Each week, students will be asked to write two short papers. One, due the first class of the week, will be on a topic that varies from week to week, starting with an autobiographical essay. The second, due the last class of the week, will be about The Confessions. We will read chapters of On Writing Well as they become relevant. Each student will be expected to finish that text.

You will be responsible for one book a week of The Confessions. Each week, you will write a page long (approximately) summary of that chapter, and then you will talk specifically about some perhaps paragraph long section of that chapter. In this second part, you will talk about Rousseau’s writing and try to point out what he does as a writer that is effective.

Week One:
Students will write an autobiographical essay, that will include first impressions: of the place, family, or whatever they feel is most important. These, I imagine will prove interesting six weeks later when the students write a more comprehensive paper on their nearly completed experience.

Discussion of that paper. Rousseau paper: Students will also write a summary of Book One of The Confessions, and then write about an especially effective passage, such as his initial description of Annecy.

Week Two:
Students will write a piece with some extended description, the specific subject to be discussed individually.

Discussion of that paper, a look at some Rousseau descriptions, and finally discussions of interviewing techniques. Reading of Book Two of Confessions. One of the problems writers have is that of making a personal experience significant to others. Rousseau is a master at this. For this week’s paper, pick a generalization he makes about life, human nature, etc., and show he supports his observation with anecdotes.

Week Three:
Students will write a first profile, based on an interview, preferably of a member of the host family, and definitely of a French person. (Not Bernard—everyone will want to do him, poor guy.)

We will discuss those papers, and talk about any surprising/particularly interesting discoveries. We will look for ways of deepening the understanding of the person involved, and of improving the characterization.

Book Three: Specific assignment. We will talk about Rousseau’s hatred of what he calls “subjection” and yet his belief that citizens need to be connected. Then you will be asked to write a paper about the negative examples in Book Three of Bacle, Le Maître and Venture. This assignment will be come clear at the time.

Week Four:
Paper on a topic of each student’s choice. During this week, each student will meet individually with the teacher to discuss the student’s writing. Rousseau: Book Four. Paper: By now we see major themes in Rousseau’s writing, and the way he uses anecdotes, incidents and descriptions to support his ideas. Sometimes he also uses them subtly to complicate his story, as I shall demonstrate in class. Pick two
anecdotes that comment on the same general theme as a subject and compare them.

Week Five:
Second profile, this one (I hope) much better. Alternately a piece specifically contrasting some aspect of American and French life, as it strikes them. Discussion of that writing, and of final papers.

Week Six:
Slightly longer paper (6-7 pages) on some aspect of the Talloires experience I will have discussed individually with each student. Book Six of Confessions: description of Les Charmettes/ or self-chosen topic.

Grading: The grades will be based primarily on the writing, and on participation in class.