

Creative Nonfiction and Science Writing
Unit 3 Major Assignment: Observation Essay
Assignment Sheet

DUE DATE: _____

SUMMARY OF THE ASSIGNMENT

Hone your apperceptive faculties by visiting the same site three times over the course of three weeks. Using all of your senses, examine the ways that a landscape or space changes over time and relay those changes in a creative and interesting way in a short essay.

PURPOSE OF THE ASSIGNMENT

Observation is key to many scientific discoveries, and it's an essential tool for writers too. We often think that observation comes naturally to us and that it happens automatically, but observation is actually a skill that can be developed through assignments such as this.

REQUIREMENTS AND GENERATIVE CONSTRAINTS

- Submit field notes with your essay. Your field notes should provide evidence that you observed the same setting at least 3 times. Your notes should be marked with 3 different dates.
- Your essay should be 3-5 double-spaced pages.
- Include a title that is unique and specific to your essay.
- Make ample use of detail, drawn from your observations.
- Note details that most people would overlook.
- Defamiliarize something for the reader.
- Vividly recreate a scene or setting for your readers.
- Use evocative language, including metaphor.
- Involve all of your senses in your descriptions. (Or feel free to remove one sense to change your perception. So if you typically use your eyes to see, try putting a blindfold on – and then see differently.)
- Use the observation practices that we discussed in class, draw from scientific methodologies. If you wish, you may wish to bring a tool such as a magnifying glass or thermometer to the site where you complete your fieldwork.
- Note the relationships between elements in the setting.
- Provide your readers a sense of how the landscape changes over time.
- Your essay should be easy to follow and consistently interesting.
- Style, tone, word choice, verb tense, grammar, and spelling should be consistent. All departures from convention should have a clear purpose and should contribute to the meaning of the piece.