**Responsibilities and Assessments**

**Responsibility 1: Mini-Assessments for Formative Feedback on Main Assessments**

For each unit, we will have brief assessments, either in class or out of class, that build to the main assessment. For example, we might complete a segment of an assessment, hold a one-on-one conference related to an assessment, or complete an in-class activity. These mini assessments are low stakes. They provide you with opportunities to practice and experiment with your thinking for the main assessments.

I promise to provide feedback to these materials in a timely manner so that you can put that information to use for the main project.

**Responsibility 2: Attendance, Participation, & Engagement**

Our class time is precious and serves to support our work together. You should plan to prepare for class by doing any required readings and to engage in the class discussion and activities. All our activities prepare you for the main projects and work towards investigating the main questions of the course. Attendance is required. You should plan to meet for every class unless you are ill, have an emergency, or have a conflict that cannot be resolved. Communicate with me and your classmates about your attendance. Missing class will impact your performance on the projects.

I promise to make class time worthwhile by preparing activities, discussion questions, and presentations that are relevant, meaningful, and engaging. If our class time is not helping us move forward in our investigations, I am not doing my job.

**Assessment 1: What is a life of significance?**

Goal: Write an essay (4-5 pages) in which you draw from your experiences and the readings, podcasts, and other materials we have examined as a class to answer the question, what does it mean to live a life of significance? By what criteria or measure might we judge a life as significant? What are the qualities, characteristics, actions, and attitudes associated with such a life?

Role: As a new member to a community that values living a life of significance, your job is to articulate for yourself and for others in your community your understanding of what it means to live a life of significance. There is no one way to answer the question. Your contribution adds to and enriches the perspectives on the core question for this group.

Audience: Your audience includes new and current members of the Birmingham-Southern Community. This community has not prescribed a specific definition for living a life of significance. For this reason, you want to clarify for yourself and for other members of this group—as best you can—how you understand what it is live a life of significance.

Situation/Challenge: The challenge involves examining your own experiences and observations as well as the readings, podcasts, and other materials we have considered as a class to develop and articulate what you think it means to live a life of significance. Put these course materials in dialogue with your own experiences to develop an answer. You will need to distill a complex set of materials into three or four principles, features, or elements that constitute, in your view, living a life of significance. What are the qualities or features of such a life? What does such a life look like? How or in what way is it lived? Must one, for example, be famous or can one be relatively unknown? Does one have to have a “big” impact or can one’s direct impact be small? How or in what ways does one approach failure? How does one relate to or interact with others? What kind of work does one engage, including work in careers and communities? What sort of relationships does one establish with different groups?

While all sections of IDS 142 are producing a similar assessment, the readings or materials against which you should position your reflections may be unique to your section of the class.

Product/Performance: Produce an essay of approximately 4-5 pages in which you articulate three or four criteria, features, qualities, or tension points (or paradoxes) of a life of significance. In your essay, provide a rationale for what you identify and use your own experiences and observations (including materials we have examined as a class) to support your conclusions or any remaining questions you may have.

Standards: An effective essay will articulate four or so conclusions based on your analysis and consideration of your own experiences and our shared materials as a class. It will provide evidence and justification for those conclusions and address any alternative points of view. The essay need not be definitive, and in fact may raise more questions than it answers so long as it has articulated a set of principles, characteristics, tension points, or paradoxes about living a life of significance as you are coming to understand it. (Put differently, one could argue that living such a life is impossible for the following reasons, or that living such a life requires navigating six tensions)

**Assessment 2: Interview: College, Career, Significance?**

Goal: Conduct and write up an interview with someone about their educational and professional journey. To do this, use the readings, skills, and resources materials we have discussed in class. Ask your interviewee about their college experiences, how they identified their professional and civic trajectory, and what they would recommend to their younger self. Interview someone older than you, who is not part of your immediate family, who has had a life experience about which you are interested, who has some professional work or post-graduate experience. Consider interviewing someone who falls outside your usual circle, someone who you would not normally interact with but would like to or someone who has may have had a life experience from which you can learn or with which you identify.

Role: You are a researcher continuing your quest to understand what it means to live a life of significance. You are interested in the relationship between college/school experiences, career selection and career satisfaction, and community contributions.

Audience: Your audience includes those interested in the relationship between living a life of significance and college engagement and professional and civic responsibilities. This audience includes other college students as well educators, parents, and anyone interested in preparing young people or being prepared to get the most from college, find a meaningful and purposeful vocation or calling, contribute to their communities and otherwise live a life of significance.

Situation: The challenge will be to contact and conduct an in-depth interview with one person about their professional journey and how their experiences in college prepared them for their current career and professional identity (or not). You can draw from your extended network, ask a faculty or staff member for a referral, or review the list provided by the Krulak Institute and the BSC Alumni office. In all cases, be sure to identify someone who is older than you and has some professional work or post-graduate experience. The challenge includes reaching out to them via email or telephone, scheduling and conducting the interview, and writing up the findings of that interview.

You will want to ask your interviewees about

their current or intended professional position and any other jobs they have held

how and when they identified their current areas of work and time investment

why they chose to do what they do and what draws them to their work

how they navigate competing work and other commitments, including health, family, etc.

who in their life has served as a mentor or support

how, if at all, their experiences in school prepared them for where they are now

a time when they experienced a roadblock or a failure and how they navigated that experience

how their life experiences have shaped where they are today

what recommendations they have for their younger self when they look back from where they are now

and, finally, how they would define or describe what it is to live a life of significance

With the permission of your subjects, record your interviews.

Product/Performance: Write up your interview in the form of an interview essay. Your write up will be part of a collection of interviews conducted by the class that explore the theme of college, career, citizenship, and a life of significance.

Standards: An effective product will summarize the main and key subordinate points that emerged from your interview, provide direct quotations and summary of your interviews to support those points, and be formatted like a published interview. Do not organize the product seriatim—instead, use the interviews to contribute to your reader’s understanding of the relationship between college, mentoring, career, and living a life of significance as it is understood by your interviewees. Position your interview in a larger conversation by challenging common assumptions, reinforcing beliefs, or adding nuance to assumptions or perceptions your readers might hold about the relationship between college, career, civic engagement, and living a life of significance.

**Assessment 3: Group Project: Interview Synthesis and Reflection**

Goal: Develop a presentation with two of your classmates in which you reflect on the experience of conducting and writing your interview projects. Specifically, address three questions: what did you learn about conducting interviews? How did your interviews change, enhance, or challenge your thinking about what it means to live a life of significance? Given what you have learned, what specific recommendations would you make about crafting curricular and co-curricular plan in college that will result in a life of significance?

Role: You and your co-investigators should synthesize your findings from the three interviews and reflect on the process of conducting the interviews as a way of assisting others in gleaning value from your interview methods, understanding the overall results of your interviews, and setting plans given what you found.

Audience: Your audience includes your classmates and others interested in understanding the value and importance of both the process and product of interviewing and what that process and product might imply for one’s own academic journey.

Situation/Challenge: The challenge is to identify the points of commonality and difference among your interviews as well as reflect on what was difficult, useful, challenging, enlightening, or important in conducting the interviews themselves. For example, what tensions, patterns, or themes do you see across all your interviews? In what ways do your interviews challenge or reinforce your prior understandings of what it means to live a life of significance? What surprised you or puzzled you in your interviews? Additionally, what was it like to conduct the interviews? What was hard or easy about conducting the interviews? What might be the practical value of conducting interviews? What surprised you about the interview process? And finally, what implications might either the results or the process hold for your curricular and co-curricular plans? What recommendations are suggested by the process and products of your interviews? That is, what can you glean from this project that will put you and your peers on the path of living a life of significance?

Product/Performance: Prepare a presentation for your classmates, such as an in-class presentation, a recorded video, a staged performance, or some other kind of presentation. Your presentation should be no less than 10 minutes and no more than 15 minutes. Make sure that each person contributes to the presentation.

Standards: The presentations will provide a succinct answer to each of the three main questions and will provide evidence and explanation from the interview process and related products to support those answers. Each presenter will demonstrate similar contributions to the overall presentation and the presentation itself will engage the audience.

**Assessment 4: Significant Communities**

Goal: Identify, investigate, and evaluate a specific group or community you would like to learn more about. It might be a professional, civic, social, awareness-raising, or other community or group. Gather as much information about this community or group as you can, including its history, practices, values, priorities, and impact. This is a culminating activity that requires you to draw on the work we have done previously and to gather your own resources similar to those used in previous assessments (e.g., theoretical, historical, and practical readings, podcasts, interviews). Your aim is to determine the extent to which this community enables or constrains the ability of its members (or others) to live a life of significance as you have come to understand it.

Role: You are a social and cultural critic who seeks an understanding and assessment of a specific community or group. To criticize is to judge the merits and faults of something. As such, social and cultural critics judge the merits and faults of the culture as a whole and specific groups within it. As a critic, you are well-versed in what it means to live a life of significance, and so you seek to investigate a community or social group and assess the extent to which this group exemplifies, complicates, or challenges your understanding of what it means to live a life of significance.

Audience: Your audience is other members of your society, including members of the Birmingham-Southern community and your peers in the first-year class interested in what it means to live a life of significance.

Situation/Challenge: The challenge involves identifying a specific group, developing a deep understanding of this group (its history, practices, and impacts), and evaluating this group against the criteria you have articulated about living a life of significance. You want to understand this group on its own terms (that is, respect it) and then evaluate those terms against your understanding of what it means to live a life of significance (that is, critique it). Effective social critics are not dogmatic; as such, your investigation may prompt you to modify or alter your initial understandings of what it means to live a life of significance. The challenge is to balance understanding the group in its own terms against your assessment of the group’s merits and faults for enabling its members and others to live a life of significance.

Different sections of IDS 142 may approach this project in different ways. For example, your section may investigate a single group or community; alternatively, your class may divide into groups to investigate related communities or groups; or your class may determine that each student investigate a group or community of their own. Check with your instructor to determine your class’s approach.

In general, select a specific, identifiable group that you can research and place in social and historical context. To be workable, your group selection should be *locatable* and *bounded*, as well as *describable*, *measurable*, or *countable*. That is, be sure you can pinpoint this group in time and space (where is it and when are the members present?), determine some level of continuity, stability, or self-identification of membership (who is and who is not a member of this group and would they recognize themselves as such?), and provide a reasonable description of the group (can we measure its size and name it with some confidence?). “People who use Apple products” would not be a good group selection for this project because, although there might be some shared behaviors and values of these individuals, membership and participation is transitory, if even acknowledged. However, if there is a student group or local club who focuses on Apple products in some way, such a group would be workable.

Some examples of groups might include, but are not exclusive to: specific student groups, including groups that serve particular identity groups or constituencies on the BSC campus or have affiliations with larger, national organizations (e.g., SGA, Black Student Union, Spectrum, Bonner Leaders, or fraternal or sorority groups); religious or social communities (e.g., a local church, mosque, or temple, a local chapter of Kiwanis club, or a bowling team); professional communities, including academic communities (e.g., chemists, sociologists, social workers); specific sites where professionals practice or conduct their work (e.g., a medical unit in Birmingham, a particular law office, or the Birmingham city council); neighborhoods or cities (e.g., any of the neighborhood groups representing the 99 communities in Birmingham, each of whom have formal members and meet at least once per month); activist, advocacy, or social service groups (e.g., the United Way, the Birmingham Community Foundation, the Birmingham chapter of Black Lives Matter, Alabama Arise).

Whatever group you choose, you want to maintain both investment and critical distance from the group. This may sound contradictory; it is paradoxical: by investment we mean that you are interested in the group, that you value it for its own sake and want to find what is useful, productive, meaningful, and important about the group for its members and others (you want to believe in this group); by critical distance we mean that you must imagine how the group might be differently perceived, both internally and externally. That is, you will want to evaluate the group on terms separate from those used by the group itself, by criteria that others might employ—namely, the criteria we have developed previously in this course for living a life of significance. Put simply, neither advertising copy (investment without distance) nor judgmental dismissal (distance without investment) will do. The project requires both.

In all cases, you should research

the history of the group, including its founding and history of membership,

the practices central to the group’s work (including the work they conduct, the structure of the group, the clients or stakeholders they serve, the knowledge or information they hold in common, as well as how one becomes a member, sustains membership, demonstrates membership, and serves as a good member),

the values or priorities that animate this group,

the impact this group has on its members, clients (if appropriate), and the world at large, • and, to the extent possible, the social, political, or historical context of groups like this one.

The core aim of your investigations is to determine the extent to which this group enables or constrains the possibility of its members and others to live a life of significance. You should review written materials, conduct direct observations, search archives, hold interviews, and use other means to research your group and place them in the context of other groups like them.

Product/Performance: You have considerable latitude in what you produce for this project. Be creative. You can create anything that demonstrates deep and respectful understanding of this group, including its core practices, and your assessment of this group in terms of living a life of significance: teach your audience about the group and provide your assessment of it. Your product might include, but is not limited to, a video, a theatrical performance, a comic book or comic sequence, a scientific or reflective poster, a podcast, or a poem or painting—and, of course, a written report. Some products may require additional commentary (e.g., a painting with an artist’s explanation of how the painting fulfills the two criteria of understanding and critique). Your product will be showcased as part of a celebration for all sections of IDS 142.

In addition to this final product, include a brief, two-page narrative on how your thinking and understanding has developed during this project. Specifically, talk about how your thinking about research, community, living a life of significance, understanding others, and criticism has developed or changed as a result of this project. Be specific. The audience for this reflective statement is yourself, your classmates, and the instructor.

Standards: An effective main project will provide the audience with the history, core practices, and impact of the community under investigation—either through visual, auditory, or written means. These details will be based on library and other research (including direct observations and interviews with members). It will also provide a reasoned and sound assessment (including consideration of any counter views) of the capacity of this group to enable or constrain the possibility of living a life of significance.

The reflective narrative that accompanies your project will tell a detailed and rich story of your project development and what that project development has meant for you. (This narrative is separate from any artist statements or other materials that might accompany the project proper, although there may be overlap in terms of content.)

**Assessment 5: Curricular and Co-Curricular Plan for Living a Life of Significance**

Goal: Develop a curricular and co-curricular plan for your time at BSC, including a rationale for how this plan will help you achieve a life of significance as you understand it. This plan should include intention, flexibility, and exploration. We understand that this might not be the actual path you end up taking as life has twists and turns. Good plans are not rigid and static; this will be a living document that will change as you further identify your priorities, goals, and aspirations.

Role: You are providing yourself and your support network a roadmap for your next four years and beyond.

Audience: You and your support network. Your plan will serve as a document to you to hold yourself accountable to your community.

Situation/Challenge: The challenge involves planning and justifying the various courses, programs, activities, and other kinds of curricular and co-curricular engagements that you want to be involved in for the next four years. To develop this plan, you should talk with your academic advisor and other mentors, review available resources about courses, majors, minors, distinctions as well as options about co-curricular engagement, including residence life, orientation, phonation, and so on—as well as the materials we have been working with all term. Central to this plan will be the rationales and explanations that accompany it. You can determine how best to organize the plan, but it should include not only details about the courses (or kinds of courses) you plan to take, how you plan to succeed in them, and what else you plan to get involved with while at BSC, but a rationale and justification for those activities as furthering your priorities and values as someone who is and will lead a life of significance.

Product/Performance: A plan with curricular and co-curricular engagements as well as a rationale for those engagements that can serve as a guide for the next four years. You will share this plan with your academic advisor and you will be asked to revisit it in three years.

Standards: An effective plan will be sufficiently detailed so that it can be followed, include rationales and justifications that link plan elements to overarching principles related to living a life of significance, and include contingencies, questions, and options so that the plan is not overly prescriptive.