

**Reflection Essay**

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Having a portfolio is critical to the development of an individual's career. According to Professor Sankey, when students have portfolios, they tend to become more rigorous as self-evaluators and they start to set goals for their own progress (2025). Being able to amplify and exhibit crucial skills from artifacts in your portfolio is what can set you apart. With portfolio submissions, program leaders and hiring managers will be able to gain valuable insight into a student's "mastery" of critical concepts in their field (Kuon et al., 2024). The artifacts included in this portfolio highlight the skills I have developed and used throughout my coursework.

The three skills I have developed and improved throughout my academic career are writing, critical thinking, and technical skills. My writing skills developed the best in my upper-level courses where writing assignments required more research and effort. My lower-level courses prepared me to understand concepts I would be later building off of. I began to think more critically when my assignments required me to do a deeper analysis and view things in an interdisciplinary manner. According to Polyakova, understanding ideas, actions, and judgments is what allows individuals to critically think (2024). Lastly, my technicals skills developed through assignments where I had to use course material and apply it through hands-on assignments. In conclusion, the development of these three skills has helped me display my abilities in my portfolio.

### **Writing Skills**

Throughout my courses, I have developed the ability to write and express complex ideas with supporting research. These assignments required clear and accurate information to support my arguments. The following three artifacts demonstrate my ability to communicate my ideas with supported research through writing.

**Artifact 1: The Impact of Family on Socialization**

CRJS 320 Law and Social Control focuses on how society functions and how social control leaves an impact on an individuals' behavior. During this particular assignment, I had to research how family situations impact how individuals contribute and function in society. Also, I had factually prove each claim I made. For example, I included a study of two parent households and how children are more likely to be able to hold their emotions better compared to individuals living in single parent households. This artifact shows my ability to gather information from other peer-reviewed studies and apply it to my own research.

**Artifact 2: Examining SNAP in the United States**

SOC325 Social Welfare focuses on the history of welfare programs and their impact on society. In particular, this course mostly focused on social welfare occurring in the United States. For this assignment, I had to pick a social welfare program and focus in on a specific country. This research prioritized research relevant to current SNAP policies due to them changing continuously in the United States. Completing this research paper helped improve my writing skills by making me stress the accuracy of my writing by prioritizing relevant sources.

**Artifact 3: McFarland, USA Movie Project**

SOC 347 Sport Sociology concentrates on sports and their impact on society. This was probably the most unique papers I have completed at ODU. The requirements of this paper were to watch a movie relating to sports and tie in relevant course material and theories. This particular artifact helped me learn how to tie in a piece of media I have never used for an assignment before. By doing this assignment, I was able to gather and explain evidence and its relevancy which is a critical skill in cybercrime.

## **Critical Thinking Skills**

The ability to critically think is vital in the complex field of cybercrime. There are a multitude of factors that can contribute to and disrupt cybercrime investigations. Being able to critically think allows cybercrime professionals to be able to take into consideration different possibilities leading to justice. The following three artifacts demonstrate my ability to analyze complex topics to reach logical conclusions.

### **Artifact 1: Artificial Intelligence Online Effect on Humans**

This particular assignment was the main research project I spent a whole semester on in IDS300W. The main goal of my project was to explain how artificial intelligence is becoming such a prominent component in today's society and how it impacts people in their daily lives. Every single source I used was reviewed by the professor as it had to be relevant and accurate for my research. This assignment showed critical thinking because I had to incorporate multiple different disciplines then tie them into my core ideas and beliefs about artificial intelligence and the powers it has on the human race.

### **Artifact 2: The Analytical Paper**

In IT/CYSE 200, the main goals of this class were to introduce cybersecurity and how technology is connected and impacts the global environment. This assignment was unique because I was able to incorporate previously completed journal entries to come to a conclusion about the pressures the criminal justice system faces due to rapid technological advancements. This was the first class where I genuinely found out just how far behind the criminal justice system is compared to rapid technology advancements.

The process of completing this assignment was built on viewing this issue from a philosophical lense and then standing on a theoretical position. I had to think of the long-term ramifications of technology advancements and understand why the criminal justice system struggles to keep up. Then, I had to look at how cybercrime laws being different across the world keep the United States criminal justice system limited in how they can deal with cyber threats. From this, I emphasized my belief of protecting critical infrastructure at all costs whether the criminal justice system can prosecute cybercriminals or not. This analytical paper made me critically think by making me stand on my position and explain the importance of taking countermeasures to still deal with cybercrime in an imperative way.

### **Artifact 3: Legal Issues with Online Censorship and Monitoring**

This artifact comes from the previously stated CRJS 320 Law and Social Control class. This was one of the most challenging papers I have had to write, but I made it slightly easier by creating an outline of what I needed to include in the paper. This paper required an in-depth focus on how legal and ethical issues arise from online censorship and monitoring.

The most crucial part of this research was explaining legislation relating to censorship and monitoring, especially in the United States, and explaining precisely how they can act as a deterrence. Also, I looked into how technology advancements make both censorship and monitoring more difficult or easier around the world. Lastly, I looked at the current state of affairs, especially in the United States, between the confliction of Amendments and laws protecting citizens versus private companies being allowed to have different rules set in place. This assignment forced critical thinking by requiring a complex topic to be broken down and analyzed based off of a multitude of different factors.

## Technical Skills

An imperative skill to have in the field of cybercrime is technical skills. Cybercrimes are crimes committed on the internet, therefore individuals who work to combat cybercrime must have knowledge on how and why they occur. Knowing how a cybercrime occurs allows cybercrime professionals to be able to produce solutions and measures to protect and limit future cyberattacks. The following four artifacts below demonstrate my ability to identify critical processes in combating cybercrime as well as show my ability to follow legal guidelines.

### **Artifact 1: 3 Year Forensic Lab Plan**

CYSE 407 Digital Forensics requires learning fundamental knowledge for obtaining and dealing with digital evidence. This particular assignment required a 3-year forensic lab plan for a mid-sized police department. I had to make sure it followed an accreditation plan as well as have proper software and hardware in order to complete digital forensics operations properly. Over the past few decades, there has been a dramatic increase of global incidents of cybercrimes taking place. These incidents are becoming more sophisticated and even coordinated with advancements in technology (Klátik & Rad'ášová, 2025). This assignment helped improve my technical skills in several ways. The first was using Microsoft Visio to complete a diagram for the police department. This was new technology to me but now I have been using it consistently since. Also, this assignment required me to identify and evaluate specific hardware and software that are necessary for proper completion of digital forensic operations.

### **Artifact 2: Digital Forensics Case Report**

Another project from CYSE 407 required me to clearly explain the process of a forensic analysis with a made-up case scenario. Technology has opened up so many different

opportunities for individuals to partake in criminal activity. These opportunities have become very desirable due to the lack of law enforcement presence (Holt, 2018). When individuals feel the urge to commit and talk about crimes, a main factor in prevention is deterrence. Law enforcement acts as a form of social control that can prevent crimes. In this case report, I am a law enforcement agent who legally obtained a search warrant for a forensic analysis of a U.S senator's personal devices.

This project showed technical skills because I had to list every single process in order I took for a digital forensic investigation as well as the tools I would use. With these tools, I showed how to use them and what I am looking for. Also, I showed how to do a key word search by using a string search. Lastly, I stated all the software and hardware used and what the evidence from the U.S senator personal devices contained.

### **Artifact 3 & 4: Federal Search and Seizure Assignment**

CYSE 406 Cyber Law focuses on the legal and constitutional considerations coming from the cyber/digital world. In this assignment, I had to be an agent showing expertise in dealing with identity theft and skimming devices. Both of these artifacts are from the same assignment. In this first artifact, I showed how probable cause for a warrant is established based off of my expertise in skimming and identity theft as well as providing digital evidence. In the second artifact, an actual search and seizure warrant containing what and where I am searching as well as what I found is provided. This assignment shows technical skills by providing targeted descriptions of what is being searched and how skimmers operate.

## **Conclusion**

Interdisciplinary methods and theories are vital for understanding my coursework because cybercrime contains multiple different fields of study. The main way I was able to engage and complete my coursework was to take all of the concepts I learned in each different class and find ways to connect them. By doing this, I was able to expand on my writing, critical thinking, and technical skills. In particular, a course like IDS 300W helped prepare me for my program's coursework by making me research and gather information relating to my topic from multiple different perspectives. It is imperative to be an interdisciplinary thinker in cybercrime because it incorporates many different fields that influence and impact one another.

## References

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