

## GETTING STARTED ON YOUR ACADEMIC JOURNALS:

The Academic Journal allows the learner (you) to go beyond sharing your story, history, life experiences and perceptions. You can work on learning to expand your "perspective taking" to include other people's stories and research. This is where your sense of curiosity is aroused.

**You become a detective and search for new knowledge and understanding beyond the course material - to make connections with your life and studies, asking yourself (and researching) new questions, exploring new areas, putting different pieces together for clearer understanding. Each Academic Journal should show how it connects with your journey on becoming an anti-bias educator.**

### First Step:

- We recommend that you begin with a topic that interests you regarding one of the multitude of anti-bias issues.
- Often students find their first topic from the initial required readings. There may be something that you disagree with, something that you really agree with but want to learn the story behind the issue, maybe there was something in the readings that you are hearing for the first time and want to explore the topic.
- The Academic Journal entries can develop out of, or build upon previous week's entries. This indicates to the instructor that you are on a journey of understanding about anti-bias perspectives.

### Second Step: Keep the following in mind,

- What the Academic Journal **should not be** is a collection of unrelated stories or simply a "diary" of your opinions. Also, it **should not be** a "traditional research paper or report".
- The Academic Journal **should** explore a topic from multiple perspectives, show an understanding on the issue in the social/political context of our society, and show how you see yourself connected to this topic. **Remember**, the Portfolio is documenting your growth and knowledge regarding anti-bias issues.
- The Academic Journal should **demonstrate critical thinking skills and in-depth reflections.**
- Decide if you want to explore various issues on your journey this semester.
  - You may explore more than one issue in each of your Academic Journal Entries.
  - Some students have explored 2-3 issues per Academic Journal Entry.
  - Some students explored in-depth five different issues - one in each Academic Journal Entry.
  - Some students took one topic and explored it in depth throughout the semester (i.e. Institutional Racism, School Segregation, taking a series of stories and putting them in historical context: i.e. the Montgomery Bus Boycott and then showing connections to your own journey and/or the issues in our society today.).

## CRITERIA FOR THE FINAL PORTFOLIO

### The Portfolio needs to:

1. Have a variety of entries that show growth on your journey.
2. Turn in the Academic Journal entries with documentation on time.
3. Continuing exploring the issue in each of your revisions.
4. Include an Appendix
5. Be neatly organized.
6. Proof-read!! (we encourage you to take advantage of the Writing Center).
7. The initial and revised Academic Journal entries **MUST BE TYPED!**
8. Must provide documentation of your research.

### **Some ideas on how to get started:**

- Perform critical in-depth reflections on class discussions and/or current events. This should provide you with the question to "investigate". **Then** do some additional researching of the issue.
- Look at what you underlined in your readings. Look at your margin notes. This is often an indicator of curiosity regarding the issue.
- Perform critical in-depth reflections on newspaper articles and other sources of media (movies, videos, magazines, etc.). Use the goals/framework/stages or what is being discussed in class to make the connections.
- Perform in-depth reflections on in-class exercises and readings. Do some research around your initial findings.
- Analyze why you disagree with an author - what points or issues? Possibly develop a dialogue with the author (either hypothetical or actual).
- Analyze why you agree with an author - supporting ideas.
- Make connections between the class topics and your own experiences.
- Analyze why you find yourself asking questions about a reading, and reflect on it - "I wonder why..." or "I'm having trouble understanding..." or "It bothers me that..." or "I was surprised when..."
- Analyze concepts you do not understand by reading outside literature (instructors have a number of related books) or website searches, and reflect on what you find.
- Perform exercises in other anti-bias books that help you understand or get past a hurdle, and document your experience.
- Document any "ah-has" (break-throughs, set-backs, incidents), and analyze what lead you to the discovery.
- Look at each topic from its historical context and then reflect on the issue in the present social/political context of today. One hot topic that's being discussed is the issue of school segregation today. Explore the Lemon Grove Incident, The Repatriation Act, Mendez vs. Westminster, Taking back the East LA Schools in 1968, Brown vs the Board of Education. Find out what really was happening. Then look at the issue of segregation today. Do we have segregation in our public schools in 2006? This could be the focus of your Portfolio - exploring one topic in depth for better understanding.

### **FINAL WORDS OF WISDOM**

**from former students**

- Don't be concerned about writing something that you think the instructor does or doesn't want to hear.
- Agreeing with the instructor is not necessarily the point.
- Journal entries may even include discussion of how you may not be ready to change your view.
- Even though content is open, spelling and grammar are still an issue. Proofread and spell check.
- Make sure you keep backed up copies of all your original documents to you turn in. This will help in your revisions and editing.
- Keep all your research/supporting pieces in one area.
- Be sure to put in time every week into building your Portfolio. It will make a huge difference.
- ENJOY THE WONDERFUL DISCOVERIES ALONG THE WAY☺