

APPENDIX B: EXAMPLE PROBLEM POSING LABOR PROCESS

REFLECTION LETTER: PROBLEMATIZING OUR EXISTENTIAL WRITING ASSESSMENT SITUATIONS [TO BE DONE AFTER OUR ASSESSMENT DISCUSSIONS IN CLASS ON FEB 26]

The final step in this process is to reflect in writing on the problems posed by the process of assessing your colleagues' drafts in a letter to me. Like last time, here are the questions that can help you think about what you might say in your reflection letter to me:

- What problems about your own judgment of writing, of language, might you pose to yourself at this point?
- What contradictions were there in judgments or assumptions (explanations) about language, ideas, or sentences?
- What perspectives did you notice others reading from that shaped very different observations and judgments than yours?

These are the sources of the problems posed by your judgments of writing. Point out one or two problems in your reflection. Show me their sources in your colleagues' assessment letters and your assessment letters. Quote from one or two colleagues' letters (you have them available on G'drive). Quote from the drafts in question. Be precise with the language, since it is the problems of judging language that I'm asking you to reflect upon. In your reflection, try to come to an articulation of the problem as a question. Most important, think of your discussion in the letter not as one in which you figure out which judgment is correct, but as one in which you see them both (or all) as reasonable, as a paradox (a puzzle with multiple ways of approaching it and solving it). You don't have to have answers, but you may have some hypotheses that show tensions. To do this labor, do the following:

1. Find a quiet spot where you can do your work in peace and be completely there for yourself and me.
2. Using our methods from class, spend **five minutes** practicing mindful breathing. As you breathe out slowly, say in your mind, "I am here," then as you breathe out again, say in your mind, "I give my time to myself to problem pose." Repeat these two statements during the entire five min-

utes.

3. Take just **three minutes** and review our handout on deep reading, so that you can do some deep reading of these assessment letters.
4. Spend **at least 20 minutes** looking through your assessment letters and those of your colleagues, looking for the problems you might pose about your judgment of writing or language.
5. Next, reflect in writing for **at least 25 minutes** on the above questions. Your job: problematize your existential writing assessment situation, in other words, pose problems about your judging of writing, think them through, consider the paradoxes (i.e., unresolvable conflicts). The final product should be between **300-400 words**. Place this G'doc in your named folder—this will make it easier for me to get to it. Name it: your name—problem posing 3, so an example of the file name would be: Jen - problem posing 3. These are due by Mon, Mar 02 at 11:59 pm.

NOTE: Typically, this assignment is done after each assessment labor on major drafts (usually around three times in a quarter or four to five times in a semester). Because I now use Google Drive and Google Docs, I can quickly respond to these letters in writing, tweeting students when I'm done. This means most students get at least one revision in before the first due date of the letter. Most of my responses ask students to revise or respond with more discussion, more thinking about the emerging problems they are trying to pose. My responses usually ask about their *habitus* (Where did this idea come from in your life? How do these sources help you understand this text in the way you do?) or to be more specific about the judgment of language (What did your colleagues say exactly about this sentence?). It takes one or two times of doing this assignment for most students to figure out what I'm asking them to do.

The reference to mindful breathing comes from my own contemplative practices that I incorporate into classrooms and invite students to do with me. I do not suggest a teacher use such practices unless, (1) she has a contemplative practice of her own that she feels comfortable with, and (2) that she supports such uses of meditation or mindfulness with some readings and practices in the classroom, which my classes do. If you are interested in such practices, I suggest Daniel Barbezat and Mirabi Bush's (2014) excellent book *Contemplative Practices in Higher Education: Powerful Methods to Transform Teaching and Learning*, which offers a range of contemplative practices and some theorizing of them. Much of the book can be read with students. For a good reflective discussion of how contemplative practice helps a teacher think about her teaching and the learning in her classroom, Mary Rose O'Reilly's (1998) *Radical Presence: Teaching as Contemplative Practice* is excellent, as well as beautifully written and accessible to students. Additionally, I've used excerpts from Thich Nhat Hanh's

(1991) *Peace is Every Step*, Pema Chodron's (1991) *How to Meditate* (2013), and numerous online selections and videos to help students understand mindful breathing and the research on it that shows its effectiveness in lowering stress and increasing focus and attention.

Finally, the deep reading handout referenced is an extension of the assessment and mindfulness activities done in my classrooms. It is a labor practice that helps us do problem posing. Students and I build a list of behaviors and actions that we feel create a mindful and compassionate reading practice that we can use in all of our reading labors. To help us with our thinking, my students have read excerpts from Barbezat and Bush (2014), O'Reilly (1998), Ratcliffe (2005), and Elbow (1993). All offer explicit discussions on listening mindfully, reading rhetorically, and reading to like in compassionate yet critical ways.