language(s) of the EU?

The instructor can show students different European maps of languages: the first map represents all the languages and dialects spoken in the European continent, the second map represents official and co-official languages in each country, and the third map shows only the official languages of each state.

The instructor guides students reflecting on the fact that the EU official languages are 24, but the working languages used for official documents are only three (English, French and German) and that during the European Parliament sessions each member speaks and listens in his/her mothertongue.

Class activity about Italian words for “diversity”: the instructor asks for help to the advanced students and invites them to name the Italian words (they know) that describe different types of diversity. The instructor can also recount the etymology of the word “diverse/diversity”: in Latin it meant “changing route, leaving the right way, turning away from the right direction” and it had a negative connotation. The adjective “diverse” derives from the past participle of the verb “divertire” (= to have fun), originally meaning “to go away from, to be separated from”. The following terms may be used as a guiding list:

- omosessuale, gay, lesbica, transgender, pansessuale, eterosessuale, bisessuale
- “straight” vs. “deviato”
- handicappato vs disabile vs diversamente abile
- disabile mentale, matto, pazzo, demente, mongolo/mongoloide
- nero, negro, di colore, africano, di colore vs bianco
- differences between white people (Balcanian, Slavic, Mediterranean...)
- “marocchino”
- etnia (termine dell'antropologia)
- etnico (cucina)
- “extra-comunitari” (Romanian vs American)
- islamico, arabo, musulmano, ebreo
- rom/roma, “zingari”,
- vecchio/anziano
- clandestino, immigrato, migrante (povero), rifugiato
- emigrati (brain-drain)
- body consciousness

The same activity could be done for each of the several languages of Europe.

The instructor might refer to the lessons on Italian history and geography (included in the course of Italian language during the three-week intensive course) to underline the inner diversity in Italy.

Week 5

The instructor presents a brief slide show about the Council of Europe and the Reference Framework of Competences for Democratic Culture. Later on the slides are emailed to students.

The instructor guides the discussion about the values of the flower, focusing on some key terms such as democracy, justice, fairness, equality and the rule of law.

The instructor facilitates the discussion and sharing of reflections about the prompts on diversity, which is the first value of the flower that we consider.

Phase of re-writing on diversity: students should revise their previous opinions and positions according to the shared reflections in class, adjust, widen, change.....

The instructor introduces the new topics of reflection for the next session:

- Why do you think we use this as a guide/reference model? What value can you see in it?
- Do you have other experiences with competency-developing frameworks *or* coursework that covers some of this material? Explain.
- How and in what ways do these ideas/topics relate to your experience here in Siena? Explain.

Week 6

The instructor facilitates the discussion and sharing of reflections about the prompts of the previous week and afterwards leaves time for the re-writing phase.

Then he/she recalls the concept of attitude and guides an open discussion about openness and respect using the following prompts:

Openness to otherness:

1. How would you define yourself in relation to the “other”?
2. What does “other” mean to you?
3. Have you ever felt like the “other”?
4. What are the defining elements/categories of “otherness”?
5. What other world views (different from your own) have you experienced?
6. What does “being open” mean?
7. Give an example of a situation where you were “open” or “closed”.
8. Have you observed “openness” and “closedness” in your experience in this country?
9. Are there advantages and disadvantages to being open?
10. Can you tell an episode in your service activities that is representative of openness (or lack of openness) to cultural otherness?

Respect:

1. Are there instances in which you have felt respected or disrespected?
2. How can you show respect in this country? Compare with examples from home.
3. Where have you observed respect/disrespect?
4. Do you feel more obligated to be more respectful at home or abroad?
5. What is normal for you that may be considered disrespectful in this country?
6. Do you see differences with respect for rules/laws?

7. Who – locals or visitors - bears more responsibility to respect rules in a different cultural context?
8. Can you tell an episode in your service activities that is representative of respect?

Students are invited to write entries about openness and respect for the following week, guided by the questions used in class.

- good vs. evil
- clean vs. dirty
- safe vs. dangerous
- permitted vs. forbidden
- decent vs. indecent
- moral vs. immoral
- beautiful vs. ugly
- natural vs. unnatural
- normal vs. abnormal
- logical vs. paradoxical
- rational vs. irrational

Week 7

The instructor facilitates the discussion and sharing of reflections about the prompts of the previous week and afterwards leaves time for the re-writing phase.

Civic mindedness and responsibility:

1. Have you observed any examples of the local perception of community?
2. How do locals participate in the community? Is it different from how you would participate in your community?
3. What levels of community have you observed here?
4. How do locals express a sense of belonging to the community?
5. What is the “glue” of the local community?
6. What contributions can you as a foreign student make to the community?
7. Do you feel that you are able to participate in the local community?
8. What new ways have you found to participate and contribute to the community?
9. How can a strong sense of belonging to the community influence service?
10. Do you feel any responsibility to the society in which you live? Or wherever you are?
11. Do you feel the same responsibilities in... as you do at home?
12. Where do you feel the burden of social/civic responsibilities to be stronger?
13. Does local culture influence your attitude and behaviour towards social responsibilities? (Give examples)

Reading assignment for next week: article by W. Drechsler “The Contrade, the Palio and the Ben Comune: lessons from Siena” (Tallinn University of Technology).

Week 8

(Week before the break)

The instructor facilitates the discussion and sharing of reflections about the prompts of the previous week and afterwards leaves time for the re-writing phase.

In the session during the week before the break, the instructor invites students to bring journals on travels, look for/pay attention to situations in which they are dealing with **tolerance for ambiguity** and describe/reflect on that. He/she also ask them to reflect on their initial tolerance for ambiguity when they first arrived at the beginning of the semester to Siena (phase of re-reflection).

The instructor gives the following prompts:

1. What were your feelings in ambiguous situations?
2. What ambiguous situations have you experienced here? How did you react? How did the locals react?
 1. Have you experienced situations where local culture reacts with what you perceive as an ambiguity that has made you uncomfortable? But you were left confused? (Give some examples)
 2. What situations at your home may be perceived as ambiguous for a foreign person?
 3. Compare your first impact to Siena/Italy to your first impact to another Italian city or region / European country: is your tolerance for ambiguity changed (increased or decreased) or stayed the same?
 4. Think about public transportation, people's behaviors and manners, people's interactions, etc.

Week 9

The instructor facilitates the discussion and sharing of reflections about the prompts of the previous week and afterwards leaves time for the re-writing phase.

The instructor guides a new discussion about **Self-efficacy** and proposes the following questions:

1. Do you feel your participation in service is effective and impactful for you and/or the local community?
2. During your time serving this community do you feel that you have gained a new sense of self-efficacy?
3. How has your perception of your self-efficacy changed during your time here or at service?
4. Re-reflection phase: has anything changed in your concept of the use of time, efficiency and productivity from the beginning of the semester?
5. Can you compare efficiency and time management in service activities in this country and in your home country?

Week 10

The instructor facilitates the discussion and sharing of reflections about the prompts of the previous week and afterwards leaves time for the re-writing phase.

The rest of this session is structured around the following questionnaire about students' skills.

My skills abroad: Skills self-assessment questionnaire

Please rate your **improvement** for each skill based on the following ranking:

1 – weak;

2 – satisfactory;

3 – good;

4 – very good;

5 – excellent;

Please circle your selected option:

A) autonomous learning skills	1	2	3	4	5
B) analytical and critical thinking skills	1	2	3	4	5
C) skills of listening and observing	1	2	3	4	5
D) empathy	1	2	3	4	5
E) flexibility and adaptability	1	2	3	4	5
F) linguistic, communicative and plurilingual skills	1	2	3	4	5
G) cooperation skills	1	2	3	4	5
H) conflict resolution skills	1	2	3	4	5

Begin to think about experiences that could possibly show how you have improved (or not?) your skills while abroad, thus far.

Think in terms your general intercultural encounter with Italy/Europe and how being in/interacting with/in a different cultural environment, and with people of other cultures has impacted these skills (positively – or possibly negatively?).

A) autonomous learning skills; B) analytical and critical thinking skills; C) skills of listening and observing; D) empathy; E) flexibility and adaptability; F) linguistic, communicative and plurilingual skills; G) cooperation skills; H) conflict resolution skills

PROMPT for next week (**aim for 700 words**). Describe and reflect on your experiences that have lead to skill development (you can focus on one specific skill or a combination/all skills you retain improved/change). Alternatively, if you feel you have not improved on any skills, craft your entry reflecting on why that might be.

Brussels Week

The instructor sends the following instructions via email.

1) The institutions and organizations you will be visiting are very different in nature even if they all deal with European integration. They welcome us but they expect our students to be interested in their activities. So, please, make sure you ask questions! Ideally each of you should have a question for each organization, but of course there is flexibility...It is just important that we have questions for each site. Also, keep in mind that the first ones to benefit from the questions are you! The goal of this trip is to understand Europe and this is what we will be talking about in class next week. Keep yourselves as active as possible in this process of discovering Europe. Also, activate your 5 senses to understand diversity in Brussels. What is the deep essence of the meaning of diversity in our continent in your perception? After your trip to Brussels your perception may change quite a bit.

2) Once you are back in Siena, try to respond to the following prompt. Now that you have lived in

Siena for almost a semester, traveled throughout Europe and visited its heart and institutions (Brussels) how do you feel about "our" flower? What do you think is the need for such a framework? How hard do you think it is to implement it in the different European contexts? AND...also...do you think the validity of this framework could go beyond European borders? Try to think of a situation you experienced during your time in Europe that confirmed the absolute necessity of such an education tool.

3) Lastly, while in Brussels EAT FRITES!!!!

Re-entry from Brussels Week

The instructor facilitates the discussion about the trip in Brussels. The phase of re-writing is structured around the request of review students' experience in Brussels. No other prompt is given.

Last Week

In the last session the instructor facilitates the discussion and invites students to reflect on the following:

Knowledge and critical understanding of the self

1. How has your experience here changed your knowledge of yourself?
2. Have you discovered new things about yourself?

Knowledge and critical understanding of language and communication

Knowledge and critical understanding of the world: politics, law, human rights, culture, cultures, religion, history, media, economies, environment, sustainability.

Final Project:

The instructor asks students to type each journal entry, while they type it up he/she invites them to think carefully about each week's entry and re-reflect upon it. The following prompts might be used:

1. Do you feel anything has changed since you wrote it?
2. Have you learned anything more that might change your perspective on the subject?
Anything else to add to this entry.