

Originality in the Arts and Sciences

Inquiry I: Go Do Something Intellectually Interesting and Tell Us About It

For the next three weeks, you are asked to perform a bit of inquiry that exploits the opportunities, knowledge and skills you currently possess as you arrive on a college campus. You will write a paper that details what you have accomplished that proves you are an interesting intellectual. Feel free to employ whatever format or structure makes you comfortable: a lab report, a computer program, an essay, a criticism, a survey, a proof. It is important that you originate the idea that you investigate, that the work product you turn in approximate what you think quality work done over a three week period by an honors student would produce in a college setting, and that you think critically in writing about what you have done. If you don't struggle (if your brain doesn't hurt) in the effort, it will show and you will be called on it.

Selecting a topic: Here is the hard part. BE CURIOUS!! Let your curiosity take hold—a big part of getting a good grade on this assignment is the creative part. You will have done your job if your professor actually enjoys grading what you have done.

Your UGTA: What better time than now to start to talk with people who have had these same experiences and are the better for them. You will be assigned an Undergraduate TA on Friday and on Sunday night he or she will contact you. Make it a point to engage your UGTA through IM or e-mail or text messaging or however you all communicate these days (maybe even meeting in person?) Understand that your UGTA is NOT to be the originator of your idea, but he or she can suggest improvements to the idea. In the end, it is your inquiry, but your UGTA needs to approve it.

Format for the write-up: Whatever you do, it has to be the kind of thing your instructors can access and read easily. Consequently electronic documents must be submitted as pdf files. How and to whom, will follow. If you use a medium not readily amenable to electronic format, contact your UGTA for guidance.

- You will submit your document electronically. Instructions for submission will be provided the week the assignment is due.
- Retain a hard copy of the inquiry for your portfolio, which will be due on December 14.

Safety: You will make the decisions on where and how to perform this inquiry so it is difficult to be too specific, but I caution you to use good sense with respect to legal, health and safety and confidentiality issues. This is a serious warning. Use common sense in your efforts and check with an instructor before you do anything potentially illegal or dangerous.

Grading: Exhibit an intellect, originality, enthusiasm, solid critical thinking and industry to get credit for the assignment. Otherwise we will hand it back for you to redo.

Reflection: Attached below is a single page that you must complete as the cover page to your inquiry. It is a reflection you will do after completing the inquiry that will allow for a bit of self assessment. Keep it real.

A Giant Piece of Advice: Get started thinking about the inquiry idea this weekend. If you wait until the last minute on the 13th, it will be a good indication that your time management is an issue and that your academic year will be a disaster.

Important Inquiry 1 Dates:

Wednesday, August 25, 2008—Inquiry 1 assigned.

Wednesday, September 1, 2008 at class time—deadline for having idea approved by UGTA

Monday, September 13, 2008 at class time—deadline for submitting inquiry with appended reflection

Inquiry 1 Reflection—Append to front of inquiry 1 when submitted

Name: _____ **UGTA:** _____

Inquiry 1 Topic: _____

Give yourself a grade. If you were assigning a letter grade as a college teacher in an honors course, what grade would you give your own inquiry 1 (A through F): _____

Explain the reasoning for your grade.

UGTA reflection. Candidly assess your interaction with your UGTA. Was he or she a help or a hindrance to you in creating a good inquiry. If they were a hindrance, what can be done to turn him or her into an asset for the next inquiry?

Time Management. Did you give yourself enough time to do a good job on the inquiry? Yes ____ No ____

Will you make any modifications to the way you manage your time in performing Inquiry II? In particular, what aspect of Inquiry I surprised you in terms of how much time it took you to complete it. What will you do to become for efficient?

Independent Inquiry. What do you think of independent inquiry as a way to learn? If you don't care for it, is this because it is fundamentally a flawed way to learn or is it because of the way you were programmed to learn in K-12?

The Internet and Learning. Did you rely on solely on what was already in your head in writing up the report or did you go to written sources (books, journals, internet) to supplement and develop a better background? If you didn't get help, what might you have learned about that would have made for a better discussion of your results? Write down a URL that you did use, or should have used.

Getting ready for Inquiry II. What were the most challenging issues for you with Inquiry 1 (consider, for example, idea development, background knowledge, poor experiment design, inability to assess data, etc.) What do you plan to do so that this is not a problem on Inquiry 2.