Personal Essay Assignment

Length requirements: At least 1250 words.
Sample due dates, from a 15-week course (your syllabus has the dates for your class):
Rough draft due Week 5
Final draft due Week 6

In class, we looked at some examples of the "personal essay," discussed what the word "essay" or "essai" means (to "try"), and talked about some of the key conventions of the genre of personal essays. One we read, Joan Didion's "In Bed," is about her migraines, and it's full of research: some she lived, and some she had to look up.

This essay is a "try" of your own choice, meant to be quick, to help us think through a question or idea, and to understand the beginning of our research process. This is what real writing work is like, and it's often a necessary first step to think through the beginnings of a project or idea. Similar to Elbow's freewriting ideas, we are writing to think.

This is an exercise in working with the mode of language, primarily, and not the other modes of communication we discuss in other units. This should be more traditional of a writing assignment.

As discussed in class, remember to:

- Show evidence of a "try" in your personal essay. You should be thinking something through, working through a problem, or working/researching/thinking through a question that you have.
- Real answers to these problems are not necessary, but often there is an ending that is satisfying to read.
- Your essay should involve you–and be in the first-person perspective.
- Double space your paper.
- Give your personal essay a title (something other than "Personal Essay").
- The goal has always been for you to think about what "research" you are interested in and what you would be motivated to gather data for, think about, and focus on for the research later in the course.

While you do not need to incorporate citations in this assignment (in fact, it may be counter to the appropriate audience and purpose of your work this time), we will for future assignments. For this assignment, focus on making your language clear, and steer your readers in the right direction regarding who said what. Is this a claim you're making, an observation you observed, or was it someone else's claim/observation/writing?