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Writing Reflection
Dr. Colby
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Reflections of my Writing Journey

I chose to explore pieces from my Advanced Writing and Rhetoric course (Writ 1622) and my Theory, History and Research course (Writ 2555). Writ 1622 was the first writing class I took at the University of Denver and I felt very confident in my writing abilities at the time, but I have grown tremendously as a writer in “skill” and ability since then. I wrote “What it Means to Be Responsible” as an exigence analysis in this course to call attention to the lack of adequate safety services on campus. At the time, the University did not have a single functioning emergency call box and cursory Title IX investigations. During this time I was also beginning to explore social justice issues that I had been sheltered from in my small childhood town and I was beginning to shape my political profile. The second piece I chose to analyze was a rhetorical analysis “How to Bridge Communities: An examination of Jell-O and Funeral Potatoes.” By the title alone, it’s easy to identify how much I grew as an academic writer between 2020 and 2022. The rhetorical analysis was the first piece I wrote in college to not cite any external sources (beyond simple reflections) and I was worried my writing would be frivolous blabber, but I was pleasantly surprised by the end product. In the past two years I have transitioned from exploring social justice issues as they affect others to identifying how, and if, I align with the people and places they affect to become a more well-rounded ally. The two texts I have selected widely vary from one another in time, space, and composition, but they capture pivotal ideas/thoughts/beliefs I’ve carried as a student, writer, and person.

Looking backward, I was conditioned to write in MLA format throughout high school, so I remember how shocked I was when my professor told me to cite in APA for the exigence

analysis. Reading the piece now, it's about 50% formatted to MLA and 50% to APA (unfortunately I still write/cite in a semi- MLA/APA format, but it's not as noticeable- I hope). However, I don't read this piece and think it's written with a high-schooler mentality. I'm very pleased with the intention, heart, and direction I wrote towards. I also paired this piece with an audio/visual element that highlighted the "WeCanDUBetter" Instagram page in the background as my class read the text independently. The screen scrolled through the Instagram page reading stories of survivors and then aimlessly scrolling back to pictures of cute pets. At the end I recall asking my class if they had noticed what was on the screen while they were reading and they all said they noticed it was Instagram, but they didn't look closely enough to know what the posts were. I find this to be a very bold commentary and interactive piece to curate in my first-year of college and I don't think I've one-upped it since in regard to risk-taking as a writer. I do remember I was very nervous to present on the topic and I doubted my credibility.

I produced my rhetorical analysis last quarter and it was novel to me in a less-bold sense. While writing the piece I had a solid background on writing concisely, fluidly, and for an audience, as had been encouraged by my professors across all of my classes. I also knew plenty about the topic of LDS and non-LDS Utahns because I grew up in Utah as a non-LDS person with many LDS friends and community members. My aim was to highlight food as artifacts and the way they connect communities in and outside of the church. I encountered a lot of self-doubt with this project and imposter-syndrome being the only source.

Looking inward, I felt very doubtful about these pieces, more than most, and I doubt most of my writing to some degree. I learned a great amount from challenging myself to write about the novel concepts I presented on and I realized how passionate I am to discuss social justice issues as they relate to me or the communities that surround me. Since the first exigence analysis,

I diverted most of my writing projects to explore environmental issues, so I chose my recent rhetorical analysis where I didn't let myself write about animals to find more interesting connections. Importantly, the two texts are some of my favorites and are not related to my major. Since the earlier text I have learned a lot about curating my ideas to be the most impactful and true to my objectives, but this growth has not been linear. In fact, pushing myself to be less comfortable by writing a rhetorical analysis about religion and culture reminded me to be bold and take risks outside of subject areas I commonly discuss.

Looking forward, I would like to continue to challenge myself to write about novel subjects whenever possible. I really enjoy both pieces because they're exciting and they highlight my ability to connect to diverse audiences in effective ways. I was calling out school officials after only fifteen weeks of learning at the University and I'm proud of it, it really was needed. I also began attending Do Better DU club meetings and my concerns were brought all the way to the advising board (with many other students, faculty, and community raising concerns as well) and the phone boxes were replaced. I also related Jell-O and carbs to community connection in a way that my class enjoyed and I resonated with.

The effects mentioned in the above paragraph also respond to my looking outward response and my desired influences on my audience groups were not only met, but exceeded. These pieces make me a writer because being a writer first means you are a person and then means you are a person who shares what you have to say through text. I'm proud that the texts I selected highlight me as an observant and dynamic individual and I look forward to creating more pieces with this reflection in mind.