

ES/21W.729 REFLECTIVE ESSAYS OVERVIEW  
FALL 2016  
MYTH AND PARACHUTE STORIES

These assignments have two communication foci: self-knowledge (one of the 5 knowledge domains needed for successful communication) and the rhetoric of story telling, especially for stories that have a “moral” or take away message. These foci are situated in the context of applying for jobs &/or graduate school. In these situations, you’ll need to explain who you are to others using anecdotal evidence; to do so, you’ll pick stories with specific, satisfying, concrete details and sandwich these morsels between an introduction and a conclusion that guide the reader’s interpretation of the story.

MYTH ~3-5 pages

This assignment is designed to be accomplished (in part) during Thanksgiving dinner, a time during which stories are told and re-told. Spin the stories that are told about yourself into a myth. This myth should explain some aspect of you or your nature. You are encouraged to give yourself superpowers and other extraordinary traits. If “myth” seems too big for your shoes, try a fairy tale; “Once upon a time...” A degree of exaggeration is expected in the myth.

PARACHUTE ESSAYS 2 stories; ~1 page/story

Parachute essays are one-page stories that you can use to figure out who you are and to explain who you are to prospective employers or graduate school admissions boards. These stories must be short and real. They must reach beyond anecdote and statistical significance into myth, but without the exaggerated claims that can be made in a myth. For this assignment, write two such stories based on your experience THIS semester. The experiences described do NOT have to have occurred as part of your ES.729 work. But try to address these stories to topics of importance to ES.729:

- your experience working with others
- your experience working on technical projects
- your experience communicating

These topics fit well in the people|information|things skills trichotomy outlined in *What Color Is My Parachute*, where sample stories and further explanation of the reasoning behind such stories and their use may be found.