YS #1: One in Three
Structured Reflection #3
Due Monday, Nov. 15 at class-time

Writing Prompts:

Part ONE:
Part One relates to peer review of cancer survivor profiles. Craft a narrative that addresses the issues raised in the following questions (without “just answering the questions”):
What were the most valuable moments to you of having peer-review of the cancer survivor profiles?
What writing traits did your group identify for you to improve? What writing traits did they think were developed? Were your peer evaluations similar or dissimilar from your own understanding of your strengths and weaknesses as a writer? How so? Explain using specific examples/moments/etc. After reading the profiles for the students in your assigned peer-review group, did you discover new or the same perspectives on what it means to have cancer as compared to the interview you did? Again, use specific examples to illustrate your thoughts. Were there any other striking moments for you as you looked over your classmates’ cancer interview profiles – moments that made you pause, wonder, evaluate yourself, others, this course?

Part TWO:
In one of Donne's meditational essays, written while he was quite ill, the poet reflects on the tolling of funeral bells he can hear from his sickbed. He writes:

No man is an Iland, intire of it selfe; every man is a piece of the Continent, a part of the maine; if a clod bee washed away to the Sea, Europe is the lesse... any man's death diminishes me, because I am involved in Mankinde; And therefore never send to know for whom the bell tolls; It tolls for Thee.

The main character in W:t lives her life by use of intellect and high standards of scholarship never thinking about her “soul.” Even in her study of Donne, Dr. Bearing has lost the true "soul" of Donne’s poetry that addresses the nature of the human soul with heartfelt questioning. It is easy when in college or pursuing education to focus on the goal of doing well on an exam, getting high marks, graduating with honors, getting to best graduate school, etc. without attention to development as a person or development of a passion. In what whys have you seen parallels between your own academic pursuits and to Dr. Bearing’s? In what ways do you think you will intentionally try to cultivate yourself as a person with a soul/ passion in the coming 4 years? What parts of Wit resonated most with you and why? Remember to use specific examples in your writing and go beyond the surface. Structured reflection takes into account your assumptions, experiences, learned concepts/theories of a community.
NOTES: Part One of this prompt was used after in-class peer-review of cancer profiles. Each student read 3 profiles besides the one they wrote. There are both “metacognition” elements in this prompt (think about yourself as a writer and think about how others see your writing) as well as a reflection on course material (what did you learn from the other cancer profiles). Students responded well to this prompt. The interesting thing I learned from this is that several students were really biased and suspicious about doing peer-review due to negative experiences in high school. However, as these students explained in their structured reflection, the experience in this course (in College) was vastly different and actually quite helpful and they were surprised about that.

Part Two of the writing prompt worked very well with the course as it directly related again to course work (reading and discussion of Wit). Students, from my judgment, were very honest and reflective in the writing on this prompt. Some still superficial with lots of generalizations, but at least attempting to get at some issues about the value of knowledge and passion. One unintended thing was that this last writing prompt of the term repeated in different words/context the first writing prompt of the term, e.g. is anyone an island unto themselves?

MORE BELOW – SCROLL DOWN
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Part TWO:  
As you read Junot Diaz’s *The Brief Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao*, you may have noticed the thematic richness of the novel, for instance:
- Family and gender conflicts and expectations
- The attempt to be “normal” in the midst of fuku
- The use of sex as currency or weapon
- The experience of moving through adolescence as a “geek”
- The complexities of biculturality
- The tension between internal and external expectations
- An evolving sense of self in the midst of shifting environments

Each of these themes is a potential doorway through which we can enter a text by making connections between our own life experience and that of particular characters in the novel. What is the thematic entry point that resonates most powerfully with you? Feel free to choose one of the themes already mentioned, or identify some other aspect of the novel that speaks to you. Your structured reflection should describe the connection you’ve discovered between some aspect of *The Brief Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao* and your own life experience. Whatever you choose, your work should reveal your close reading of the novel and your willingness to take a brave leap into its imaginative world. (This writing prompt was developed by the SCR group from summer 2008).

OPTIONAL: The prompt below need not be turned in, but consider the questions posed as you start work on your research paper. You have the option to include a final structured reflection on the writing prompt below with your research paper due December 3 for bonus points.

BONUS PROMPT:  
Working on a research paper can be a very challenging task as you try to decide what interests you, how to narrow down your interests, how to determine what resources are reliable and useful, how to find resources, etc. Consider the process you have been going through in working on your research topic. How did you decide on a topic? What motivated you to pick the topic you did? What do you wish you understood better in order to gain more from this research and writing experience? Where there things that frustrated you? How could those frustrations be lessened? What do you think is the goal of writing a research paper?
NOTES: You will recognize that the Diaz prompts are the ones used by the SCR group from 2008; I did not write these. But, they work exceptionally well. I used them for structured reflection in 2009 and the responses by students were insightful, for the most part, and connected with course work (though not necessarily with our course topic, per se). The prompts did help students understand the themes of the book - an important outcome since the students had a longer paper writing assignment that related to the use of breast cancer as a metaphor in the book and they needed to be able to relate the metaphor to the themes of the book for that assignment. I did not use these prompts in 2010 because we did not end up having time to read Junot Diaz’s book.

The “Bonus Prompt” is a useful one for getting students to think about “Process” for writing a research paper (but could be applied for writing or different kinds of work in other courses/disciplines). Prompts that focus on process are also important, I think, in structured reflection because they perhaps more efficiently get at issues of metacognition. They also help students take responsibility for learning outcomes.

Part One of this prompt was used after in-class peer-review of cancer profiles. Each student read 3 profiles besides the one they wrote. See notes above for more info.