**Some Principles for Writing a Personal Essay**

Key points about narrative:

* It’s personal, so ethos is crucial
* The subject can be dramatic—the time you nearly died falling off a cliff—or completely commonplace—a conversation with a roommate that brought an epiphany
* The form is freer than most academic writing
* There’s an appeal to the readers’ five senses: including carefully chosen concrete details about the scene and the people in it is a major strategy in narrative
* It includes what happen**ed** (the story part) and what happe**ns** (a statement about the big picture)
* The best stories come from initial confusion, ambiguity
* Uses a lot of **dialectical** thinking: shifting from showing to telling, back and forth in time

Prompts for prewriting to generate ideas for a narrative:

* Think of incidents where you were given a new way to think about yourself
* Incidents or conversations that exposed you to a new world view (or an old one you thought had died)
* An experience that left you unsettled, that you’re still mulling over
* Consider starting with a picture of yourself—recent or old—that still strikes a chord with you, and fastwrite your way to an epiphany about that time and that “you.”
* Starting with an article of clothing is another option. How did it make you feel? How did others react? Work toward an epiphany about how our identity is related to the way others perceive us, or about the rhetoric of clothing.
* Start with an object that means something to you; fastwrite toward an epiphany about identity, memory, or our relationship to things.
* You can also continue with the idea you came up with in class when you did a fast-write. The prompt (if you want to start again with it) is on pp. 13-14 in your text. Other invention strategies are listed on p. 15