

Alternate Assignment for Students – Academic Excellence Day

Assignment Option 1: Presenter Engagement & Reflection Paper

Purpose: Encourage students to actively engage with presenters and reflect on their relevance to course themes.

Instructions for Students

1. **Attend Academic Excellence Day** and visit *at least three* posters or fine art works.
2. For each poster/fine art work, document the following:
 - Title and name of presenter(s)
 - Major/discipline represented
 - A brief description of the project
 - A question you asked (or would have asked) the presenter
3. Write a **2–3 page reflection paper** addressing:
 - What you learned from each project?
 - How these presentations relate to concepts, skills, or themes from this course?
 - What surprised or inspired you?
 - How seeing peer work influences your own understanding of research/creative inquiry?

Deliverable: 2–3 page reflection paper

Adaptation Notes for Instructors

- Can require **discipline-specific connections** (e.g., “relate to ethical issues, broader societal issues, engineering design, statistical methods, etc.).
- Can adjust required length or number of presentations.

Assignment Option 2: Presenter Interview & Applied Analysis

Purpose: Deeply engage with one student presenter and practice disciplinary analysis.

Instructions for Students

1. Select **one poster presentation or fine art work** that interests you.
2. Speak briefly with the presenter to gather:

- Research question or artistic theme
 - Methods, techniques, tools, or creative processes used
 - Key findings, takeaways, or artistic intentions
 - Challenges encountered during the project
3. Create a **1–2 page analysis or critique** that includes:
- A summary of the project
 - An interpretation or analysis using course-specific ideas (e.g., economic theory, design principles, biological mechanisms, literary analysis, statistical reasoning, etc.)
 - One suggestion, question, or potential direction for future work
 - How the project broadened or challenged your understanding of the discipline

Deliverable: 1–2 page analytical paper or recorded 5-minute audio/video reflection

Adaptation Notes for Instructors

- Could work especially well for writing, communication, or upper-level courses within majors.
- Adapt analysis prompts to match course goals (e.g., “apply at least one concept from Chapter 6”).

Assignment Option 3: Thematic Synthesis

Purpose: Build students’ abilities to connect seemingly unrelated works around a theme relevant to the course.

Instructions for Students

1. Attend poster presentations and/or fine art works and select **3–5 projects** from different disciplines.
2. Identify a **unifying theme** that connects these works. Examples include:
 - Innovation and Technology
 - Sustainability
 - Data Analysis
 - Social impact
3. Create a **short synthesis project**, which can take one of the following forms:
 - A written 1–2 page thematic overview
 - A brief slide deck (4–6 slides)
 - A concept map linking the projects

Your synthesis must:

- Describe each selected project

- Explain the theme and why you chose it
- Show how the projects connect to one another
- Relate the theme to at least one concept from this course

Deliverable: Written summary, slide deck, concept map, or video

Adaptation Notes for Instructors

- Could work well for general education courses, strand classes, or first-year seminars.
- Theme can be instructor-assigned (e.g., “Ethics & Responsibility,” “Systems Thinking”).

Assignment Option 4: Cross-Disciplinary Connections Grid

Purpose: Help students see connections across disciplines and practice synthesizing information efficiently.

Instructions for Students

Attend Academic Excellence Day and visit at least 5–6 presentations from different disciplines.

Complete the following grid for each presentation:

Project Title & Presenter	Discipline	Main Finding/Theme	Connection to This Course
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Write a 2-page reflection addressing:

- Describe each presentation briefly and explain the connection you identified to course content
- Analyze which connections to course content were strongest and why
- Discuss patterns or common threads you noticed across different disciplines
- Reflect on what surprised you about how different fields approach similar questions or problems
- Explain how seeing this range of work influences your understanding of research, creativity, or your own field

Deliverable: Completed grid plus 2-page reflection

Adaptation Notes for Instructors

- Can require discipline-specific connections (e.g., “relate to ethical issues, broader societal issues, engineering design, statistical methods, etc.).
- Can adjust required length or number of presentations.

- Can specify that students must visit presentations in particular disciplines relevant to your course.
- Works well for general education courses or introductory courses in any discipline.

Assignment Option 5: Research/Creative Process Observation

Purpose: Help students understand the research and creative process by observing how peers communicate their work.

Instructions for Students

Attend at least 4–5 presentations and take detailed notes on process-related aspects, such as:

- What methods or techniques did presenters use?
- What challenges did they mention encountering and how did they address them?
- How did they explain complex ideas to non-specialists?
- What evidence or examples did they use to support their findings?
- How did they respond to questions from the audience?

Write a 2-page analysis that includes:

- Brief descriptions of the presentations you attended (which projects, what they were about)
- Common patterns you noticed in how students approached their projects across different fields
- Effective strategies you observed for communicating research or creative work (with specific examples)
- Challenges that seemed common across disciplines and how presenters addressed them
- Insights about academic or creative work that you hadn't considered before
- How you might apply what you learned to your own work in this course or your major

Deliverable: 2-page process observation analysis

Adaptation Notes for Instructors

- Can require discipline-specific connections (e.g., "relate to ethical issues, broader societal issues, engineering design, statistical methods, etc.).
- Can adjust required length or number of presentations.
- Can focus the observation on specific aspects (e.g., "focus on methodology," "focus on visual communication," "focus on data presentation").
- Particularly valuable for courses with research or project components.
- Could be combined with an in-class discussion about effective presentation strategies.

Assignment Option 6: Disciplinary Lens Application

Purpose: Practice applying course concepts to real-world examples by analyzing presentations through a specific disciplinary framework.

Instructions for Students

Attend 3–4 presentations in any discipline.

Analyze what you observed using a specific framework or concept from this course.

Examples might include:

- Psychology: Analyze presenters' communication strategies, cognitive load considerations, or audience engagement techniques
- Business: Assess potential applications, market viability, scalability, or business model implications
- English/Communication: Analyze narrative structure, rhetorical strategies, or persuasive techniques used in presentations
- Engineering: Evaluate design choices, problem-solving approaches, optimization strategies, or technical constraints
- History/Political Science: Consider broader social, political, historical context, or policy implications of the work
- Biology/Chemistry: Examine experimental design, data interpretation, or scientific methodology

Write a 2-page analytical paper that:

- Describes the 3–4 presentations you attended (what they were about, key findings or themes)
- Applies the specified course framework systematically to analyze what you observed
- Explains what this analysis reveals that might not be obvious at first glance
- Compares how the framework applies across different presentations or disciplines
- Reflects on what this exercise taught you about applying course concepts to new situations

Deliverable: 2-page analytical paper

Adaptation Notes for Instructors

- Can require discipline-specific connections (e.g., "relate to ethical issues, broader societal issues, engineering design, statistical methods, etc.).
- Can adjust required length or number of presentations.
- Specify which course framework or concept students should apply (or let them choose from 2-3 options).

- Can tie to specific course learning outcomes or recent course content.
- Works particularly well for upper-level courses in any major.
- Consider providing a rubric that emphasizes depth of analysis over summary.

Assignment Option 7: Question Development and Critical Inquiry

Purpose: Develop critical thinking skills by generating thoughtful questions about peer research and creative work.

Instructions for Students

Visit 5–6 presentations across different disciplines.

For each presentation, develop one thoughtful question. This could be:

- A question you actually asked the presenter (document their response)
- A question you would have asked if you had the opportunity

For each presentation, document:

- Project title, presenter name, and discipline
- Brief context (3–4 sentences about the project)
- Your question
- Why this question matters (what would the answer reveal or clarify?)
- If you asked it: the presenter's response and your reaction to their answer

Write a 2-page reflection that addresses:

- What makes a good scholarly or creative question in different fields?
- How did your questions differ across disciplines and why?
- What did the process of generating questions teach you about critical thinking in your field?
- How might you apply this question-development skill in this course or future academic work?

Deliverable: Documentation of 5–6 questions with context, plus 2-page reflection

Adaptation Notes for Instructors

- Can require discipline-specific connections (e.g., "relate to ethical issues, broader societal issues, engineering design, statistical methods, etc.).
- Can adjust required length or number of presentations.
- Can require questions that connect to specific course themes or methodologies.
- Could incorporate peer review of questions before or after the event.

Assignment Option 8: Future Research/Creative Extensions Proposal

Purpose: Practice thinking about how research and creative work builds on itself by identifying potential next steps.

Instructions for Students

Attend 3–4 presentations that interest you (ideally related to your major or course content).

For each presentation, spend time thinking about "what comes next?" Consider:

- What questions remain unanswered?
- What related topics could be explored?
- How could this work be expanded, applied, or tested in different contexts?
- What limitations or gaps did the presenter mention (or did you notice)?
- What interdisciplinary connections might be valuable?

Write a 2-page proposal that includes:

- Brief descriptions of the 3–4 presentations you attended
- For each project: identify at least one specific gap, extension, or related question that could be explored
- Choose one project and develop a detailed "future directions" proposal including:
 - Specific research questions or creative goals
 - Proposed methods or approaches
 - Why this direction would be valuable or interesting
 - Potential challenges and how they might be addressed
- Reflect on how this exercise changed your understanding of how research or creative work develops over time
- Connect this to concepts or methods from this course

Deliverable: 2-page future directions proposal

Adaptation Notes for Instructors

- Can require discipline-specific connections (e.g., "relate to ethical issues, broader societal issues, engineering design, statistical methods, etc.).
- Can adjust required length or number of presentations.
- Can require students to focus on presentations within their major or related to course topics.
- Particularly effective for courses with research or capstone project components.
- Helps students understand that research is iterative and builds on previous work.
- Could be adapted to have students identify potential interdisciplinary collaborations.
- Works well as preparation for students developing their own research proposals.