**Assignment Sheet: Personal Essay**

**Due: December 10, NOON**

**Purpose:** The purpose of this assignment is to provide you with an opportunity to explore and express your feelings about college. You need to try to answer this question: What is your religion of college? What do you believe strongly about higher education? What are your core beliefs about what you (and the rest of us) are doing here? What led you to this faith? Your thesis for this essay is the answer to this question.

This whole semester, we’ve been trying to figure out if there is a cohesive religion of college in this country, or what the different beliefs are, and I’ve been asking you to reflect periodically about where you stand in these arguments about what and/or who college is for and why. **Now is your chance to articulate your thoughts and feelings about “college.”** In other words, the purpose of this essay is for you to practice writing coherently and interestingly about and from personal experience, and to draw connections between the themes of this class and your own educational beliefs and journey.

**Objectives:** This essay requires you to use details and stories from your own educational or cultural or familial background to write convincingly about your religion of college. **At some point in the essay, you do need to say a version of “My religion of / strong belief about college is . . .”**

**Structure and Format:** This essay is unlike the previous essays we’ve done this semester. While everything you write implicitly has a thesis and supporting arguments, this type of essay grants you some freedoms the others did not. **In 3.5-5 pages (950-1500 words),** this should be a reflection on your college story. It is a personal essay, in that you will get to (indeed, be required to) speak about yourself and speak from your own experiences as you argue for your religion of college. You need to use specific, concrete details that illustrate what you’re saying you believe about college, and **you are required to meaningfully reference at least one of the texts** we’ve read together so far.

**Rhetorical Strategy:** You need to convince your readers that, while they may not come to share your religion of college (and may themselves hold a different one) after reading your essay, they should be able to see your argument as valid and to see where you’re coming from—the beliefs and experiences and knowledge you have which led you to this set of feelings about college. You will have to choose your rhetorical strategies carefully: you have to think about your audience (your prof and your colleagues) and what they might expect from an essay like this and a writer like you.

**Getting Started:** Here are some questions to help you get started—you needn’t answer them all, but think about them as you begin the writing process: why are you in college? Why are you here at Perimeter? Did you always want to go to college? Did you expect to? What are the reasons you’re here as opposed to earlier in your life or later in your life? What do you want to accomplish through college? What are the messages you have received about college from: your family? Your previous schools? Your friends? Your co-workers? Your fellow students? The culture? The cultural artifacts that you like? The authors / creators / examples you look up to? Now that you’ve been in a college class or two, is anything different from what you expected? If you have transferred, what is different between the previous school and this one? Do you feel like you are doing what you want to do? Go back to the “response” section of your SAR; some of what you say there may help propel this essay.

In other words, this essay should be a meaningful attempt to thematize your life and experiences in higher education. This should be fun, so I encourage you to be imaginative and creative in constructing this essay. There are quite a number of themes and aspects to explore; I don’t doubt you’ll find something to write about.

**Evaluation**: While a personal essay is much more structurally flexible than academic essays, most creative essays share these basic components, and your essay will be graded accordingly:

* **An attempt to engage or interact** with some of the larger themes of this course, **including at least one** reference (citation or paraphrase) to one of our class readings; \*bonus for meaningfully mentioning the work of the scholar you’ve researched
* **An introduction** that draws your reader into the essay and that introduces your reader to the structure and thesis of the essay
* **A structure** that is consistent throughout the essay (including introduction, transitions, and conclusion) and that conveys your experiences / observations / reflections meaningfully
* **Use and development of details** that clearly, appropriately and meaningfully express your points
* **Evidence of an individual voice and tone**, i.e., language that *you* would use (instead of that of your parents, friends, or profs).
* **Authenticity and originality** in the sense that it’s derived from your own experience (your reader should get the sense that only you could have written this essay and that its content / subject matter is something you care about) and makes an attempt to reflect / meditate on the subject matter

**You can absolutely use multi-modal / digital elements in this; consult with me if you’re interested.**