

## **CLASS JOURNAL SUMMARY**

One of the things I enjoyed the most about this course was doing a weekly journal where I could reflect on during this semester. The weekly titles and their questions helped me a lot because I'm a person who needs a theme to start with. I think that if it weren't for the weekly titles, my dairy wouldn't have had such a deeply introspection on me and my life, I think that I would have just wrote on what I did during that week, instead of writing about past experiences and what my thoughts were during those moments. It pushed me to learn more about myself, my culture, and my environment.

Also, thanks to this course's readings, especially Deep Survival by Laurence Gonzales, I learned about topics like survival, adaptation to harsh environments, and leadership. Therefore, with each journal entry I tried to apply what I learned from the book, so I could learn from why I did what I did and connect with everything the book taught me. It guided me a lot in understanding, why I am the way I am, and what are some aspects about myself that I can improve.

The course started with the "Survival Situations" title in Week 0. This was one of the entries that I enjoyed writing the most, as it brought back a traumatic childhood memory that has stuck with me for years. I talked about a moment when my family and I faced a scary situation when walking back home along the beach after a lunch at a restaurant in Spain. During our walk back we encountered a river mouth. It didn't look very threatening since the current was very weak and the river wasn't too deep. While crossing it, a sudden huge current dragged me and my whole family into the sea. For a few minutes, it felt like we were in real danger, as I was only 10

years old and my brothers 7 and 6, so we weren't that strong to swim against the current.

Fortunately, my father immediately reacted by grabbing my youngest brother and getting him to safety while calling for help for the rest of us. Even though I was very young, that moment has stayed with me as an impactful moment as it always reminds of how fast situations can escalate, and how important it is to stay calm and think clearly like my father did. When writing about this moment, I reflected the story through my father's perspective which I had never done before and appreciate how serious the situation actually was.

From this entry, I learned about how moments of crisis show true leadership. During that crazy moment my father stayed calm, and he thought about prioritized the weakest amongst all the brothers. Therefore, carrying my youngest brother to shore first was very intelligent as I don't know if he could have kept swimming against the current for 5/10 minutes like me and my brother did. Making these decisions under pressure reminded me of what I read about Roald Amundsen's leadership during his Antarctic expedition. Amundsen had to stay composed, just like my father, in extreme conditions, make quick decisions, and lead his team during the expeditions. This comparison helped me understand how crucial quick thinking and prioritizing the important things first are during a crisis.

Then, Week 1's topic, "Different," allowed me to deeply reflect on my story as a college international student from Spain. Deciding to study my bachelor's degree at Whittier College was a hard decision, and it brought me a big culture shock. Initially I wasn't as fluent in English as I am right now, the food and culture was way different. Therefore, I had to adapt and get out of my comfort zone to grow as a person and it definitely helped me become the person I am today. Fortunately, I adapted very easily by being active in campus and finding other

international students that were in the same situation as me, and the international orientation events were a huge help.

From this experience, I realized how powerful and important adapting to new places and getting out of your comfort zone are, and not just to move in a new environment, but also to grow and mature in it. Being able to reflect on my journey in a new country was very interesting as it helped me understand how much I have changed during my time here, and also how much different I would have been if I hadn't made the decision to move here. I learned that stepping out of my comfort zone and facing the discomfort of being in a different culture allowed me to open up to new perspectives and form new and very meaningful connections for me. This journal entry specially reminded me that welcoming change is essential for personal growth. I will always be thankful for having made the decision to study abroad.

Week 2's journal about "Diet" made me write about my whole diet for a week here in the US. I have 15 meals a week here in the Whittier College's CI, so I mostly always eat there, and I benefit from that a lot since I don't ever have to cook. I rarely go to an outside restaurant for the weekend, and if I do, it's usually to chipotle since it's my favorite one here in the US. During that week, I tracked my dietary habits, and it made me realize how structured and healthy my eating actually is. I don't have very specific preferences when it comes to food, but I don't like sweets or chocolate that much, so instead, I usually eat fruit for dessert, like bananas, grapes, pineapples and watermelons, usually whatever is available that day in the CI. I also hardly ever eat pizza either, I tend to always go for rice, especially the whole grain rice and whatever protein option is available that day. Since I go to the gym regularly, I'm very conscious of my protein intake, so I also try to eat four hard-boiled eggs for lunch every day. Therefore, here I've built a habit of eating clean and nutritious meals like chicken, meat, and rice, and fortunately the CI always has

those options available. All of these routines have helped me keep my body in check and avoid gaining too much weight. However, one thing I feel that I could improve on is eating breakfast, as I usually only eat a big brunch and dinner as I get to waste less of meal plan.

In this week's entry, I realized how much discipline and consistency I've built into my daily life, mostly due to a period last year when I tried to lose weight and that I talked about on the following week's journal writing. I am a person that doesn't really enjoy eating that much, so I always try to eat whatever gives me more benefit, and helps me meet my fitness goals. The conclusion I take from this writing is that it is very important to develop habits in order to shape your physical health.

In "Pushing Yourself" in Week 3, I wrote about the physical transformation I went through last year between February and May. During that time, I was really motivated to change how I felt about my body because I had gained quite a bit of weight since coming to the U.S. I had gone from weighing 135 pounds to around 175 during my time here, so I committed myself to a strict gym and diet routine to get back in shape for my summer back in Spain. I started going to the gym five times a week for two and a half hours a day. I would lift weights for the first hour and a half and do cardio for the last hour. During that period, I also paid close attention to my diet, and ate according to what I needed for my physical transformation. I started eating more protein and controlling my calories, which I had never done before. I was very consistent with it and I hardly ever had cheat meals during those months. I was very strict and focused, and I lost 20 pounds and gained some muscle, which made me feel more confident about myself.

As a result, I learned a lot about discipline and consistency from this experience. Even though I was physically tired most of the time, the mental satisfaction I got from pushing myself

and seeing results was very worth it. It showed me that I am capable of being disciplined when I am truly committed to something. I had never gone to the gym before that time, I only played soccer back home, and since I stopped playing in college, I gained that much weight here. This journal helped me reflect on how that process shaped my mindset even today, I still go to the gym, and I still keep most of my eating habits I took during that phase. I realized that I definitely can accomplish anything if I stay focused and motivated during the process.

For Week 4's journal entry, "Over the Seas," I decided to write about a boat trip that I've actually thought about doing in real life: a trip from Barcelona to the island of Mallorca in Spain. It's a route that can be done in one day by boat, and I always thought it would be a great adventure to do with some close friends and my father. I have gone to Mallorca multiple times but it has always been by a 45 minute plane flight. Apart from that, my dad got a boating license about two years ago, and he has mentioned about doing a trip like that together. For the assignment, I planned out every detail of the journey, like what kind of boat we would use according to my dad's license of course, as he is only allowed to drive boats of a certain size. Also what foods, drinks and even the medications that we'd bring, and how we would make sure to keep the right balance of calories, hydration, and even some backups in case of bad weather or the trip goes wrong. The trip is only 1 day long, so it was quite easy. Moreover, I thought about how we'd split responsibilities in the boat among everyone, like who would handle the navigation, who would cook or prepare food, and how we would make sure to take care of waste and cleanup during the trip, so I also planned the trip as if my whole family was there, both my parents, my 2 brothers and me. I personally enjoyed this entry as while writing it I imagined how fun the trip with my family would be and hopefully we do it some day.

From this entry, I learned how important it is to think ahead when planning something that involves responsibility, logistics, and teamwork. Also, in the book readings about the Antarctica expeditions, I learned a lot about how to prepare for similar expeditions. So, I had to consider real factors like food portions, safety, weather conditions, and how to assign the tasks clearly like a leader with the people I'd bring. Therefore, it helped me realize how much work goes into planning an expedition and that is not just a simple vacation with my family.

For week 5 we had to reflect about the first five writings we did. In it I realized how I learned a lot about understanding of leadership and exploration from the books we were reading. So, I managed to relate at least one thing from every entry to the course's readings. Such as, handling emergencies, adapting to new cultures and pushing yourself.

In week 7 journal entry, "Small," I wrote about the first time I went to a soccer stadium to see FC Barcelona play, back when I was about eight years old. I was a huge fan at the time, and going to a live match was like a dream come true. I had always watched the players on TV and, from the screen, they didn't seem that big. But when I saw them in real life I was shocked at how tall and strong they were, they looked like giants compared to me. My father knew some guy from the staff team, so I had the opportunity to take pictures with all the players after the game, and I remember standing next to them for a photo and feeling incredibly small. It was one of the first times in my life that I truly felt tiny next to someone. I remember going back home that day thinking how they're so much bigger than they looked on TV.

The "Goal of My Life" entry in Week 9 was a very deep writing in my opinion. In this journal, I simply just wrote about how the main goal of my life is to be happy. That's really it, just to be happy and at peace with the life I'm building. I want to have a nice family, good

friends, someone to enjoy my happiness with. I want to wake up each day feeling grateful, fulfilled, and motivated to keep going. Of course, I want to make money and be successful, but money is not the end goal for me, as long as I'm happy I don't really care, I just want to feel proud about what I do in my life. I want to have a job that I love, something that brings me a purpose and I feel motivated about. I wouldn't want a life where I'm rich but unhappy and constantly stressed. I just want a life where I feel at peace with myself and surrounded by people I love.

From writing this entry, I thought about that happiness and how it is not something you find one day, it's something you build with patience and it is hard to achieve. You need to create a balance in life and don't waste your time on things that don't really matter, and that you can't control. Therefore, writing this helped me reflect on what I really want in my life and reflect on how I need to approach my future.

In Week 10, "Lost," I write about a personal memory from when I was very young. It was about how one day, I went to the zoo with my family, and at some point, I got separated from them. I remember walking around looking at the animals, and suddenly realizing I couldn't see my parents. I started to cry and panic because I had no idea where they were. Luckily, a very nice old couple noticed me, and asked me where my parents were. I told them I didn't know, but after my panic moment finished with their help, I told them about how I remembered my mom's phone number. So they called them, and a few minutes later, I was finally reunited with my family.

From this entry, I realized how scary it can be to feel lost. I don't remember how old I was, but I definitely remember how scared I was at that moment. I felt completely alone and

confused, as I didn't know where I was in, since it was my first time in the zoo. Moreover, I also talked about how in similar moments, staying calm, asking for help is the key to finding your way back whenever you are lost.

Week 12's "Letters Home" was very easy as I already live far from home. Therefore, I just talked about my experience living abroad. I wrote about how I stay in touch with my family and friends regularly, and it is something I do every week. I do FaceTime calls with them, and we catch up on how things are going on both sides. I usually tell them everything I've done during the week, like how my classes are going, what I did on the weekend, etc. Then, they tell me how things are going back home, and sometimes I feel like I'm missing out on moments with them, but at the same time, I know that I'm learning a lot by being here. My friends always ask me curious questions like how college life is in the U.S., specially how are the parties here, and if they are like on the Hollywood movies they watch back home.

From writing this entry, I realized how much I value those conversations and how important they are to me. Being far away makes it easy to feel disconnected, but taking the time to talk with my loved ones back home is a very important part of my life here. Living abroad can be very hard as, for example, I sometimes feel like I'm missing out on things back home, but I also know that I'm creating new memories and learning things I wouldn't learn if I had stayed. This journal helped me appreciate that it is always very important to stay connected to the people you love, and how it is a habit I have developed here.

In week 13 entry, "Leadership," I wrote about how this past summer, my younger brothers were playing in a 7v7 soccer tournament in our town and they asked me to be their coach. I said yes and it ended up being way more challenging than I initially thought. I had to



plan their training practices, figure out how to improve their positioning and teamwork, and get them motivated before each match. Coaching them was fun because I love soccer, but it also came with some difficulties, like when I had to decide on who to bench. Since they were my brothers' friends and not mine, I didn't always feel confident being strict or giving feedback about their games. This experience gave me an idea of what it's like to be in charge of a group and be responsible for them.

From this experience, I realized that being a leader means a lot. It's hard to lead people you're close to, especially when you don't want to hurt anyone's feelings or be unfair. But I also saw how important it is to be honest and confident in your decisions, especially when you're trying to help your own team improve. It taught me that leadership isn't always about being liked, it's about doing what's best for the group. Therefore, this journal entry helped me reflect on areas where I still need to grow as a leader, especially in being more trusting about my decisions.

Finally, in "The Climate Future," the last journal entry, I wrote about climate change and how it is something that we all need to take seriously. I personally don't think that it could cause a big change in my life, but it will definitely affect our future generations. That's why I think it's key to start acting and making changes in our lifestyle as soon as possible. People should be aware of how damaging for the environment some of our actions are. I think that we should leave the world better than how we found it initially, but we aren't doing it. We should be more responsible about our planet, and have its future in mind.

In conclusion, writing this journal throughout the semester gave me a bigger insight on how I think. I looked back at key moments of my life and reflected on what were my feelings

and thoughts during those times. I learned about my growth as a person and how I am the way I am. Every week, I took time to write and think on moments from my past or things happening in my current life, and I connected them with what I learned during this class. I tried to apply the concepts about leadership, adaptation, and reflection that I got from the Antarctica explorations. The weekly titles and questions gave me a path to follow, but I discovered my own way while writing. This journal helped me apply my learnings about leadership and survival, from this class, while I was also reflecting on my past experiences, fears and goals.