LEARNING PORTFOLIO ASSIGNMENT
John Zubizarreta
Professor of English, Director of Honors & Faculty Development
Columbia College, SC U.S.A.

What is the most valuable project of the semester? I would say it’s the learning portfolio. In the portfolio, you will pull together your thinking and writing in a coherent demonstration of the content, scope, and quality of your work along with your substantive reflections on what you've learned, how you've learned, why you've learned, and what value your learning has added to your intellectual and personal growth. Remember that the portfolio, a major grade in the course, will consist of evidence of your writing accomplishments and the important reflective component that is where deep and lasting learning really occurs. When you simply acquire information or knowledge, you have activated only a part of your learning potential. Going beyond knowledge to comprehension, application, analysis, synthesis, evaluation, and creativity engages you in a richer, fuller, deeper, more lasting learning experience, and that is what you will have done in your essays and online writing during the semester. When you reflect on your learning, you enhance the meaning of what you've learned and its relevance to your intellectual, social, personal, and ethical development. Your learning becomes authentic.

In reflecting on your learning throughout the class and in your various writings, ask yourselves questions such as these in composing your final reflective narrative(s):

1. **WHAT** have I learned or not learned from my work in the class, from my formal and online writing?

2. **HOW** have I learned or not learned best in the class?

3. **WHY** did I learn or not learn from the kind of work we did in the class and in the online discussion forum?

4. What have I learned about **MYSELF AS A LEARNER** from our written and oral work in this class?

5. How has my writing in this class **CONNECTED** to my learning in other classes? To my personal life?

6. In what ways has my writing and learning in this class contributed to my **PRACTICAL** learning and career goals?

7. Did I have **FUN** writing and learning in this class? What do I mean by fun?

8. What about the content of the course and my engagement in the course **SURPRISED** me?

8. If I were to do the class all over again, what would I do differently to **ENHANCE** my learning and **IMPROVE** my writing?
You do not have to answer all of the questions, but they are helpful guides to help you reflect on your learning experience in the course.

Here are some nuts & bolts about the learning portfolio:

**How Long Should I Make My Reflective Narrative(s)?**

Some of you may wish to write a few pages as a single reflection, while others may wish to write shorter reflective statements scattered throughout the compilation of written work, addressing a particular piece or group of pieces and the meaning and value of the work. Either way, the thoughtful, analytical, metacognitive writing in your reflections will be a useful, coherent way of organizing, understanding, and evaluating your own learning. *You should end up with at least 500 words of reflective narrative, either as a single piece or as interspersed pieces.*

**What Should I Include in My Portfolio?**

1. A written, reflective analysis of your learning. Again, your reflections can be a single narrative or various pieces interspersed throughout your portfolio. The reflective component is the heart of your portfolio, the most valuable and challenging core of the portfolio in which you tap the power of reflection in deepening and extending your learning.

2. You should log on to the online threaded discussion pages and print off your pieces. You can either use the “print friendly” feature to print all entries or copy and save your particular entries to Word and print. If you think adding others' responses or questions in a threaded series of entries enriches an individual post or helps to clarify or enhance your reflection about an individual entry, then feel free. *As you revisit your online writing, look for patterns of learning and growth as a writer and student.* Focus not only on what you've learned about the course content (i.e. short story) but also on what you've discovered about yourself as a learner.

3. Copies of your essay drafts--especially with evidence of feedback from instructor or peers and how you improved writing--and final versions of formal papers. I will carefully review any revisions you have written and consider them in appreciating your growth and learning in the course.

4. Evidence of research for formal papers, especially the longer research paper: written notes, copies of articles with your marginal notations, email exchanges on your topics, web inquiries.

5. Evidence of your work on the various individual or collaborative oral presentations based on your research outside the class to supplement our study of various stories. Include any notes, copies of material, bibliographical lists, etc. Any written reflections on the meaning and application of your self-directed research and presentation would be particularly valuable.
6. Copies of your class notes, revealing your thoughts, insights, questions throughout the course. If you have any work you've achieved toward completion of your final, creative, group project, include it also.

**How Should I Organize My Portfolio?**

I suggest that you design sections of the portfolio that will collect the different types of writing and other learning activities of the course. For instance, you may have a section on online threaded discussion writing, a section on formal essays, a section on research, a section on notes, and such. If you choose to write a single reflective narrative piece, you could have a section for it. If you choose to write several shorter reflective pieces about your growth as a learner, commenting on your growth throughout various selected moments throughout the portfolio, you can add the pieces at intervals throughout the portfolio, identifying them in some notable way.

What is more important than which particular way you organize the portfolio is that you *collect, select, reflect, and connect* in a way that is meaningful and coherent for you! I will read your portfolio carefully, but ultimately, the portfolio is your record of learning in the course, and you should organize it to help you understand your learning best.

**When Is My Portfolio Due?**

Submit your portfolio by making sure I receive it in my office on **Fri., 2 Dec. 2011.**

A mindful, honest, thorough learning portfolio demonstrates honors at its best. I'm confident that your learning portfolios will be delightful, instructive histories of your learning. Thanks for your hard work!