

Reflection

At the beginning of this course, I felt pretty confident about my relationship with writing, rhetoric, and research. Growing up, I was always encouraged to read and write. My mom, an English teacher, made sure I read for at least 30 minutes every day. Even outside of school, I was constantly exposed to language and literature, which helped me develop a strong foundation in writing from a young age. I also participated in the IB program in high school, which definitely shaped my writing style. The coursework was intense and focused on high-level analysis, and I learned how to write in-depth essays and research papers. Coming into college, I felt like I was pretty prepared, but I knew I still had areas to improve. One of my biggest challenges, was figuring out how to plan and organize my thoughts before I started writing. I had the skills to write, but I wasn't always sure how to approach the writing process effectively. By the end of this course, I've learned how to better structure my ideas, focus on "showing" rather than just "telling" my readers, and present well-supported arguments that truly make an impact.

The assignment that challenged me the most in this course was definitely the 10-page argumentative research essay. At first, I felt completely overwhelmed. Ten pages seemed like so much, and I struggled with writer's block in the beginning. I had to advocate for myself and ask for help, which is something I don't always do. It was tough, but I realized that asking for guidance wasn't a sign of weakness, it was part of the process. The paper itself was on sexual assault, a topic that is sensitive and complex to me personally, and researching it really opened my eyes. The experience of writing that paper helped me grow as a writer because it taught me how to tackle difficult topics with care, do thorough research, and make a strong, evidence-based

argument. It also taught me how important it is to take breaks and return to your work with fresh eyes, something I didn't always do.

One of the most significant changes this course has made in my thinking is how I view rhetoric. Before, I saw rhetoric as mostly a tool used in advertisements or political speeches to persuade people. But now, I understand rhetoric as something empathetic. I've learned that it's not just about persuading others to think the same way you do, but understanding where people are coming from, even if you don't agree with them. I've realized that just because something doesn't make sense to me doesn't mean it's wrong or invalid. People communicate in different ways, and it's important to listen to all perspectives. Now, I view rhetoric as a way of connecting with others and engaging in meaningful conversations, whether I am agreeing, disagreeing, or simply trying to understand someone else's point of view.

As for the value of writing, I've come to see it as a powerful tool. Writing allows me to express myself in ways that might not be possible through spoken words alone. I can communicate emotions, opinions, and arguments that resonate with others, even if they've never met you or heard your voice. The fact that you can say so much with just words on paper or on a screen is pretty incredible. Writing gives people a platform to share their thoughts and ideas with the world, and it's a way to leave a lasting impact. Writing is also a way to communicate with myself. Writing allows me to clarify my thoughts, work through my emotions, and make sense of complex issues. In that way, writing is not just an academic skill but also a personal one.

Despite all the progress I've made, I still have some lingering questions about writing, research, and rhetoric. One thing I'm still figuring out is how to maintain my unique voice while still using sources effectively. Sometimes, it feels like I'm relying too much on other people's

ideas, and I wonder how I can find a balance between using sources to support my arguments and keeping my own voice clear and present. I also wonder if there's room for creativity within more formal writing.

A moment this semester that made me feel especially proud was completing the 10-page paper. Finishing it was a huge accomplishment, and looking back on it, I feel proud of how I pushed through the difficulty and writer's block. Another moment that made me feel proud was creating my resume. When I saw how much I had accomplished in just one year, it was a great reminder of how far I've come, and it motivated me to keep going after everything I want.

In terms of my writing process, I've learned that I work best in the library, sitting at a desktop computer with my laptop next to me for notes, sources, and ideas. I need music blasting in my headphones to stay focused, and I put my phone on Do Not Disturb to avoid distractions. Being in that kind of environment helps me get into the zone and really focus on my work. I've also learned that I need to give myself time to brainstorm and outline my thoughts before I start writing.

If I could offer one piece of advice to my past self at the start of this course, it would be to just enjoy the process and not worry so much about getting everything perfect right away. Writing is a journey, and it's okay to make mistakes along the way. I also wish I had engaged more in controversial conversations early on and been more passionate about the arguments I was presenting. The more I invested in the process, the more rewarding it became, and I think I would've enjoyed the experience even more if I had done those things from the start.

When I think about the kind of writer I am, I don't think I fit into just one category. I'm capable of writing academically, but I also enjoy creative writing. I like to write songs, poems,

and journal about my feelings. I think the most engaging writing comes from the heart, and that's what keeps me motivated. I don't necessarily see myself pursuing writing as a career, but writing will always be something I turn to, whether for personal expression or to share my thoughts with others. If I had to describe my writing identity, I would say I'm someone who values directness and honesty in my writing. I want my words to have meaning and to connect with people on a deeper level.