

THINKING ABOUT ESSAY WRITING

MATH 105-6: FIRST-YEAR SEMINAR: THEORIES OF MIND AND MATHEMATICS
PROF. THEO JOHNSON-FREYD, NORTHWESTERN UNIVERSITY, FALL 2015

SUBJECT

What is the nature of writing? How is the process of writing similar to or different from the process of the mathematical sciences? How is the output of writing similar to or different from the output of the mathematical sciences? How is thinking about writing similar to or different from thinking about the mathematical sciences? What types of truths can writing communicate? What types of biases does writing introduce? Are there a priori limits on the power of writing? Is the effectiveness of writing unreasonable? What types of strange loops can appear in writing, and what happens when they do?

Choose one topic in the area of the above questions about which you have a message or point to make. In a two- to three-page essay, make your point clearly and forcefully. Draw evidence to support your message from your lived experiences writing and from the readings from this class. When crafting your essay, think carefully about ways that its form can reinforce its content.

OBJECT

Your essay should be addressed toward a typical Northwestern student who is not participating in this class. In particular, you must provide enough context for someone who has not read any readings for the class to be able to understand your essay.

Your essay should be between two and three pages, double spaced, written in a normal typeface, in a normal size (11pt or 12pt), with normal margins (between 1in and 1.5in). It should be copy-edited and should follow the conventions of an academic essay.

Your essay should be submitted in PDF form by email to theo.jf@math.northwestern.edu by 9am on Tuesday, November 3.