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Writing With Archives ENG 101-015

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11/6/2016

Reflective Letter

Introduction

Throughout the semester I have learned many things to improve my writing and effectively articulate my thoughts. I have noticed immense growth within my writing that is evident as I peruse through my previous works. I, specifically, see a drastic, yet positive change in my writing style and am now able to pay close attention to minor detail. My portfolio supports this statement by providing concrete, tangible evidence. <https://scholarblogs.emory.edu/thepersonalispublish/skyla-janus/> While improving my writing, I believe that I naturally embodied the intended learning outcomes. Overall, I have become a more eloquent, confident writer.

Outcome 1: Rhetorical Composition

This learning outcome aims to guide students in collaborating multiple texts using rhetorical devices and other literary devices to grasp its audience's attention. Throughout the semester, I have embodied this outcome first with creating the proposal which eventually led to creating my curated exhibit. In the proposal, I utilized artifacts from the Stuart A. Rose Library along with scholarly journals to support my notion of "Identity Crises". I then formed each component of the proposal with analyses from each source. Each source, provided me with valuable information regarding the author, Adrienne Kennedy, or the storyline of *Funnyhouse of a Negro*. As I discuss in my portfolio, I note immense

improvement from my drafts of this proposal regarding style and attention to detail. Within my proposal, my thoughts were not as clear leading to an unorganized, unclear essay. After experiencing a great deal of the course, I improved upon these aspects which is demonstrated in my curated exhibit. My curated exhibit is an structured, coherent analysis of many artifacts that connects each artifact to tell a compelling story about the identity crises in the 1960s.

My portfolio first begins by introducing my ultimate purpose and main idea, I essentially summarize what is to come in the portfolio. My portfolio is organized to walk the reader through my improvement through a series of works leading up to what I believe is the most evident of my improvements. I then begin by highlighting my first aspect of improvement, "detail." I first clarify what I mean by detail then go on to illustrate exactly what I have noticed to track my improvement. In relation to detail, I first analyze my statement of purpose taking quotes to show that I neglected to expand upon my statements and did not provide relevant context. This made the piece less effective and unorganized. I learned useful techniques in class, I began incorporating these in my plan of action draft which is the next piece of work I analyze. My plan of action provided a little more detail yet took on the wrong format and was still largely unclear. Finally, my narrative essay showed a colossal use of detail explaining all thoughts and emotions that may arise from the audience of the exhibit. Similar to the formatting I used for detail, I followed the same format for style. I explained what style is then used three pieces of writing to outline my improvement in this aspect. My thoughts have become more smoothly transitioned and my writing has become much more coherent, organized and structured. My conclusion then wraps up the portfolio emphasizing its importance and stating what I completed throughout the semester as well as in the portfolio. I reread all of my pieces of writing and chose the ones that I believe demonstrated the greatest degree of growth.

Outcome 2: Critical Thinking and Reading Resulting in Writing

I used critical thinking multiple times throughout the semester in order to interpret and analyze my sources as well as to formulate insightful thoughts to explore in my writing. I have learned how to

integrate a variety of genres of treats in my writing. My curated exhibit used a play, many scholarly journals as well as artwork from the Billops Hatch Exhibit. I was forced to interpret the artwork from the Billops Hatch Library to prove its relevance to my overall theme of identity crises. I initially, just saw the picture that was created on the page then as I looked closer I was able to understand the purpose of the artwork and connect it to my theme. I believe it is extremely useful to be able connect disparate works based upon a single aspect.

I have learned a great deal of organization which is demonstrated in my writing. I am also able to make deeper, more insightful connections. I have learned that I enjoy analyzing texts and images to understand their underlying purpose and deeper meaning. The person who created the work clearly had more to offer than just the words or images they put on the page. I learned to pay attention to the context and connect what is on the page with society as a whole. As my portfolio showcases, much of my writing illustrates this growth. I start with one of the first things I ever wrote in this course and analyze what I did versus what I could have done better. I continue tracking my improvement by analyzing my objective of my proposal leading to my curated exhibit. I believe my curated exhibit demonstrates my overall growth. This exhibit forced me to delve deeper into the meaning of each piece of work and connect them to form a story. This was, at first, challenging but, became more natural as I continued to collaborate texts.

Outcome 3: Writing as Process

Writing as Process is essentially the act of writing and rewriting. Throughout the semester, we practiced a great deal of writing as a process. We frequently peer reviewed each other's work and provided insight on these aspects. We also reviewed our own work to improve its overall coherence and purpose. I have learned that my best writing does not come in my first draft but, takes me a couple of times to formulate something I am proud of. I wrote and rewrote my narrative essay multiple times until it lived up to my personal expectations.

In creating my portfolio I took my professor's advice into account. The portfolio is essentially in the form of a blog in which I first outlined my ideas in order to organize my thoughts. I then reviewed all

of my works to choose which pieces most clearly tracked my progression. I also used informal ways of processing my thoughts by emailing my professor and taking measures to peer edit outside the classroom to ensure that my best work would be executed in this portfolio. As I used many resources, both formal and informal, I believe I embodied writing as a process in creating my portfolio. Writing as a process is something that I did not fully understand before taking this course but now is something I truly value. From rewriting drafts and making countless revisions, I am able to learn how to properly formulate my thoughts into a coherent essay demonstrating my overall improvement as a writer.

Outcome 4: Locate and integrate archival material into writing and multimodal projects.

I have learned the meaning and importance of archival material in this course. When I first visited the Rose Library I perused through a multitude of archives, each with a different significance and physical appearance. I was able to relate each artifact to historical context in order to understand its significance. I chose to use *Funnyhouse of a Negro* as the central focus of my exhibit because it took me as an intriguing, unique play that outlined relevant issues from an inner perspective. As I further explored this novel, I learned the background of the author connecting it to her writing and the plot of the play. I thought it was interesting to connect the two in such a way.

Additionally, I examined the physical appearance of the novel and interpreted the significance of minor details such as its condition. Since its condition was relatively poor, I made the presumption that the novel was heavily used thus served great importance. Likewise, there was a note attached to the artifact suggesting that the artifact was given to Emory as a gift. Gifts are given by someone to share something they believe is important and want to share with whom they are giving the gift to. I used these ideas as the central focus of my exhibit to delve deep into the meaning of each text and connect each artifact in a thoughtful way. The archives have served as an important resource throughout the course of the semester which is something that I will continue to utilize as a writer.

Conclusion

I have learned to appreciate the learning outcomes of this course in a way that I had not understood before. I am now able to synthesize texts to form a compelling, intriguing story which is evident within my curated exhibit and also in my portfolio. I also now appreciate the concept of writing as a process in order to execute my best work and am able to think critically while doing so. This course has helped me to improve on many skills and become an overall better writer.