

Eng 255 Creative Non-Fiction

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This assignment uses the QAP as a model for ethical interviewing as part of your research for your Profile Presentation and Profile Essay.

We are using our visit to the QAP as a model for two assignments.

1. The Profile Presentation-an existing profile that you will present to the class
2. The Profile Essay-a profile essay involving research into a person, one you know or a public figure, a place you have interest in or have been to, or an event (such as Dillard's "Solar Eclipse"). Think of your own connection to the material-if you are choosing a public figure, what can you bring to the story that no one else can? If you are choosing a place to write about, what is your connection to it?

Profile Presentation

1. Take a look at the transcripts or listen to the Queer Archives Project independently. After reading or listening to the archives, choose two stories/ people to focus on. You can choose any subjects because of anything that interests you about them, but please choose interviews from different time periods, which will allow you to investigate different historical contexts. Please read these transcripts AND listen to the oral histories of these two subjects. In your notebook write about what kinds of questions were asked of them. How were they asked? What answers did those questions elicit? How does the interview take into consideration the ethics of privacy? Is there anything that has been left out? Does that seem intentional or not? How so? Think of the subtext of these interviews as well. For example, how has Lafayette and its culture and environment helped to shape the subjects' identities? How does time function in the interviews? Were the stories of queer alums from decades ago different from more recent graduates? How so? Does the interview acknowledge the context of time and the context of world events? How has this context affected the identity of the subjects as well? Now consider and note how reading v. listening to the archives affected your experience with understanding the subject.
2. Take what you have learned from the QAP and think about the interview of the profile you are presenting. What makes it effective, ethical and compelling or not? Use the QAP to compare/contrast. (3 min presentations)

Profile Essay

1. Now that you've chosen your subject, think of how interviews can enhance your essay in addition to other forms of research. If you are writing about a place, can you speak to residents there? To historians? If you are writing about a person, can you interview them directly? Can you research their lives in other ways, perhaps using other oral histories, to enhance the experience of your subject? Think of our work with the QAP and what makes an ethical interview, as well as what makes a compelling one. How can you learn certain details about a person's life before approaching them? How can you elicit

narratives that will help you write an essay that brings your subject to life on the page? The interviewers of the QAP have knowledge of queer history, the history of Lafayette, and the context that their subjects grew up in. How can you tell what knowledge and positions the interviewer brings to the interview? How can you be prepared for an interview so that you can elicit the most compelling stories for your essay? If you chose to revisit the QAP digitally, what did the transcripts reveal that the audio interviews might not have? How can the voice of the audio be transferred to the page in an organic way? What is the effect of seeing a visual of the person being interviewed? How can you recreate that experience for the reader?

2. Write an 8-10 page profile of your choice. We will workshop this piece in class.