

# portfolio piece

*“An intellectual?” Yes. And never deny it. An intellectual is someone whose mind watches itself. I like this because I am happy to be both halves, the watcher and the watched. “Can they be brought together?” This is a practical question. We must get down to it. “I despise intelligence” really means: “I cannot bear my doubts.”*

— Albert Camus

## Project #1: Live? Die? Kill?

This first major writing assignment (P1) for the course carries with it a provocative title, indeed. It is designed to provoke your thinking on three simple and yet very difficult questions about who you are and what is important to you.

The three questions I’d like you to address in a cohesive, unified, well-developed essay come to us from documentarian and radio producer Karen Michel who recently went around asking these questions to people she encountered in her local community. The questions?

- **What do you live for?**
- **What would you die for?**
- **What would you kill for?**

Karen Michel asked these questions of strangers. Now, I want you to consider these questions for yourself—but develop your answers. (This is not a quick interview on the street; this is a thoughtful, well-developed essay.) Take your time to give very careful and deliberate thought to these monumental questions and write your answers in a connected fashion as an essay. Also, be sure to reflect and write at length on why you answered the way you did, and consider what this might reveal about who you are and what’s important to you. This is your opportunity to do what Camus suggests in the epigraph at the top of the page—be the mind that is watching itself. In other words, think critically about your own responses to the questions. What do they mean?

If it helps you get your mind better wrapped around this project, you might consider the following additional questions. They are phrased less provocatively, but have similar intentions. I want you to write specifically about the three main questions above, but considering the following questions might help get you started and/or extend the discussion in your essay.

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- What do you care about? What is important to you?
- What do you want to change?
- What makes you angry? What bothers you?
- What do you stand for?
- What are you willing to do or to give up to make it happen?
- Reflect on why.

### **How this Assignment Will Be Assessed**

First of all remember that this assignment will not be fully assessed until you include it as a part of your final portfolio project; however, as an initial draft that will be reviewed by members of the class, completing it on time is essential to stay on track toward at least a B in this course. Refer to the grading



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contract on the syllabus for more information about the importance of meeting all deadlines, and for general information on what makes for exemplary writing in this course.

*The basic expectations that I have for average and acceptable work for this project are as follows. The work should:*

- address all three of the main questions clearly, but in a unified manner with clear thesis, compelling introduction, and resonating conclusion; remember, it is a developed essay and not just question and answer
- demonstrate critical thinking, i.e. thinking about your thinking; it should reflect on the answers you provided to the questions and discuss what you think it reveals about who you are and what's important to you
- properly cite and document any and all sources used
- have a creative, interest-catching, representative title
- be well edited and free from careless mechanical errors
- around 1250 to 1500 words long (absolutely no less than 1250 but it can be as long as you like)
- be honest and enjoyable to read

## ***Due Dates***

This work must be posted to the course “Splatter” site and categorized properly as “work for review” by the scheduled due date. If you are having technical challenges with this, it is your responsibility to seek assistance from the instructor as soon as possible. Be sure also to keep your own electronic copy of your draft, so that you can easily return to it for revision at a later time. Consult the course schedule for a complete list of due dates.