Introduction and Theme

Having to look back on my years of college has made me more closely acknowledge a thought that I have occasionally pondered over this period of my life. This thought usually condenses down to that that underneath the cacophony of the surroundings I have been exposed to all my life there has been a whisper of a certain idea, understanding, or truth that I am slowly allowing myself to listen to. This truth is a knowledge or idea that requires no external evidence, and no explanation from outside sources. It is relevant to me and it is something that motivates my actions and character. I do not exactly know what this whisper of truth is yet, but that is to be understood as one of the general difficulties of life. This theme, my artifacts and my reflection would allow for a presentation of a better understanding of who it is that I am and who I am becoming. I believe that although everyone has some idea of who we each are, our lives and our surroundings can lead us to fail to acknowledge what it is that we individually strive for and desire.

Throughout my life, there have a number of instances in which I feel that my surroundings and circumstances were offering me numerous voices to listen to and paths to choose from. For instance, Caribbean-American family's views and issues have often been at odds with my trying to understand who I am in relation to the world. I feel these sorts of aspects of my life have always had an underlying presence in many of my decisions. Overall, my portfolio will be offered as a presentation of specific artifacts that each lend an idea or revelation
to the search for the truth in myself that lies underneath the noise presented to by my own views and the circumstances around me.

The artifacts I have chosen all hold a considerable significance to me. Each of these instances have been incidents that I remember as having profound effects on the way that I think and how I understand myself and the people and things around me. They will showcase the process that college life has offered me to further uncover this understanding or truth in the future. I feel that my portfolio will work as a continuation of my theme and will serve as new point from which I can continue on to find my truth inside myself or from my surroundings - or both.

Artifact Material

Although each of my artifacts represents moments of introspection and reflection, they all embody different experiences that each correspond to different revelations I have experienced regarding what I have come to know about myself. Firstly, I feel that a number of artifacts directly pertain to how certain aspects of my academic and community involvement has helped advance my development how to understand and assume a role in society.

My Honors Community Service Practicum portfolio is the first artifact that I feel falls under the category of academic and community involvement. Working on this community service project with the local charity organization Hats Off 2U, was unlike any community service project (or any project) I had done before. This was the first time I was challenged to create a new, radically improved sense of responsibility and management within myself. While it was my first semester at UNC Charlotte and I also independently headed three branches of the "Operation: Spread the Warmth" by organizing donation drives at local schools. I don't believe
that before I took part in this event with this particular role, I would have believed I could have done something on this scale on my own. That newfound sense of responsibility and duty is very important to me and I now feel I have more experience in managing my own life and priorities. This is definitely essential to my finding a truth to who I am and what I plan to become.

My portfolio for my Civil Rights in Visual Culture course was a culmination of my understanding of the visual politics of the Civil Rights Movement. I feel that the preparation and presentation of this portfolio was one of the most intense experiences of my academic career. It was a primarily reflective experience and required my own introspection and independent research. I was given the chance to reflect on specific images that provide opportunities to further one's knowledge of the way the great amount of Americans of different backgrounds interact with each other. I feel that before college, I have been vastly ignorant of race relations and the way race and identity shapes how people view themselves and others. More specifically, I feel that, before, I was a member of society who was not really informed or educated in the ways that our society functions even though I may have thought I was. I now feel that I see the world very differently and am a bit surprised of the important aspects of human existence that I failed to acknowledge before.

My University Honors Program Acceptance Letter came at a time when I was deciding which college I would choose to attend towards the end of my senior year of high school. I had my heart set on St. John's University in New York for a long time, but my father had recently lost his job and that made it clear I could not afford an out of state college. When I received the acceptance letter from UHP, it made me feel a bit better about my circumstances. Although I would not be able to go to the college that I'd really looked forward to, I would have the chance to experience life at UNC Charlotte a bit differently from the majority of students. I would be
able engage in courses and activities that would benefit me as a student at UNCC and possibly the people around me and my community. I feel that I now have an improved sense of understanding myself as an individual from being part of a group. Being a part of large institution, like a university, can make a person feel that they are losing themselves and losing what makes them unique. UHP has given me chance to be a part of something more intimate and personal. I have loved UHP and cannot imagine what college would have been like without it. There is space in me that it fills up and I am glad to have been a part of it.

The UHP Black Mountain Retreat in the fall of 2013 was very different from anything I had done in my college career so far. A trip to the mountains of North Carolina with a group of honors students was a completely foreign idea to me in the beginning. In actuality, I was very reluctant to go to begin with. I do not consider myself to be terribly social and though it sounded fun I was nervous about spending the weekend with a group of people I did not really know. It ended up being a rich and rewarding experience in which I got the chance to truly connect with other students in the honors program. I now am more confident in going through with experiences (especially social experiences) outside of my comfort zone. My artifact will be the group photograph we took in front of a waterfall at the very end of the trip.

I also feel that some of my artifacts relate directly relate to personal issues and certain realizations about myself that I have uncovered over the past few years. These artifacts mainly present experiences and instances that have given me the chance to examine hindrances that have been part of my life for a long time and how I have used other skills and knowledge to work through them.

My tickets to see Bruce Springsteen in the spring of 2014 is an artifact that represents a great deal of certain emotional experiences in my life. I have been listening to Bruce Springsteen
since I was born because of my parents, but in high school I decided to actually listen to the lyrics of the song "Badlands" and the content of the song. The themes of being depressed, restless, and angry really stuck with me at the time. I have struggled with generalized anxiety since I was about ten and towards the end of junior high school and the beginning of high school my life at home was turbulent and unstable. I engaged in a number of self-destructive behaviors and struggled academically a good deal. The album Darkness on the Edge of Town became very important to me at this time. My favorite Springsteen song, "The Promised Land," is from that album as well and deals with many of the same themes, but I feel that it insightfully captures the feelings of isolation, emptiness and insignificance and a desire and determination to rise above that I was feeling at the time. To me, being able to see Bruce Springsteen in April of 2014 was a very important, almost spiritual experience. I will never forget when I heard him sing my favorite line from any song ever on stage (from "The Promised Land"): "Sometimes I feel so weak, I just want to explode - Explode and tear this whole town apart -Take a knife and cut this pain from my heart."

This song has been important to me for a long time in my life and I still shiver when I hear the words. I feel it has helped me develop as a person in understanding what my inner turmoil is and how I am always fighting to rise above it.

After my years at UNC Charlotte, I have gained fifteen pounds. Before this, I greatly struggled with bulimia/laxative abuse in high school. I was constantly gaining and losing large amounts weight when I was between the ages of thirteen and eighteen. The weight gain that I have experienced since starting college has been a major source of stress and anxiety throughout my time as a college student and now I feel that I am (very) slowly coming to terms with my body. The artifact that would represent this would be a bottle of diet pills. I have experimented
with a number of diet pills and fitness regimens since starting college but the diet pills seem to me to be one of the most important markers of this time in my life. I began to heavily abuse those as well after starting college, but I haven't in about a year. While searching for truth in myself I have harmed myself numerous times and this artifact definitely signifies one of those times.

I have known my best friend, Katie, since I was ten years old. We went to the same junior high and first two years of high school. Throughout college she always told me that she was extremely skeptical of how she would find her way in college. She applied to two colleges (including UNC Charlotte) but in the end did not go to either of them. Instead she travelled with church-led organizations to teach at schools in India for a year and half. I did not ever expect her to take that route with her life and I am now really impressed that she did. When she initially announced her plans, I was somewhat shocked and (selfishly) a little hurt. It would be very difficult to communicate and our experiences would be so disconnected from each other's. The artifact for this experience would be a pair of pants she bought for me at an Indian bazaar. I have never worn them but I really enjoy looking at them. It was very different having one of the people I was closest to in the world on the other side of the world. We had to work hard to keep each other involved and understanding of what we both were seeing and experiencing. Everything she told me was so different from what I knew. Along with the separation from my friend, this experience was a time of an interesting sort of cultural reflection within myself. My family is Guyanese-American of Indian descent. We are of a culture that still holds ties to our Indian roots, but are also disconnected from a number aspects of it. I still don't know exactly how to explain what my feelings were when she would tell me about living as a part of a culture that
directly influenced my own. I feel I always knew the world was big and full of different experiences but my eyes were opened even more with her stories and the distance between us.

The last category of artifacts are representative of experiences that have been significant in guiding me to find what I want most from myself and the world around me.

My final presentation on the film Groundhog Day for my Honors Topics: Gods in Film, Theatre, and Neuroscience course was a very important experience to me. After the process of becoming a sort of expert on the film Groundhog Day, having to relate the religious and spiritual principles of our own American culture alongside the principles of Buddhism was relatively enlightening. The film itself has always meant a lot to me, and having the task of using the existential thoughts and Buddhist ideologies from the film that I always ponder to teach others about the film was an amazing experience. In actuality, my first encounter with Buddhism was when my mother gave me a book called "A Buddhist Guide for Teens" for my fifteenth birthday. My mom has always been there for me throughout my struggles and problems and she gave me the book after a particularly bad time. She, herself, was raised Christian and my father is Hindu, but she gave me this book to give me another outlet from which I could grow and explore. The concepts of the film (existence and reality) definitely pertain directly to the idea of finding truth in myself and the film still makes me think about who I am in relation to the world when I watch it.

Creating a Creative Writing Portfolio was one of the most enjoyable and significant experiences I have had in my academic career as well. I have had a love of writing for as long as I can remember. I've kept a journal throughout high school, but when I began college, I slowly began to write less often. I took a Creative Writing course in the fall of 2013 that helped me understand how to delve much deeper into the craft of writing than I had learned in the
classroom before. Learning about ideas like the creation of character, the solidification of fictional worlds, and the idea of "necessary coldness" on the part of the writer are things that I will surely remember when I write in the future. This course pushed me to continue to update my journal much more often and I have been more able to explore any inspiration I get for writing and my ideas for the future. My biggest dream is to be a screenwriter and I feel that this course has helped me on the path of re-discovering what writing really means to me.

My last artifact is the obituary of Harold Ramis from his hometown paper the Chicago Tribune. In high school, I planned to major in biology and do something science- and research-related with my life. This changed to media and film after I began to ask myself what was the path that I really wanted. after spending some time speaking with counselors, thinking a lot, and journaling, I found that a lot of what I enjoyed in life came from escaping through writing in my journal, film, comedy, and laughter - and that a career in science or medicine was definitely my father's dream and not mine. I (successfully!) did stand-up twice at school events and was voted "funniest" in high school. The writer/director Harold Ramis had a hand in so many of my favorite comedies and I will always credit him with sparking my interest in television and film production and comedy. His death in February of 2014 hit me very hard at a time when I was really beginning to feel jaded and tired of my life. I was forced to remember how I came to be where I was and why I chose to be where I was at that moment. Including the artifact of his obituary would be extremely important to my portfolio with this theme. Having him as an influence and having to bear the loss of someone who I never met but played such an important role in my life was unquestionably something that made me look for meaning and truth for myself.

Methodology
My methodology will mainly be based on Kolb's (2011) style and rely on the basic steps of compilation, reflection, conclusion, and presentation. Compilation will mostly consist of further exploration of ideas and concepts that relate to specific experiences in my college career that have now become artifacts (Kolb). Reflection will be the stage in which I will explore the way I will describe the artifacts in relation to myself and the themes that further connect them. In the conclusion stage, I will develop the detail and significance of the artifacts. This will be followed by the materialization of the portfolio and my final reflection. Finally, presentation will be the final stage in concluding my portfolio. By this stage, I will finalize the actual website portfolio and the way it is to be received by those reading it. I will also reach a point where I can use all of my experiences to keep moving forward.

For my foray into the actual portfolio creation process, I will create a website-portfolio using the website-creation platform Weebly. On my website, I will divide my portfolio into sections that will each focus on one specific artifact. Each artifact will be accompanied by an comprehensive reflection that will give the reader an in-depth look into how the artifact holds significance to me. Throughout each section including artifact and reflection, the theme of finding truth in myself will be included to further the understanding of the meaning of the theme to the reader. My portfolio consists of many artifacts that are text and document based, but I do have a number of artifacts that can be enhanced with the inclusion of different types of media. Weebly makes it very easy to integrate multimedia features into their layout designs and makes it attractive as well.
**Tentative Schedule of Completion**

January 8, 2015  Begin finalizing schedule after first Senior Seminar class; begin creating outlines for artifact reflections. Begin writing initial drafts of first two artifacts.

January 15  To be completed by this date: meet with Advisor and Reader, free-writes on 2 artifacts. Begin initial drafts of artifacts 3 and 4 reflections, select template on Weebly.

January 22  To be completed by this date: initial drafts of reflections for 4 artifacts, finalize Weebly template. Begin first drafts for artifacts 5 and 6.

January 29  To be completed by this date: Meet with Advisor and Reader, free-writes on 5 and 6. Begin initial drafts for 7 and 8.

February 5  To be completed by this date: initial drafts of reflections for all artifacts, Weebly template finalized. Begin draft of introduction and revise draft of artifact 1 reflection.

February 12  To be completed by this date: Meet with Advisor and Reader, draft of introduction and artifact 1. Begin revision of draft for artifact 2, upload artifact 1 to Weebly.

February 19  To be completed by this date: Revision of artifact 2. Begin revision of artifact 3, upload artifact

February 26  To be completed by this date: Meet with Advisor and Reader, draft of artifact 3. Begin draft of artifact 4, add artifacts on WiX.

March 5-8  To be completed by this date: revision of artifact 4. Begin revision of artifact 5 and 6, upload artifact 4.
March 12
To be completed by this date: revision of artifact 5 and 6. Begin revision of artifact 7.

March 19
To be completed by this date: Meet with Advisor and Reader, revision of 7. Begin revision of 8, uploading artifacts to Weebly.

March 26
To be completed by this date: revision of 8. Begin conclusion, finalize bibliography.

April 2
To be completed by this date: Meet with Advisor and Reader, draft of conclusion, send invitations to presentation. Begin finalizing drafts and portfolio.

April 9
Final Senior Portfolio Due

April ??
Presentation
Citations


