

Maps & Marginalia

Portfolio I

Due March 2nd

Please complete the following three-stage portfolio assignment, addressing each section in order. Take a break between each stage to “collect” yourself and your ideas. Your final work should be five to six pages in length, and contained within a thin, two pocket folder.

IMPORTANT: You can not successfully complete this assignment if you have not read or viewed the texts assigned this semester thus far.

1. Please reread the section on “Developing a Working Knowledge” on pages 39-59 in the Ballenger text, and “map” your experience as you move through the following exercise. This activity should give you some practice in the acquisition and development of working knowledge, and some skills for developing this knowledge through the use of focusing questions. It should also give you some sense of the various ways that this trajectory is mirrored in the mapping that takes place within the research process in its entirety.

- Follow Ballenger’s advice about developing research strategies, and see what kind of working knowledge you can acquire and begin to develop with the following terms: ‘ethnography,’ ‘ethnology,’ ‘ethos,’ ‘ethics,’ ‘emic,’ and ‘etic.’
- With Elise Lemire’s *Black Walden* in mind, make a short list of some ideas that you might be interested in pursuing about her work through research, especially in light of what you have focused on through your exploration of and with the above terms.
- With Chris Marker’s *Sans Soleil* in mind, make a short list of some ideas that you might be interested in pursuing about his work through research, especially in light of what you have focused on through your exploration of and with the above terms.

After you have completed your lists, please write two pages about this experience, describing what you discovered about your subject matter and about yourself as a “researcher.” In other words, tell me what you did, how you came to your ideas, and what this has taught you about your own capacity to generate and pursue ideas. In addition, please include specific references to all three of these texts (Ballenger’s, Lemire’s, and Marker’s) in your discussion.

2. Please read the section on “Developing a Research Strategy” on pages 61-85 in the Ballenger text, and “map” your experience as you move through the following exercise. This should give you some sense of how to develop focused knowledge with the aid of focusing questions. Once again, this should also give you some appreciation of the various ways that this trajectory is mirrored in the mapping that takes place within the research process in its entirety.

- With some of the central themes addressed in Lemire’s text in mind, think about your own beliefs and opinions about her subject matter, and about what she is trying to achieve through her work. Without making any claims at this point, once again consider your own take on what you have written regarding possible ideas to pursue through further research.
- Taking a look at the themes that are addressed in Marker’s text, think about your own beliefs and opinions about his subject matter, and about what he is trying to communicate through his film. Without making any claims at this point, explore your own take on what you have written regarding possible ideas to pursue through further research.
- Look on page 81 of Ballenger’s text, and again read his comments regarding the development of “focused knowledge.” Think about what you might still need to do in order to successfully achieve this level of expertise on your own by asking yourself the following questions: How does it help me understand the context for the sorts of questions that interest me? Do I have enough information to support any claims that I might eventually want to make about these subjects? Has anything that I have written down or thought about thus far challenged or complicated anything addressed in these works at this point in the process? Has anything that I have found in these works, or anything in my own previous thoughts about any of the ideas been complicated by what I have accomplished at this point of this portfolio assignment?

After you have completed your list, please write two pages about this experience. Focus on what you have discovered about your subject matter and about your own experience as a “researcher.” In other words, tell me what you did, how you came to your ideas, and what this has taught you about your own capacity to generate and pursue ideas. Once again, please include specific references to the three texts in your discussion.

3. Please read pages 99-105 in Ballenger’s text, and then apply his suggestions about conducting interviews to Lemire’s book, *Black Walden*. In light of what you have discovered in the first two parts of this portfolio assignment, compose three possible questions for Elise Lemire’s in preparation of her visit to the university on Wednesday, March 9th. In your questions, please refer to her text to give your questions proper context. In other words, rather than asking her a question about her use of narrative in general, you should point to specific examples of narrative in her text. After you have composed each question, please provide me with a short explanation of how you arrived at your question. This should be one to two pages in length.