

*A great deal of your time at university is spent thinking; thinking about what people have said, what you have read, what you yourself are thinking and how your thinking has changed. It is generally believed that the thinking process involves two aspects: reflective thinking and critical thinking. They are not separate processes; rather, they are closely connected (Brookfield 1987).*

One of the skills that is being taught in this course is the ability to engage in constructive peer review. We will be working with the instructors from Odegaard Writing & Research Center at the start of the course to develop effective strategies for peer group review. In order to do that you **will each need to complete this writing assignment and bring two hard copies to class with you on Tuesday Oct 9<sup>th</sup> (25pts). Your second draft of the paper will be due in Thursday Oct 11<sup>th</sup> (25pts). No late papers will be accepted.**

For this initial assignment I would like you to select one of the prompts below and prepare a **200-400 word reflection**:

1. “If we look straight and deep into a chimpanzee's eyes, an intelligent self-assured personality looks back at us. If they are animals, what must we be?” — Frans de Waal, Scientist, Author
2. “As I sit, my back leaning against a damp, moss-covered tree trunk, my eyes sweeping the canopy above, my ears straining to catch the crack of a distant branch that betrays an orangutan moving in the treetops, I think about how we humans search for God. The tropical rain forest is the most complex thing an ordinary human can experience on this planet. A walk in the rain forest is a walk into the mind of God.” — Birute M.F. Galdikas, Scientist, Author
3. “I’d been traveling in Asia long enough to know that monkeys there are nothing like their trombone-playing, tambourine-banging cousins I’d seen on TV as a kid. Free-living Asian primates possess a characteristic I found shocking and confusing the first time I saw it: self-respect. If you make the mistake of holding the gaze of a street monkey in India, Nepal, or Malaysia, you’ll find you’re facing a belligerently intelligent creature whose expression says, with a Robert DeNiro-like scowl, “What the hell are you looking at? You wanna piece of me?” Forget about putting one of these guys in a little red vest.” — Christopher Ryan, Author

**Reflective writing is\*:**

- your response to experiences, opinions, events or new information
- your response to thoughts and feelings
- a way of thinking to explore your learning
- an opportunity to gain self-knowledge
- a way to achieve clarity and better understanding of what you are learning
- a chance to develop and reinforce writing skills
- a way of making meaning out of what you study

**Reflective writing is not:**

- just conveying information, instruction or argument
- pure description, though there may be descriptive elements
- straightforward decision or judgement (e.g. about whether something is right or wrong, good or bad)
- simple problem-solving
- a summary of course notes
- a standard university essay

\* adapted from

## Example of Reflective Writing

In *Monkeys on the Edge: Ecology and Management of Long-tailed Macaques*. Gumert, Fuentes and Jones-Engel eds. Cambridge Press.

FOREWORD By David Quammen

### Thirteen Ways of Looking at a Monkey

If the world of nonhuman primates offers an emblem of the tensions of modernity, it's *Macaca fascicularis*, the long-tailed macaque. This alert, adaptable Asian species is one of the world's most familiar monkeys, but also among the most sorely taken for granted. Its behavior is flexible and complex. Its intelligence and opportunism are famous, even notorious. It has been called many names, of which "weed" and "ethnotramp" aren't the worst. Its current population status is poorly known but, by reliable accounts, combines the good news of broad distribution with the bad news of declining numbers. Its relations with *Homo sapiens* are close, diverse, ambivalent, and in some cases problematic. Although it has recently been reclassified as a species of "Least Concern" by the IUCN, concern does remain high among some primatologists, who see the long-tailed macaque facing multiple challenges throughout its distributional range. Some of those challenges (of which habitat loss, habitat fragmentation, and capture for use in biomedical research are foremost) could lead to local extinctions, disappearance of subspecies, and compromised population viability overall.

The long-tailed macaque is an extraordinary species, much valued (especially as a laboratory test animal) and at the same time much disdained. It's so plastic in its attributes and roles, so various, so shimmery—and human attitudes toward it are so varied too—that I'm put in mind of the Wallace Stevens poem, "Thirteen Ways of Looking at a Blackbird," first published in 1917, when cubism in art and imagism in poetry were the cresting waves. Stevens was getting at the matter of perspective and subjectivity when he wrote those thirteen little haiku-like bits, each bit a vision or a thought of the bird. For instance: "Among twenty snowy mountains/The only moving thing/Was the eye of the blackbird." And: "I do not know which to prefer/The beauty of inflections/Or the beauty of innuendos,/The blackbird whistling/Or just after." In a similar spirit (but far more prosaically), I've made a list of adjectives that have been or could be applied to the long-tailed macaque, holding myself to a canonical limit of thirteen. This creature is: smart, adaptive, widespread, resilient, winsome, pestiferous, synanthropic, variable, exploited, sacred, profane, numerous, and besieged.

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