Points for the class documentation:

Fundamentally, you are trying to use your own skills of representation to convert your own experiences of the class and related objects and events—including the readings and everything else—into a communicable object, a record, a document. This will both record and structure what you experience in and learn from the class.

What types of information should be in the written responses to the class?

Summaries of the readings and responses to the readings with students’ own thoughts. I am actually more interested in your own thoughts, but you need to demonstrate that you understand the readings and the class discussions, so some summary would be appropriate to show that understanding.

For example, “the definition of art and religion.” We will discuss the origin of the words “art” and “religion” and the difficulty of defining both of them. You should at least mention such issues, although your response to them is even more significant.

Approximately how long should each submitted documentation be?

I’ll talk about that after the first submission—in other words, I am going to let the students determine how much you should do by averaging what you actually do do. OK?

Some things that I specifically want you to do:

Without assuming that they are correct or true:

Find and Collect:

A. any dubious or “borderline” examples—things that may or may not be art, that may or may not be religion. This is very instructive in heightening your own awareness of your own understanding of and assumptions about art and religion.

B. images or metaphors for (true) art from your readings, eg. “true works of art … tune [the spirit] up, as a tuning fork does the strings of a musical instrument.” (Wassily Kandinsky, On the Spiritual in Art, 5).

C. passages directly comparing or contrasting art and religion, eg. “The artist is rooted in imagination, while the mystic seeks to transcend imagination” (Karen Laub-Novak, “The Art of Deception” in Art, Creativity, and the Sacred, 12). “The obsessive quality of art is an attempt to reconcile opposites and keep an equilibrium, and, as in religion, this is art’s validity. If you strip away the dogmas and doctrines, religion becomes a very precarious relationship between a frail and finite reality
and a sense of all-present infinite reality; and it is such a strange
disequilibrium that this struggle to create an equilibrium creates religion”
(Stephen De Staebler, “Reflections on Art and the Spirit” in *Art, Creativity, and the Sacred*, 26).

D. Taxonomies and Classifications of art and religion, that is, ways of
classifying or compartmentalizing these categories, eg. Paul Tillich says,
that there are “three ways in which humanity is able to experience and
express ultimate reality … philosophy … art … and religion” (“Art and
Ultimate Reality,” in *Art, Creativity, and the Sacred*, 221).