CREATIVE NONFICTION / JOURNALISM

LUTHER COLLEGE ENGLISH DEPARTMENT GRID FOR ASSESSING SENIOR PROJECTS

Project Author: _____

Project Title: _____

Semester and year: _____   **Credits _____**

Reviewer: _____   **Adviser _____   2nd Reader _____**

Note: The following assessment criteria for senior projects are based on the English Department's goals for student achievement.

_____ 1. Does the introduction/afterword demonstrate sophisticated reading, informed reflection about nonfiction or journalism, and the clear explanation of the particular goals of the project? (Dept. goal 1, "to become a more sophisticated reader")

1. The essay seems minimally considered and offers little helpful reflection about reading, the wider range of published work in which the project belongs, or the goals of the finished work.

2. The essay mentions several works that can plausibly be seen to have influenced the writer and suggests the range of published work to which the project connects. The writer adequately articulates one or more goals of the finished work. The introduction/afterword seems more of a beginning, however, than a completed essay, and lacks the finish of good writing.

3. The essay discusses a range of works that have influenced the writer and the range of published work in which the project can be seen to fit. This discussion seems sound. The writer articulates the goals of the finished work in a style that is convincing.

4. The essay is an excellent illumination of the literary culture in which the writer operates, demonstrating a keen knowledge of the writer's antecedents and inspirations, and the range of published work in which the project can be seen to fit. The writer sharply defines the project's goals.

_____ 2. Does the author use language for successful storytelling? (Dept. goal 2, "to become a better, more flexible writer")

1. The language of the project has troubling lapses in sentence structure, punctuation, spelling, or grammar. At times diction is awkward and word choices obscure or inadequate to the task. The style seems wooden.

2. The language of the project has enough unintended lapses in sentence structure, punctuation, spelling, or grammar to be annoying. Diction is uneven and word choices fall short of the mark in key places. The style is unremarkable.

3. The language of the project employs good sentence structure, punctuation, spelling, or grammar. The diction is appropriate, including well-chosen variation. The style has several moments of excellence.

4. Language is employed in a masterful way, with word choices that startle with their freshness, turns of sentence and phrase that delight, and a diction that is finely modulated to the materials at hand.

____ 3. Has the writer delved into the facts and presented them according to the dictates of nonfiction (which may for the best writers include some deliberate suspense or ambiguity)? (Dept. goal 4, "to become a more … critical thinker")

1. The material has a sketchy quality: either under-reported or hazy or of questionable veracity.

2. Material answering the basic questions (of who, what, when, where, why, how?) is usually there, but the reader leaves with some confusion or sense of a critical gap or two.

3. Material answering the basic questions (such as who, what, when, where, why, how?) is there and presented with a critical eye: a sense that the writer asked fair questions and (for journalism) asked them of appropriate people, and that the writer examined (or reviewed) the right terrain.

4. Material answering the basic questions (such as who, what, when, where, why, how?) is there and presented with a critical eye: a sense that the writer asked probing questions and (for journalism) asked them of exactly the right people, and that the writer combed over (or reviewed) the right terrain with an eye that uncovered what the average viewer would miss.

____ 4. Has the writer showed creativity in using form to engage and communicate with her or his audience? (Dept. goal 4, "to become a more creative … thinker")
1. The work seems more like an assemblage, with the feeling of being patched together without thought.

2. The work lacks several of the elements necessary to completely bring the story home to its readers.

3. The work is clear, with competent use of description, character, dialogue and quotation, scene development, and a sense of balance and timing that typically keeps sight of the main story according to the rules the work has set for itself or plays with form in a way that is meaningful.

4. The work comes alive for the reader through expert use of description, character, dialogue and quotation, scene development, and a sense of balance and timing that keeps sight of the main story while bringing its parts to life. Or establishes and works within its own rules in a way that hooks the reader and brings her or his feelings strongly into play.

____ 5. Does the project convey the writer's active moral and/or aesthetic imagination in a way that invites and serves readers? (Dept. goal 5, "to develop moral imagination, ethical values, and a sense of vocation")
1. The writer has merely reported, without voice or vision.

2. The writer pursues an angle but the vision behind the project feels uninspired.

3. The writer maintains a clear angle and a narrative presence that, to a degree, deepens or enlivens it.

4. The writer maintains an angle and an animating authorial presence that feels honest, wise, and/or deeply engaged.

_____ TOTAL SCORE

_____ REVIEWER'S GRADE

_____ FINAL GRADE