

### **Preparing Your Final Connections Essay**

At Southwestern, we intentionally work to create an educational and social environment where you are always learning inside and outside the classroom and always learning to connect different aspects of your learning together. We call it Paideia, and FYS is designed to introduce you to that way of learning and that way of being in the world.

Your Final Connections Essay is all about your personal experience of Paideia this semester. It should tell the story of your journey through this class in the context of your other experiences this semester as you have adjusted to your life at Southwestern.

More specifically, the essay should discuss your perspective on the different components of our Roadside America class—the summer assignment, course readings, movie screenings, discussions, individual papers, modules, and the collaborative projects—and it should connect specific elements of our class to other experiences you have had this semester in other classes and in your extracurricular activities.

To do this effectively, it must describe your experiences, analyze patterns that you saw emerge in your experiences, and interpret those patterns in an essay that connects everything together. Your essay should make specific points that show *what* you have experienced, what you have learned from it, *how* you have learned it, and *where* you have applied what you have learned as the course has unfolded. Remember that the main word here is “connections,” and the only way to describe connections is to be clear about both the things that you are connecting as well as the way they are connected for you.

As you develop this essay, consider the following:

- What was your personal experience of this class?
- What common threads do you perceive overall between your other classes this semester?
- How has what you are learning in one course informed how you view the knowledge you are gaining in another course? How did this change throughout the semester?
- When and where did you find yourself thinking about our work in this course outside of class—in other classes, and out in the world?
- Overall, how has this course worked as bridge between your courses and your other experiences as you have adjusted to life at Southwestern?