Dear Portfolio Assessment Committee,

My name is Eri Hirashima, and I am a first-year student at Emory University. In my first semester, I have become part of Dr. Cooke’s first-year composition course: The Personal is Public – Writing with Archives and the Arts. This class focuses on developing the skills of researching, writing and reading skills through the first-hand experiences with letters, manuscripts, especially from the Camille Billops and James V. Hatch archives of African American arts and culture. In addition, this course aims to hone the students’ skills in “independent problem solving” and “reflection/metacognition. I write this letter to you in regards to the successes of meeting all the course requirements and learning outcomes through the analysis of the various assignments we completed in the course.

At the beginning of the English 101 course, I was not familiar with assignments that incorporated texts from researching in various genres and multiple modes, such as archival materials. However, the many writing tasks that involved such composition of texts from diverse sources, ultimately enabled me to locate an array of materials and accurately implement appropriate texts. For example, in the Curated Exhibit Project, I had to put together at least five sources that displayed the connection between the theme of my selected archives: the art, the author of my chosen manuscript, historical events and culture. This project is one of the works in which it is very noticeable that I was able to integrate my analysis of archives chosen within a very broad range, so that I could strongly support my theme of the on-going racial segregation against people of African descent. As shown in the screenshots of my project below, I went into deep research regarding racial prejudice against the African community, as I started off with an analysis of a historical advertisement of first-generation African slaves, to social issues in modern technology such as Uber and Lyft, which I discussed about the drivers’ refusals to accept customers with black-sounding names. Then, I moved onto a global scale of how people of African descent are not only heavily discriminated in America, but also in other continents, such as Japan, where Miss Universe Japan 2015, Ariana Miyamoto, a biracial individual of African and Japanese background, was greatly criticized for becoming the national representative. To conclude my exhibit, I created two slides to explore two renowned non-profit organizations run by African American people about their goals to educate people of gun violence, proper weapon usage, and to provide equal opportunities for students around the globe to learn.
Another learning objective that I think I was able to achieve in this English course was summarizing, evaluating, and synthesizing other people’s opinions and conducting research in order to produce my stance and support it. An exemplary work that showed this was through the several annotated bibliographies that I wrote for my Proposal assignment. In order to support my proposal’s objective of focusing on the segregation in the past and current communities, I wrote up five secondary source citations, in which several were derived from journals. To point out some sources, I would have to say that the citations of the journals in my proposal such as the “Television and Societal Effects: an Analysis of Media Images of African-Americans in Historical Contest”, “Racial Discrimination in Health Care Among African Americans in America” and “Jobless Discrimination Against African Americans”, greatly showed how I was able to analyze and synthesize the given information and then summarize them to support my argument. To cover a diverse field of where racism exists, I started off with a
citation of one of the biggest factors that have made society think in a certain way towards the African American community, which is the ubiquitous media. An example sentence would be the following: “It states about how the media and television are misleading the public into believing that African Americas are “as uneducated or as silly as Amos ‘n’ Andy, or crooks and drug dealers as depicted in Hill Street Blues and Law and Order”. As show in the screenshot, in the next citation, I discussed about the unfair treatment African Americans receive in the health care field with justifiable evidence and concrete summaries of the journal. I paid attention to a few events and numerical data in the medical field to support my stance of the difference in service and treatment that African American patients get.

The final objective of the course that I believe I was able to accomplish was to “practice writing as a process” through drafting, revision, editing and reflection. The narrative essay was quite a challenge for me, as I have never had the opportunity to practice writing it, and also because it was a testament of my ability to offer a story and to connect it to the arts, history, culture of my main theme. Although a seemingly difficult task at first, I wrote multiple drafts of the essay, and submitted them to Dr. Cooke during the writing process, in which he gave me many useful tips that I took into great consideration, as I was writing my final draft. For example, his advice that I could “Try for a stronger opening hook and break up your first paragraph. Also, give more of your psychological reactions and motivations”, were very helpful in guiding me to develop my final narrative essay that consisted of in-depth observation, emotion, imagination, along with “style, variety and grace”. Below, I have displayed a screenshot of my introduction and paragraphs of my essay for your reference.
Looking back at my past works, and reflecting on them, I have noticed great improvement as a writer, reader and learner. Dr. Cooke’s writing composition class has definitely given me many opportunities to better analyze others’ works, as I evaluate them and paraphrase them in support of my own arguments. Additionally, I have become a much better researcher and have developed the necessary skills to find appropriate sources from various genres and to actually implement them in my works. In conclusion of this letter, I hope that you have been able to observe such improvements, as the class has fully fulfilled the first year composition course requirements and I have satisfied the course objectives to become a better writer and more prepared for future endeavors.

Thank you for your time!

Sincerely,

Eri Hirashima