

# Reflection

## Introduction

This Essay reflects my academic journey. Throughout my academic journey, I have developed a wide range of interdisciplinary skills that reflect the diversity of my coursework and the complexity of my lived experiences. My path has not been straightforward in the least: Because of my passion for patient care, I spent the majority of my degree pursuing Dental Hygiene, completing extensive coursework in biology, chemistry, nutrition, sociology, and clinical sciences before shifting to General Studies due to family and life circumstances. This transition certainly broadened my academic perspective and allowed me to integrate my scientific background with new learning in literature, communication, women's studies, and public speaking. My work as a dental assistant, as well as my military experience as a Navy medical corpsman, further shaped the way I learn, reinforcing discipline, empathy, and adaptability.

As I prepare to take IDS 300W this summer 2026, I can already see how the coursework I have taken this far has strengthened my research, writing, cultural awareness, and public speaking skills. These skills are essential for my intended career as a Program Analyst or Clinical Specialist; both roles require analytical thinking, communication, cultural competence, and the ability to understand complex systems. The artifacts in my E-portfolio demonstrate how interdisciplinary learning has shaped my academic identity and prepared me for professional environments that demand both technical knowledge and human understanding.

## Creative writing

Creating the infographic for Nathaniel Hawthorne's "*The Birthmark*" challenged me to think critically about literature and to translate complex ideas into a visual format. One of the

hardest parts was determining the narrator's position and communicating the narrator's intent clearly. Some stories are not straightforward, and this assignment required me to analyze subtle details, interpret symbolism, and consider how the point of view shapes meaning. Through this process, I learned to be more critical of literature and to think more deeply about the meanings of words. I also drew on skills from other classes, including writing, analysis, and visual organization, as well as communication skills I developed during my roles in the military and as a dental assistant. This artifact strengthened my ability to break down complex material and present it in a way that others can understand, a core competency in any analytical or clinical role.

Baking Pan de Agua taught me about my culture, my roots, and the value of labor. I learned how satisfying it is to make something from scratch, but also how physically demanding the process is. Because I had never baked bread before, the entire process was new and challenging. This assignment helped me appreciate the generations of women who performed domestic labor daily with minimal technological appliances, and often without recognition. It also reminded me of the cultural significance of food in Dominican households and how identity is passed down through strong traditions. I believe cultural awareness matters in my future career because diversity is essential to thriving in any environment. Recognizing and respecting people's differences allows me to connect with others more effectively and provide more compassionate, culturally informed care or analysis.

The artifact, "*The Coerced Deviant*" social media project, demonstrates my ability to interpret literature creatively while analyzing complex human behavior. The task was to transform Edgar All Poe's "*The Black Cat*" into a modern social media-style confession. I had to fully understand the narrator's psychological wickedness of thinking, and the themes of addiction, violence, and guilt that shape the story. This assignment required me to adopt the narrator's

perspective and create a descriptive narrative that translated his emotional instability into captions, images, and reflective commentary. Doing so strengthened my critical reading skills and pushed me to think about how narrative voice and tone can be adapted for contemporary audiences. This project also helped me recognize how storytelling reveals deeper truths about mental health and trauma, topics that connect to my background as a Navy medical corpsman and my interest in understanding human behavior. Ultimately, this artifact shows my ability to analyze literature, communicate visually, and interpret emotional narratives in ways that are meaningful and accessible.

## **Research and Analysis**

My research paper on endometriosis is one of the most personal and meaningful artifacts in my portfolio. I chose this topic because I personally experienced endometriosis and struggled for eight years before receiving a diagnosis. The research process was challenging, especially discovering how much information exists about underdiagnosis, stigma, and patient dismissal, yet how little of it is widely known. I learned that endometriosis can only be diagnosed surgically, and because its symptoms overlap with other conditions, medical professionals often misdiagnose or minimize patients' concerns. This leads to prolonged suffering, mental health challenges, and a deep sense of invalidation, which often leads to patients not seeking the care they need. Through this research, I gained a deeper understanding of the systemic issues in healthcare and the importance of listening to patients. This connects directly to my future career because I want to prioritize compassion, accuracy, and patient-centered care. Whether I become a Program Analyst or a Clinical Specialist, I want to ensure that policies and practices reflect patients' real experiences and address the gaps that lead to misdiagnosis and suffering.

My data paper on social media and mental health demonstrates my ability to research, analyze, and interpret data while connecting it to real-world issues. I designed a one-question survey that gathered responses from 36 adults of diverse backgrounds, asking them how they perceived social media's impact on mental health. The results showed that 67% believed social media increases mental health issues, while only 3% believed it decreases them. Interpreting this data required me to think critically about how technology affects emotional well-being, self-esteem, and social connection. I also incorporated my personal experience with the social media world, acknowledging how constant comparison and unrealistic portrayals of life contributed to my anxiety and stress. This artifact strengthened my ability to interpret data and my academic writing skills. It also reflects my ability to connect personal insight with broader social patterns, which is an essential skill for any health-related or analytical career path I pursue. Through this project, I learned how survey data can reveal hidden trends and support meaningful conversations about mental health in the digital age.

My research paper on the historical conflict between Haiti and the Dominican Republic showcases my ability to analyze complex political, racial, and social dynamics using credible academic sources. I am from the Dominican Republic, and for me, it was important to trace the conflict from colonization to modern border tensions, which I accomplished by examining how European influence, racial hierarchies, and political instability shaped the relationship between the two nations. I researched and analyzed events such as the Parsley Massacre under Trujillo in the Dominican Republic, targeting Haitians, the Duvalier dictatorship in Haiti, and the 2013 Dominican court ruling that revoked citizenship from thousands of people of Haitian descent. Writing this paper required me to synthesize information from historians and international organizations while maintaining an objective and analytical tone. This artifact demonstrates my

ability to understand and evaluate historical patterns and communicate sensitive topics. It also reflects my personal connection to Dominican identity and my commitment to internalizing the forces that shape Caribbean history.

## **Communications/Public Speaking**

Presenting medical information about endometriosis was very important for me at a personal level, with the knowledge of how unaware the general public is regarding the struggle women face despite the extensive amount of research that exists on underdiagnosis and patient dismissal. This assignment taught me how to communicate complex health topics to an audience in a clear and accessible way. The most difficult part was confronting the high percentage of women who suffer in silence. This assignment improved my communication and confidence by pushing me outside my comfort zone. While I communicate well one-on-one, public speaking has always intimidated me. Repeated presentations in my coursework have slowly allowed me to gain confidence in conveying research to an audience. These are skills essential for my future career because I may one day hold a management or leadership role where I must guide meetings, present findings, and communicate with diverse groups. Being able to maintain professionalism while acknowledging individual experiences is crucial in both clinical and analytical environments.

The Podcast presentation on music and rhythm helped me understand how deeply music is connected to our brains and how it can positively impact human behavior and culture. My research helps me to understand how our brains are wired at a neurochemical level to respond to music, and that music has connected humans across time, language, and culture. The challenge was keeping the presentation informative rather than persuasive, since the research strongly supports the benefits of intentional music use. This assignment required research, creativity, and public

speaking skills, and it reinforced the importance of communicating findings effectively. While it may not directly relate to teamwork, it strongly connects to communication and patient interaction.

Utilizing the same research, I was able to create a persuasive speech on the intentional use of music, highlighting my growth as a researcher, speaker, and cultural thinker. In this assignment, I used neuroscience, evolutionary theory, and cultural history to argue that music is more than entertainment; it is a tool for emotional regulation, focus, and identity. I also connected these scientific ideas to my Dominican heritage by discussing how merengue and bachata have functioned as cultural glue, uniting communities and preserving identity. This artifact demonstrates my ability to blend personal experience with academic research and persuade an audience with both logic and emotion. These skills are essential not only in communication courses but also in professional environments where educating, motivating, and influencing others is part of the work. This project strengthened my confidence in public speaking and reinforced the importance of using my cultural background as a source of insight and connection.

Furthermore, the slide presentation that accompanied my persuasive speech demonstrates my ability to communicate ideas visually and support spoken content with intentional design. I created slides that used minimal text, strong imagery, and clear structure to reinforce the message of my speech: that music is a powerful tool for emotional and cognitive regulation. This artifact shows that I can simplify complex information and present it in a way that engages an audience. Visual communication is an essential skill in academic and professional settings, especially in roles that require educating others. These slides highlight my ability to think strategically about how information is delivered and how visuals can enhance understanding. Together with the speech itself, this artifact demonstrates my growth as a communicator and public speaker, combining research, personal insight, and design to create a compelling message.

## **Closing**

Although I have not yet taken IDS 300W, I expect the course to strengthen my research, analytical, and critical thinking skills. Interdisciplinary learning has already exposed me to a wide range of subjects, helping me shape the career path I want to pursue. Completing this portfolio helped me understand that I am a resilient, adaptable learner who can integrate knowledge across fields. My experiences in science, healthcare, literature, communication, and cultural studies have prepared me for roles that require both technical expertise and human understanding. Whether I become a Program Analyst or Clinical Specialist, I will carry forward the lessons I have learned and approach every task with empathy and cultural awareness.