First Draft of the Self-Portrait (Description) Paper

Value: 25 points

Length: 5 paragraphs, 500 words (minimum)

Format: MLA style, typed, double-spaced, 2 copies (1 for me, 1 for peer review)

Due: See Syllabus

Note: Before turning your draft in, give your essay a creative title, proofread, and spell check (grammar and spelling count).

Topic: In this essay, you will be writing a self-portrait and discussing how identity is communicated.

OUTLINE FOR PARAGRAPH 1: THE INTRODUCTION, ENDING WITH THE THESIS STATEMENT:

Step #1: Introduce the topic: yourself and/or your thoughts about how identity is communicated to the world.

Try one of the following methods:

1) Start with a broad thought about identity and how we communicate it; then narrow to yourself and how you think the world sees you or gets to know you.

2) Begin by telling a story about yourself that will show who you are or how you think the world sees you.

3) Try a contrasting idea. For example, do people often come to the wrong first impression of you? Start with the misperception or with your thoughts about first impressions followed by one or more particular misperceptions of you.

Note: Make sure the intro leads to and prepares the reader for your thesis.

Step #2: Present the thesis statement as the last sentence of the first paragraph. It should answer one of the following two questions:

Who are you?

OR What kind of person are you?

Continued on the back of the page
Some tips for your thesis statement:

1. Be specific. Avoid vague words like unique, different, one-of-a-kind, or individual. Of course, you're unique and different from everyone else. Each of us is. What makes this vague is that it doesn't tell us what makes you unique or different or what kind of individual you are. As another example, instead of a word like nice, choose a word that indicates a particular kind of niceness (Do you mean that you're kind, soft-hearted, compassionate, considerate, or polite? etc.)

2. Focus on one overall idea about yourself. This doesn't mean use just one word, but avoid listing unrelated traits. This is not going to be a 5-paragraph essay where you deal with one trait per paragraph and then neatly wrap it up in the conclusion. Also, you don’t have to cover every aspect of your identity and can’t in so short a paper (even after expanding it to 8 paragraphs).

BODY PARAGRAPHS show us who you are with examples of your interests, activities, etc., that demonstrate the kind of person the thesis says you are.

OUTLINE FOR BODY PARAGRAPHS:

Step 1: Begin the paragraph with a POINT (an impression of you). Focus the point on ONE overall idea, a statement you’ll have to prove (I’m usually cheerful) rather than a simple statement of fact (I have brown hair). Also, make sure it relates to but is different from the thesis.

Step 2: Next, SUPPORT the point by presenting examples (primary support) that directly illustrate that point and by adding details about each example (secondary support). As part of your secondary support, explain the examples and details, what they mean, how and why they prove the point.

Step 3: Finally, DEVELOP the thesis. Explain what we learn from this point and this paragraph about the thesis. How does the impression of you presented in this paragraph relate to and add to our understanding of the thesis, the main impression of you? What do we learn from this paragraph about who you are and how/why you are the kind of person your thesis says you are?

OUTLINE FOR CONCLUSION:

Step 1: Begin by reminding us of the thesis. Don’t just repeat the same exact sentence but do use the same trait/word or an obvious synonym. You might try commenting on the thesis instead of restating it.

Step 2: Next, develop the thesis fully, exploring your identity, how you communicate it, how truthfully, and how much of it, to whom, and why.

Step 3: Finally, draw the essay to a conclusion. You might discuss other aspects of your identity or look into the future and imagine how you will be known then or how you will see your past self then. You might instead or in addition discuss identity in general. How well do you think we can know anyone? Consider too the implications of your answer (for how we judge people, choose friends, etc.).
Grading Criteria:

An “A” Paper (23-25 points) will respond fully, originally, and effectively to the assignment, fulfilling the length and addressing all aspects of the topic thoroughly. The essay and paragraphs will demonstrate excellent focus with a specific, unified thesis and clear, specific points. The essay will support and develop its ideas thoroughly with sufficient relevant points and examples, specific details, vivid descriptions, and thoughtful explanation of their significance in relation to the points and thesis. The essay will be organized logically with sound paragraph structure and effective transitions between paragraphs, sentences, and ideas. The writing will be clear, correct, and specific, effectively communicating the ideas. The paper will be formatted correctly according to MLA style.

A “B” Paper (20-22 points) will respond effectively to the assignment, fulfilling the length and addressing all aspects of the topic well. The essay and paragraphs will demonstrate clear, unified focus with a clear thesis and clear specific points. The essay will support and develop its ideas with relevant points and examples, details, description and explanation though not as thoroughly or specifically as an “A” paper. The essay will demonstrate clear organization and paragraph structure though some transitions may be missing. The writing will be clear with occasional errors or vagueness that does not detract from the ideas.

A “C” Paper (18-19 points) will respond adequately to the assignment, fulfilling the length and addressing most parts of the topic. The essay will have a clear focus though the thesis and/or points may be a bit vague or general. The essay will support its ideas with some examples, details, and description, but they may be overly vague or general, and explanation may be lacking. Development of the thesis may be inconsistent or incomplete. The paper will demonstrate basic organization, so that the reader can follow the argument despite occasional lapses. The writing will communicate the ideas, but there may be some serious errors as well as considerable awkwardness and minor errors.

A “D” Paper (15-17 points) will respond inadequately to the assignment. It may not fulfill the length or address all aspects of the topic well though some attempt to respond to the topic will have been made. The thesis and points may be vague and unfocused or entirely lacking. The support may be incomplete, lacking sufficient points, examples, details, and/or description. The paper may seem randomly ordered with random division of paragraphs, possibly wandering from idea to idea. The writing may have many errors that interfere with understanding the ideas.

An “F” Paper (0-14 points) will fail to respond to the assignment. The essay may fall significantly short in length. It may fail to address the topic. It may lack a thesis and/or points, making the focus unclear. It may lack support. In structure, it may resemble notes or prewriting rather than an essay. The writing may have so many errors that they prevent the ideas from being understood.