

Assignment 1
21W.735
The Essay on the Essay

Thus far, we have considered the definition of the essay offered by a number of essayists, as well as some foundational materials from the Greek, Roman, Japanese, Chinese, French, and English traditions. However, these definitions and foundations are incomplete if they remain unconnected to your own understanding and experience of the essay as a form. Therefore, for your first assignment, I would like you to

Write an essay (5–6 pages long) in which you explore your own experience with the essay, especially in academic contexts and in your own independent reading.

Consider:

- What kind of essays you have been asked to read and write in other contexts.
- Whether the definitions of the essay given in the readings correspond to your previous experience of the essay.
- What kind of definition of the essay you might be prepared to offer.
- What sort of relationship you feel as a writer and reader to the foundational texts we have read.

Requirements

- You must engage with at least 2 of the texts we have read in class. This engagement must include quotation.
- You are not required to do research, but are free to incorporate other materials of your choice.
- Your essay should be typed. Your pages must be numbered. Woe to those who do not number pages. Your paper should be stapled, not paper-clipped, together. I will return unstapled papers immediately.

Presentation Guidelines

- The margins of your pages should be one inch on every side.
- The font you use should produce 250–300 words per page, which is the academic standard in most disciplines in the humanities.
- The pages should be double-spaced.
- The pages should be numbered.
- Block quotations should be single-spaced and indented one tab-space from the left margin of the page.
- Your rough and final drafts should be stapled.
- Your essay should have a title, which should appear centered between the heading and the body of the essay. It should not be italicized or put inside quotation marks, but it may be bold if you wish.
- There is no need for a separate title page; your essay should begin with a heading that is flush left and single-spaced, like this:

Linda Bacciagalupo
Writing and Reading the Essay
Essay 1 /Draft 1
September 16, 2004