

Weekly Writing: Instagram

As a writing teacher, I have always used a “Weekly Writing” assignment as a way to encourage a regular writing practice and check in each week. It has taken many forms over the years, and I like to play around with it and try different approaches to see how it changes engagement with writing. The most common way I’ve done it in the past was to have students keep a journal document that was shared with me, and write 2-4 pages each week. Some of the writing was prompt-based and from class; some of the writing was totally open-ended -- up to each student to decide for themselves what they wanted to write about (and share with me!).

This semester, we’re going to try this out on Instagram. We’re using the book *Read This If You Want to Be Instagram Famous* to help us think about how to build a creative and engaged platform. We’ll read a couple entries for each class and then try for one of our posts each week to practice one of the tips we’ve covered. Of course, our purposes are not to become famous on Instagram. I like the book for its design and content...and I’m less concerned with the parts of it about gaining a large following or monetizing your account. If that’s something you’re interested in (maybe you’re thinking of going into business, marketing, etc....) go for it! Just know that if all you have are the followers from our class, that’s okay since our purpose is to think about how we compose in multimodal ways on a daily basis and how we can be more intentional, creative, and engaged in that process.

At the heart of it, the Weekly Writing assignment is meant to get you to CHECK IN to your life. This goes nicely with another one of our texts for the semester *On Doing Nothing* by Roman Muradov. All great writers do one thing really well, and really consistently...they NOTICE. They notice the things happening around them. They notice new details in familiar places. They notice small interactions between people. They use all of this to continually craft their worldview and to think about how to communicate that worldview to their reader. This is true of creative writers, creative nonfiction writers, academic writers, and even professional writers.

Learning how to notice things in our lives helps us to slow down and to remember that to find anything, we first have to look for it. That’s what I’m challenging you to do with this assignment.

The Broad Overview

1. **Create a new account** for this class specifically! I have a personal account and another for this class. You can decide to keep your account public or you can set it to private so you can decide who follows you.
2. **Follow your classmates:** You’ll follow all of the people in our class and allow them to follow you.

3. **Post 3 times per week:** Some posts will be open, some posts will try to meet some challenge or speak to a theme that we discuss in class, and one post each week should actively attempt one of the principles we've discussed from the Angell book.
4. **Each post should have a caption.** This is a writing class, after all.
5. **Comment 3 times per week** on various classmates posts: Comment on people's posts, respond to comments on your posts, and generally start to form a community through communication. Try to spread the love! Comment on different accounts each week.
6. **Use our class hashtag on every post!** I want to create an archive of our work to be able to reference later in the semester, and this is a cool way to create a chorus of voices. We'll develop other hashtags throughout the semester, but make sure you use this one each time.

Some Rules

1. **This is for class.** *This is for class.* This is for class. If you already have an Instagram account, you'll probably interact differently on this account than you do on your personal one. This is a great skill to develop, as more of both our personal and professional lives occur on digital spaces these days.
2. **Direct messaging:** It is appropriate sometimes to send a direct message to someone instead of commenting publicly. Maybe you have a deep connection to something they've posted. Maybe you have a question. See if it belongs in the comments first because there is more likelihood to spark engagement on that post that way. So, while you are free to engage each other directly, you are not to harass, stalk, demean, hit on, or otherwise act uncool on people's posts or in their messages. ***If someone is making you uncomfortable, come to me and I will handle it with discreet care.***

Grading

This is worth 10 points per week (15 weeks, 150 points total, 15%). I will input those points on our learning management system each week. I will engage on your profile throughout the week as well; this will be my primary mode of feedback. If you are falling behind or not meeting the assignment, I'll let you know. Otherwise, you can just watch the points roll in each week.

WEEKLY CHALLENGES

Week	Prompt
Week 1	What is writing? How do you feel about it? What do you hope to learn in this class? What do you think you will learn? Pair these musings with a photo that you feel represents writing.

[This file is supplemental material to Conklin, *A Cabinet of Curiosities, a Dwelling Place: Weekly Writing on Instagram as Multimodal Praxis*, prompt 5.2 (2021), doi: 10.31719/pjaw.v5i2.78]

Week 2	What is your favorite place to study on campus? Take a picture, geotag it if possible, and describe what you like about that space.
Week 3	<p>Check out the YouTube Channel The Dictionary of Obscure Sorrows and if time permits, the TED Talk “Deciphering the Language of Emotion” from John Koenig who runs The Dictionary of Obscure Sorrows.</p> <p>Choose one of the Obscure Sorrows and make a post that somehow represents it. Link to the video of that sorrow in your comments. OR Make a word for your own obscure sorrow, define it, and make a post that represents it.</p>
Week 4	The Dictionary of Obscure Joy -- let’s flip the script from last week. Do the same thing, but this time you’ll need to create your own word for your own sense of “obscure joy” ... and an image or other visual to go with it.
Week 5	<p>This week you’re going to take a trip to the art museum on campus. As you explore the museum, I want you to keep your “writing cap” on and try to think of some ways you might be able to link what you’re seeing and experiencing to what we’ve been talking about and learning about writing. You might also think about how it connects to Muradov’s ideas.</p> <p>You’ll need to take a picture (or video, boomerang, etc.) in the museum that serves as your post, and write a caption that connects with the ideas above and the picture. Use the geotag function to connect the location in your post. Use the class hashtag and any others that you think might work well for the post.</p> <p>As is the case with all art and exhibition spaces, you want to walk with care through the space, which means to check in with yourself and be aware of your boundaries or anything that is causing discomfort. You should feel free to remove yourself from those spaces. You are in no way required to see everything in the museum for this challenge.</p>
Week 6	<p>Download the app “Layout.” Layout allows you to put multiple images into one image, creating a photo collage.</p> <p>For a layout to be effective and interesting it should have some kind of theme or purpose. For example, maybe you have a two-photo layout that compares you at the beginning of high school versus the beginning of college. Maybe you have a layout of multiple images of your best friend as a tribute to them. Maybe you do a 3x3 grid layout and choose your favorite photo from each of the last nine months. The possibilities and potentials are endless...so get creative!</p> <p>Include a story, description, quote, or something else that can help us to understand the purpose/theme of your layout beyond just the visuals.</p>
Week 7	<p>For this week you’re going to play around with the Boomerang effect. It is already in the Instagram app, you just open Instagram, bit the camera logo at the top left corner, and then it should be the first option to the right of “normal.”</p> <p>You can make your boomerang about whatever you’d like, but I do have a few photography/videography tips for making it the most viewer friendly possible:</p>

	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Hold the camera still, and focus on the moving object. Because boomerangs are so short and speed up the video you capture, moving the camera can make it difficult to catch what it is you are filming and might make your viewer dizzy. 2. Choose something that becomes more entertaining the more times you watch it. We're looking for meaningful motion. The example I included, the little bear in my hot pot from lunch falls over as the server pours hot broth over him. This was a lucky mistake, because actually I took the boomerang later than I wanted to...but watching the water pour without the bear falling over probably wouldn't have been as interesting. 3. You're working with basically a 2-3 second loop. You want to look for something that feels "complete" even within that. This is the challenge and why finding a great boomerang is often hard...the moment has usually passed before you can get out the camera. Staged boomerangs are a good way to practice them to begin with!
Week 8	<p>THE HALFWAY MARK!</p> <p>For this week's challenge, I want you to think about the first half of this semester:</p> <p>How is it going? What's going well? What's not? What have you learned about yourself in the past eight weeks? How does it compare to last semester at this time? You are still in control of your efforts and outcomes? There is still time to change course -- what might need changing? What's the reward you're working toward at the end of the semester? What's the light at the end of the tunnel? What and where is your motivation? Etc. etc. etc.</p> <p>This is going to be a CAPTION heavy post. Like a paragraph or more. Try to take a picture this week to include in this post that marks this halfway point, but you can also use things from your archives.</p> <p>Think about apps and tools we've discussed so far in class</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Layout: Might help you to bring multiple, disparate moments from this semester together - Canva: Might help you to connect a mantra or thematic quote to an image that speaks to the semester - Boomerang: Might help you to communicate the often-repetitive nature of academic life...forward, back, forward, back again. - Creating new words: Maybe you have a new word to add to your dictionaries of sorrows and joys - Etc. etc.
Week 9	No specific challenge this week -- just be sure to make three posts about whatever you'd like by Friday
Week 10	No specific challenge this week -- just be sure to make three posts about whatever you'd like by Friday
Week 11	<p>TimeLapse!!</p> <p>As I shared in a post last week, I've been getting really into time lapse these past couple of weeks. There are a few reasons for this for me.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. It is a way for me to have to leave my phone alone for a length of time. I've really been

	<p>getting distracted by my phone as I procrastinate on things I need to do, so it's nice to leave it recording somewhere knowing there will be this cool video at the end.</p> <p>2. It's spring! Which means we've been seeing more of the sun, less grey skies. My apartment has a beautiful view of the sunrise in the morning, so I've been taking advantage of that and sharing it with others.</p> <p>3. This is the time in the semester that it just feel like things are flying by. Weeks are passing faster than I can keep up with them and all of my end of semester deadlines are suddenly looming. The speed of a timelapse mirrors this feeling, while also reminding me that the speed of nature is much slower and that I might be able to harness some of that steadiness in my own work.</p> <p>This is what it looks like to reflect on your compositional choices, particularly in multimodal composing. Keep this explanation in mind when you get to the reflection portion of our next paper.</p> <p>Anyway, all that said -- I want us to experiment with Time Lapse this week. This could also be a good time to experiment with Stories, because stories let you add cool media (like music!) to your time lapses which helps to further communicate the mood of the video.</p> <p>So, you can post to your feed or to your story -- but if you post to your story please be sure to HIGHLIGHT your story so it saves on your page (otherwise, stories disappear after 24 hours).</p> <p>You can use your camera (iPhones have a timelapse mode in the camera itself) or you can use the FREE app Hyperlapse...which is definitely what you want to use if you are taking timelapse where you are also in motion because it has an algorithm that stabilizes the image. I'll show you some examples in class.</p>
Week 12	<p>Okay now let's do it in reverse! SLOWMO</p> <p>Slowmo recording has the opposite compositional logic from timelapse. A 5 second video in timelapse would basically be a photo, whereas a 5 second slowmo video would seem to go on forever. You have to find something that gains interest by being slowed way way way down. Usually, it's about the details!</p> <p>Like last week, you can post it to your story (but be sure to add it to a HIGHLIGHT so it doesn't disappear) or you can post it to your feed. I know iPhones have a slowmo as a function in the camera, but we'll play around with android together in class!</p>
Week 13	<p>It's Spring! Let's celebrate that things are turning green! SO all THREE of your posts this week should focus on the theme "green."</p>
Week 14	<p>No specific challenge this week -- just be sure to make three posts about whatever you'd like by Friday</p>
Week 15	<p>For this final week, I want you to make one of your posts a "preview" for your final paper. Take or find a pictures/video that represents your lesson learned and then write a brief caption (but that has enough context for it to make sense to a reader) that connects to your paper idea.</p>

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