

READER-WRITER NOTEBOOK/JOURNAL – 21W.730 FALL 2002

The purpose of the notebook/journal is to help you to “read as a writer,” paying careful attention to the ways in which authors craft their pieces to address an intended audience. Each class you will submit one short journal assignment (approx. 1-1 1/2 typed pg., double-spaced) on an assigned reading. Some journal assignments will be given out in class. In other journal entries, you can focus on one or more aspects of the writer’s craft. These entries will help to prepare you for class discussions as well as your own essay writing.

Here are some general questions to consider in reading articles and chapters for class. In writing (unassigned) journal entries, you will probably only focus on a few of these questions. However, thinking about all of them will be helpful in preparing for class.

What is the meaning of the title?

What is the tone of the piece –persuasive, angry, informative/neutral, ironic, humorous?
What is your impression of the writer/narrator?

How does the writer introduce the essay? How does the writer end the piece? What do the introduction and conclusion suggest about how to read the essay?

What kind of language has the writer chosen for the piece—direct and simple, colloquial, abstract “high academic”, personal/confessional, comic? What’s the effect on you as a reader?

What sections, paragraphs, words or sentences seem especially significant? Why?
How does the writer use repetition—of words, phrases, sentences or passages—in the piece?

How does the writer use imagery, symbol and metaphor?

What’s the central point of the piece?

How do you see this essay as connecting with other readings (for the course or outside), experiences you’ve had, and issues that you’ve thought about?

What have you learned **as a writer** from this piece?

Note: On occasion, I will also distribute questions to guide your writing about films that we screen for class.