

CULTURAL HERITAGE PAPER GUIDELINES

ASSIGNMENT OVERVIEW:

- Write a brief paper (4-5 pages) describing your cultural heritage as *you* define it.
- Your paper should include a critical analysis of your family practices, values, etc. You should compare and contrast how these practices may differ from another ethnicity/culture.

METHOD:

1. Reflect on your family experiences.
2. Conduct your own research about different aspects of your family.
3. Interview several family members (preferably of different generations), friends of your family and/or anyone else who may have knowledge about your cultural heritage and history.
4. Research another culture (and/or interview someone) to determine similarities and differences with aspects of your own culture (i.e., traditions, values, norms).

FORMAT:

- Your paper must be in modified APA format: cover page, double spaced, in-text citations and references (if applicable).
- Cover page and references (one page) are not included in the 4-5 pages.

OTHER REQUIREMENTS:

- *Turning in your paper late will result in a lowering of your grade by one letter grade for each day it is late.*
- *No papers will be accepted after three days beyond due date.*

CONTENT:

Your paper should include your perspective of your family of origin and the factors that make your family unique. Many students have enjoyed exploring their family history using a combination of discussions with family members, reviewing albums and family documents, as well as conducting their own internet searches.

There are no “rules” about how to explore your cultural heritage. The following questions are provided to give you some guidelines and inspiration about how to begin your research. *These are merely suggestions to get you started – you are not required to answer each question.* You are encouraged to develop your own questions and ideas. However, your paper must address the following areas: **description of your cultural heritage, family traditions/norms/values, religion, comparison to another culture, lessons learned.** The highlighted questions address the required topics.

1. *What is the ethnic composition of your family? Are other ethnicities, nationalities or cultures represented within your family?*
2. *Would you describe your family as more traditional or nontraditional (must choose one)? Explain why.*
3. *What is your nationality? Were your parents or grandparents native born or immigrants to your country of birth? To the United States? Did you immigrate to the USA? When? Why?*
4. How many generations back can you trace your family tree? How much do you know about the paternal and maternal sides of your family?
5. How did your parents meet? What parts of the country/world are your parents/grandparents from? How did your family settle to your hometown?
6. Can you trace the origin of your surname (last name)? Does it have a meaning?
7. Why were you given your first, middle or nickname? Do any of your names have meaning?
8. What language(s) do(es) your family speak at home? Was it the same language you spoke at school? Does your family speak more than one language?
9. *To which religion(s), if any, do your family members belong? How did they choose that particular religion? Are there any religious traditions your family follow?*
10. *How does your family of origin celebrate major life events (e.g., birthdays, births, weddings, funerals) and holidays (i.e., Christmas, Thanksgiving, New Years, Easter, Ramadan, Kwanzaa, Lent, Rosh Hashanah, Three Kings Day, Ash Wednesday, etc.)? Are there special traditions within your family celebrations (e.g., cooking certain foods, abstaining from others, displaying special symbols, following certain rituals)? How did these traditions begin? Describe your favorite family tradition and how it began.*
11. *What are some of your family's norms? What have you been taught re: public behavior, grooming, child rearing, appropriate child behavior, treating the elderly, other races, displaying manners, sharing family secrets, etc?*
12. *What are the cultural norms regarding communication, emotions, sharing responsibilities in your family?*
13. *What are some of your family's values (e.g., respect, freedom, work, independence, marriage, education, finances, etc.)?*
14. Does your family celebrate family reunions? Describe a memorable family reunion.
15. What foods, music, sports, books and/or stories are integral parts of your family life?

16. Are there any sayings or “words to live by” that your family uses?
17. What parenting style was used during your childhood? Is this the style you (will) use with your own children?
18. What are the expected roles of women in your family? Men? Children? Elderly?
19. How would your family react if you “broke” a family tradition (e.g., changed religions or married someone from a culture that is much different from your own)?
20. *What cultural traditions, if any, would you like to incorporate into your family and why? If there is one thing that you would like to change about your family what would it be?*
21. What is the most valuable lesson you have learned from your family?
22. Who in your immediate or extended family had the most influence on your development and socialization? In whose footsteps do you intend to follow? Upon whose shoulders do you stand?
23. Describe something unique or special about your family.
24. *What would you like to take with you from your family of origin into your own family and what would you like to leave behind? Why?*

GRADING:

- Your paper will be graded based on quantity and quality.
- An excellent paper will be one that is
 - **thorough**: addresses all of the required sections; **explains concepts** well; **justifies statements** with **examples**; includes detailed “research” about your **family**.
 - **thoughtful**: includes **your reflections about your cultural heritage**, provides **specific details** and **explanations**; paints a vivid picture of your cultural heritage and family experiences -- it does more than just answer each of the questions in order.
 - **well-written**: **well organized**, free of spelling and grammatical errors and formatted correctly.
 - **unique**: has a personal or creative element to it -- *use your imagination*.

This is intended to be a fun and informative assignment.

Enjoy the journey!