



# TEACHING TIPS FROM THE WTI: THE FINAL EXAM REFLECTION

Good writing assignments evoke a high level of critical thinking, help students wrestle productively with a course's big questions, and teach disciplinary ways of seeing, knowing, and doing. (Bean and Melzer 2)



## How Dora Peña Uses a Final Exam Reflection in COMM 1307

I use a reflective essay as my final exam. I have two purposes for this approach to my final. The first is to ask students to reflect on their overall learning experience in the class. Second, I want them to produce a writing sample demonstrating what they have learned that students could use in a future portfolio for work or graduate school.

The SAC Writing & Thinking Institute, a project of the SAC Teaching & Learning Center, promotes the use of writing as an instructional tool for learning and critical thinking across the curriculum at San Antonio College.

## What is a Final Exam Reflection?

One alternative for a final exam is to ask students to write about what they have learned in your class. Reflection is about looking back and making sense of an experience; often, it is in this reflection that students make connections and generate insights they had not done before. Reflection is also about looking at a mirror (so to speak), so a key part of reflecting is to ask students to analyze and interpret learning artifacts and experiences—especially in terms of the big ideas and key disciplinary concepts of your course—to demonstrate what they have learned.

## Final Exam - Duty to Self; Duty to Others - A Self-Reflection on Mass Communication

**Objectives:** To complete this course with a writing sample that can be used in a future portfolio; To reflect on one's overall learning experience in this course.

**Instructions-** Please complete the following 3-part Reflection:

- **Beginning:** Who was I at the start of this course? What role did mass communication play in my life?
- **Middle:** What was my learning like throughout this course? What stood out the most for me? Did I struggle with any ideas that came forth or were presented in the text, in class, or from the instructor?
- **End:** What will I do with my new knowledge of mass communication? Who am I now? What are my biggest takeaways from this course experience?

**Resources:** Use our past class discussion posts, e-textbook, slides, and past assignments to inspire your answers. Cite sources where applicable.

## Uses and Benefits of Final Exam Reflections

Reflection is a tool to help students “connect the dots” and promote transfer of concepts and knowledge, particularly coming at the end of a class in a final exam essay. Through reflective acts of processing knowledge and experience, student learners deepen their understanding and improve their action. One important benefit of reflection is it becomes the catalyst for students to construct their own learning.

Bean, John and Dan Melzer. Engaging Ideas: A Professors Guide to Integrating Writing, Critical Thinking, and Active Learning in the Classroom. 3rd Ed., Jossey-Bassey, 2021.