Anna Irwin
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UWP1Y: Garin Hay

Portfolio Reflection

In UWP1, I have developed my methods of reading and writing. I had never really thought about many of the concepts that were introduced in this course. Having never explored what defines a "genre" or what a "discourse community" is, I found myself learning about more than the just standard writing process. Through several readings, discussion prompts, and small writing assignments, I learned what "rhetorical concepts" and "conventions" are and how they shape a piece of writing. Additionally, I found ways to use my analyses of assigned readings to draft and revise my own written work. One of the culminating projects, the Discourse Community Project (DCP), helped me reflect on how much I had learned in this course. From conducting research to drafting paragraphs to reflecting on my writing process, I believe that the DCP has allowed me to not only practice the skills introduced to me in UWP1, but has also given me the confidence to continue developing my writing process and style. With this final reflection, I believe I have understood and successfully incorporated UWP1's five learning outcomes: rhetorical concepts, processes, knowledge of conventions, research, and metacognition.

Before taking UWP1, I had been introduced to rhetorical concepts individually, but had never consciously used them when reading or writing. Although I was capable of identifying the audience, purpose, context, and genre of written works, I had never focused on analyzing readings using these rhetorical concepts. In UWP1, there were many several reading and discussion assignments that required some analysis of audience, genre, and purpose. Laura Bolin Carroll's "Backpacks vs. Briefcases: Steps Toward Rhetorical Analysis" served as the main reading assignment that introduced the key concepts in rhetorical analysis. My favorite assigned analysis was the one I performed on the cooking blogs. I enjoy cooking and baking with my family, but I had never ventured into blog communities for recipes as I believed that the blog entries were made primary for the author. However, after learning how to properly analyze writing using rhetorical concepts, I learned cooking blog creators each have their own purpose, audience and style of writing. These blogs can be directed at one or more communities (vegan, different ethnic groups, low-carb, young cooks, etc.), and the way the blog is written caters to a certain audience. By using UWP1's rhetorical concepts, I was able to identify parts of the cooking blogs that I most likely would have overlooked otherwise. Asking questions about the piece's target audience, exigence, organization, and genre helped me better understand what the author's goal is. The most helpful rhetorical analysis assignment was the Rhetorical Analysis of Two Sample Student Discourse Community Projects. Since I was going to create my own Discourse Community Project (DCP), I paid close attention to rhetorical concepts in the sample projects. This is where my understanding of the concepts grew the most. I began to see the importance of having a clear statement of purpose, genre, and audience. The Discourse Community Project challenges students to use their understanding of rhetorical concepts to create a comprehensive paper. Although I found myself daunted by the requirements of the project, previous UWP assignments had prepared me well. In one of our readings, English professor Kerry Dirk reminds students that analyzing rhetorical situations and acting accordingly can often be done subconsciously (253). This reminder gave me confidence that I could write in the appropriate genre and format for the DCP. Using

rhetorical concepts as a guide, I found ways to introduce my exigence, audience, and purpose in my writing throughout UWP1.

In UWP1, I learned about the recursive process of writing through the drafting and peer-reviewing of the Discourse Community Project. In middle school and high school, my rough drafts and final draft differed very little. I would throw in a couple additional sentences in one paragraph, maybe remove one from another, change a few words around, perhaps add some missing commas and periods. It was not until UWP1 that I began thinking about the process itself and why it is important. In Nancy Sommers' "Revision Strategies of Student Writers and Experienced Adult Writers," she explains that drafts are an important part of the composition process and proper revision of these drafts consists of more than a simple grammar check (384). Sommers recommends students perform a "re-view" to look over their work with a "different set of eyes" to find opportunities to improve on ideas or add new ones (382). When I was revising my DCP drafts, I attempted to "re-view" my work myself before turning in each draft for peer-reviews. Looking at my DCP with a "fresh" set of eyes allowed me to pinpoint areas that did not flow well or needed elaboration. I would usually start with the body paragraphs to ensure that they were connected effectively. Then I would look at the introduction and conclusion to adjust the exigence, purpose and or thesis to better match the content of the essay. Only after all of the major revisions were done would I move onto grammar check. At first, I was a bit nervous about making large changes to my drafts, because I was worried about interrupting ideas or straying too far from my thesis. However, I slowly became more comfortable with my new process each revision cycle. The revision process can be difficult, especially for those who are just beginning to use more sophisticated revision methods, but it is a necessary part of the composition process.

Having knowledge of conventions is crucial when reading, writing, and revising. Conventions are aspects that are commonly seen across a genre. Conventions within a genre can be its typical style, language, or format. For example, in the cooking blog analysis, I found the conventional format, which included an introduction, a recipe, and photos of the dish. Although there was no assignment that focused solely on the analysis of conventions, the worksheet provided for genre analysis requires some analysis of conventions. Being able to identify conventions as well as their significance is important when reading in a certain genre and even more so when writing in that genre. Conventions can act as a guide when writing, especially if writing in a genre for the first time. Capturing the tone, language, format, and other common aspects of a typical research paper helped me outline my Discourse Community Project. Although I wrote in first person for part of the essay, I kept my language formal to present my research findings in a clear and organized manner. The conventions of a research project like the DCP and the conventions of a narrative paper can be quite different. For instance, for the DCP, I separated various paragraphs with subheadings (introduction, methodology, results, discussion, and conclusion), but I most likely would not format a narrative piece in the same way. Understanding conventions has not only helped me distinguish between different genres, but has also helped me write effectively in new ones.

Conducting proper research has been critical during UWP1, particularly during the Discourse Community Project. With both the world wide web and the UC Davis library databases at my fingertips, I was overwhelmed by the amount of information out there. One of the reading assignments, Randall McClure's "Googlepedia," highlights the issues of credibility, accuracy, and relevance of some sources found on Google and introduces the CRAPP method that can help identify more reliable and professional

sources (237). When I was conducting research for the DCP, I used the CRAPP test on sources found both using a common search engine and the library databases. This helped me establish author credibility in my methodology section and allowed me to confidently present my findings in my paper, which helped strengthen my argument. When researching, one is both gathering new information and synthesizing prior knowledge to produce a better understanding of the subject. During my DCP, I combined my personal experiences in education, my interview with former high school teacher Maribel Albarran, and the information found in my secondary sources to build a comprehensive understanding of the communicative expectations of educators and how these align with the conventions of a discourse community. I anticipate using these research methods in future papers, whether they be for other humanities classes or STEM courses. UWP1 gave me the opportunity to practice finding, analyzing, integrating, and citing different types of sources in academic writing.

One of the learning outcomes that came later in the quarter was metacognition. I began working toward this learning objective during the drafting and revision processes of the Discourse Community Project through the cover memos of my various drafts. Through these cover letters, I presented what I believed to be my strengths and weaknesses in the drafts and any questions I wanted my peer-reviewer to answer regarding how I should improve my writing. At first, I did not quite understand why I was writing the cover memos, as I thought that the peer-reviewers should be unbiased; they should have the opportunity to look over the paper with a fresh perspective. However, after reading Sandra L. Giles' "Reflective Writing and the Revision Process," I learned that these small pieces of reflective writing are beneficial to the reader, instructor, and author (195). As the writer reflects on their work, they may find areas for improvement before sending it off for the peer-review process. Meanwhile, the reflection can present the author's purpose as well as pre-existing concerns to the reader before they read the paper. The cover letters guide the peer-reviewer to areas that the author really wants feedback on – areas that otherwise may have been overlooked. Lastly, these reflections offer a snapshot of each draft, showing the instructor or evaluator that the author knew which areas needed improvement and proceeded to ask for feedback and suggestions from others. Metacognition helped me develop my DCP holistically as it encouraged me to actively reflect on the content of the paper as well as my revision process.

Although I believe that I have understood and incorporated the UWP1 learning outcomes into my work, I know that I have plenty of room to improve. Even within the UWP1 course itself, I was constantly finding ways to develop my writing. For the Discourse Community Project, if given more time, I probably would have formatted a few things differently to walk the reader through my thinking process a bit more clearly. I would have found ways to cite Swales more often than I did, so there were more connections between the characteristics I presented from the discourse community of educators and the characteristics that Swales presents in his essay. Meanwhile, I expect I will come across more opportunities to improve my reading and writing skills. There will be times when I read something and I will not be able to correctly identify the author's intended audience, purpose or genre. However, as I continue on my academic journey, I am sure that I will get better at it. I will have many classes that require me to conduct research using both the UC Davis library and the world wide web. I anticipate finding myself challenged by the abundant resources available to me, but using the tools introduced to me in UWP1, I will eventually narrow down the results to find the more reliable and accurate sources. As I continue to practice identifying and reacting rhetorical situations in my life outside of the English classroom, I will improve my ability to respond thoughtfully through writing by reflecting on real-life

outcomes. Lastly, when it comes to drafting a long essay or a big project, I need to take a few moments and read through all of my work to ensure that my purpose is carried to the end. When my writing is at the point where I cannot find any more ways to improve it on my own, I will remind myself to first reflect on my processes, identify where things don't feel quite right, and then reach out to peers or instructors for additional feedback.

UWP1 introduced new concepts and tools to help students develop their reading and writing literacies. The course covered analysis, research, reflection, and revision through various reading, writing, and discussion assignments. With the culminating Discourse Community Project, I was able to apply the new concept and skills I was developing throughout the quarter to create a paper about a community I was interested in. As the quarter progressed, I found myself asking more detailed questions about readings both inside and outside of the course. This introductory writing course has provided me with a solid foundation in academic writing, and I am positive that I will continue to build upon the knowledge I have gained. For me, the most important thing is to keep learning and improving. I hope to use the concepts I have learned in UWP1 to help me continue to learn in university classes and beyond.