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Portfolio Seminar

Analysis Statement

Upon transferring to Rowan University, I knew that I wanted to study Elementary Education. As for my dual major, I had many choices. I was a previous Mathematics major and soon found out that was not the road I needed to be on. So I took a turn down the Writing Arts road and realized I was in the right direction. Throughout the Writing Arts program, I have found out many things about myself as a writer and as a person. Through the numerous projects and countless discussions in the classroom, I have grown tremendously.

My Analysis Statement takes a look at several different projects from the main courses of the program and how they reflect the nine core values set forth. I never knew how rounded I could become as a writer until I started to take part in the courses. The projects from incorporated are from classes such as Writing, Research, and Technology, The Writer's Mind, Evaluating Writing, and Fiction Workshop. I also touch upon different aspects of various other courses I have taken during my college experience at Rowan University.

1. Writing Arts students will demonstrate understanding of a variety of genre conventions and exhibit rhetorical adaptability in applying those conventions.

Throughout my portfolio, I have several different papers that range in genres. Such genres include creative and academic. Within creative and academic contexts, there are several other subgenres that have their own set of rules and practices. Learning how to write in each genre takes practice and understanding of the different components. Academic writing calls for more formal Standard English. Creative writing gives the author more freedom. Grammar and

formal English can be substituted in the creative writing setting.

The Collaborative Research Project, which was about buying locally grown produce, is an academic project that incorporates an abstract, annotated bibliography, video, and conclusion. This project also includes a blog that tracked the group's progress. In order to complete this assignment, my group members and I had to write from an academic standpoint. What was also interesting about this project was the ability to write cooperatively. All parts included in this project were written collaboratively. The project was created on website platform that was available to anyone who went to the link. Due to the widespread anonymous audience, we had to remain transparent in our writing.

Aside from the academic situations, I also had to acquire the ability to write creatively. Projects such as the Twitterive in Writing, Research, and Technology, the Multigenre assignment in the Writer's Mind, and "Indica" in Fiction Workshop included different genres. The Twitterive and Multigenre assignments were assignments that required me to incorporate multiple genres. Both assignments cover my way of coping with Tourette's Syndrome and are a type of creative nonfiction piece in two separate ways. The Twitterive tackles my struggle with Tourette's Syndrome through a technology based interface. It allowed me to write vignettes, static words, explanation, and dialogue. I also included videos, pictures, and quotes. The Multigenre discusses my syndrome through a paper. It includes an eviction notice I created, second person point of view, in scene narration, a list, a coupon, and a works cited page. Since my syndrome is the main reason I write, it has been included in several assignments throughout my Writing Arts program. "Indica" requires using the conventions of a short story such as, dialogue, plot, and first person point of view. Knowing how to include these different techniques took practice through trial and error.

Genres and the ability to adapt to certain genres is quite interesting. Throughout the Writing Arts program and classes taken outside of the program, I have learned how to write in specific genres by using the appropriate techniques.

2. Writing Arts students will understand theories of writing and reading and be able to apply them to their own writing.

Upon entering the Writing Arts program, I was exposed to the general theories of writing and reading as implemented in the public school settings. For example, the five paragraph essay was the only essay I knew how to write. There was no creative writing that I could remember. There was also no emphasis on papers other than the essay noted previously. There was one research paper a year. Reading meant reading for the standardized test; not for enjoyment or to reveal possible strategies about writing. The set curriculum did not allow me to explore new theories that would help me with my own writing, creative or academic. It was not until I was in the Writing Arts program that I found out how to read as a writer. I was able to read text and understand or at least ponder why an author made the decisions he or she did. Nor was I able to read through a text that would eventually lead to a paper. It always led to a test.

The most influential writings I was exposed to were those introduced in the creative setting. Such courses as Creative Writing I and II, Writing Poetry, Writing Children's Stories, and Fiction Workshop allowed me to use classic works of literature as examples to follow when writing my own pieces. By dissecting these classic works in the classroom setting, I established a greater understanding of different theories of creative writing and how to approach different techniques certain writers used. The use of group discussion on a specific work was a beneficial experience for my writing.

During my Fiction Workshop course, we were instructed to read several different works. The class was quite small and therefore, the discussion was organic and fulfilling. We would often venture off and talk about the readings and how we can emulate the techniques in our own writing. After a group of readings, we were instructed to do “Self-Directed Exercises” based upon the techniques our authors used in their works. These exercises were about 500 words and helped us to generate ideas for our next short story. It help to apply different techniques of famous writers into my own work. I could choose which worked well for my writing and what did not work.

One of our readings, “Powder” by Tobias Wolff, had several paragraphs using short, direct sentences. I attempted to use this technique in my own writing. At first, I wrote a mircofiction piece that eventually evolved into a short story called, “Indica”. I submitted this piece for a workshop for the course. The exercise I had completed for class became the end of the story. An example of how I incorporated Wolff’s concept: “He passed it to me. I pinched it between my thumb and index finger. I inhaled. I exhaled. Life slowed down. My limbs felt loose.” The technique became a vital tool for the portion of the story where the character uses drugs. Long, complex sentences would not suffice for the scene because they are not the characteristics that fit the moment.

Examples of course concepts have become an essential tool in expanding my writing abilities. By allowing myself to understand how a technique is first used helps me to create a story or writing encompassing all the concepts I have previously learned. Knowing which concept to use when and how to properly use the concept is important. Gaining this understanding came from examples of how the concepts are used in different literary works.

3. Writing Arts students will demonstrate the ability to critically read complex and sophisticated texts in a variety of subjects.

In my third year in the Writing Arts program, I decided to get a concentration in creative writing. The program offered several beneficial courses that interested me. I enjoy reading the great literary works and wanted to further my understanding of the concepts they offered. Aside from the creative texts, other courses required I read texts on a variety of subjects. Writing, Research, and Technology required reading texts about our food industry and collaborative writing. The Writer's Mind required reading about Stephen King's writing experience. The senior level capstone course, Evaluating Writing involved reading about journalism techniques outlined in the textbook.

Evaluating Writing was the first encounter I had with journalism. I was a stranger to this genre of writing. While I had my reservations because I was more interested in fiction and poetry, I still gained an appreciation for the style of writing. The class was instructed to read a factual text by the authors Bill Kovach and Tom Rosensteel. The authors created a certain criteria articles should follow when being printed in a newspaper. We were instructed to apply the criteria to a newspaper. Such criteria included journalism requiring verifying information, a forum open to public opinion and a compromise, and also make the significant information interesting and relevant to others. In the paper, we had to discuss whether *The Philadelphia Inquirer* fulfilled the set criteria. To ensure that I had met the appropriate assignment guidelines, I had to read both the newspaper and the text thoroughly. A thorough reading of the text would allow me to be more analytical when writing the assignment.

When reading complex and sophisticated texts, I try to highlight important information, define words that cause confusion, and pay less attention to information that is not closely related

to the main topics. I used these strategies for the Evaluating Writing paper as well as other papers throughout my academic career. I have taken geography classes where I was instructed to write a research-based paper and I followed these strategies. Also, in my Elementary Education major, I follow the same strategies for reading text on a certain topic of instruction. By reading a variety of texts, it helps me as a writer. I am able to adapt to a certain style of writing when needed. I can write creatively and analytically as a result of reading critically in a variety of texts.

4. Writing Arts students will be able to investigate, discover, evaluate and incorporate material into the creation of text.

All writing comes from research. Writing creatively involves understanding various concepts about syntax, character, plot, audience, and so on. Writing academically involves having an understanding in a specific area before knowing what you are going to write. I am a dual major in Elementary Education. Before writing my lesson plans, I would have to discover who my students are and find the appropriate material that best suits their learning abilities. If I do not know my students, I do not know what to write in my lesson plans. My students may not have previous knowledge on a topic that I would want to review and extend off of. As an education major, we are encouraged to give pre-assessments and interest inventories on our students to know their backgrounds.

Throughout the Writing Arts program, I have been required to write both creatively and academically. A specific example of this core value comes from my Writing, Research, and Technology course. One assignment, a Collaborative Research Project, required for the course was to come up with a research project that stemmed from the movie "Food, Inc." Essentially,

the project had to do with food. The specific food topic was left for the group members to decide. Throughout discussions and investigating proposed topics on the internet, we decided to concentrate on buying locally and organically grown produce. Another requirement for the assignment was to conduct an interview and form an Oral History of our topic. Our plan for the broad assignment was to create a video of multiple interviews. We found several different people who agreed to the interviews. Our sources included a nutritionist, a couple which was opening a farmer's market, a manager of an Amish market, and a grower of organic produce. We had other options but these seemed the most influential people for the topic.

The assignment led to a creation of a website that was the foundation of our project. We were able to construct a blog with contributions from each group member and provide relevant information based upon our investigation process. The website allowed for us all to add important details to the project. The use of multimedia helped us to reach people outside of our academic setting and discover new outlets for people to look at our work through.

This research process is used in several other projects. Creative writing pieces involve researching the conventions, understanding how to use them, and applying them to my own work. Academic writing, such as a geography course, involves researching a proposed topic, understanding the topic, and analyzing the effects. The process used in my Collaborative Research Project can be applied to several different circumstances of writing.

5. Writing Arts students will demonstrate self-critical awareness of their writing.

When I entered the Writing Arts program, I never envisioned the impact it would have on my writing. I am not referring to writing just for the program but writing everywhere. The program has taught me to read as a writer. I read and wonder what the purpose for the piece I

read was. Or I read and wonder why an author made a decision to cut off a scene at that moment or insert dialogue in the middle of exposition. I am constantly reading each individual word and trying to understand the process beyond the writing to know how to improve my own writing.

When I read my writing, I try to read as if I am an outside reader. I try to see if what I wrote makes sense, as any writer does. The most beneficial part of the Writing Arts program is having pieces work shopped. In my Fiction Workshop class, I wrote the story "Indica". The first draft was submitted for a class workshop. During the workshop, I learned the positives and negatives of my writing for the specific piece. I had clear descriptions but needed to speed the pace of the story up more. I also had a great conflict but I needed to raise the stakes and make it even more heightened. Once the workshop had finished, I took the critiques and made revisions that were suggested. I also made revisions to parts that I felt were not working. I posted both the first and second draft on my website. This allows me to reference both pieces and see where I made revisions.

For my first creative writing class in the program and my first short story ever, I was clueless. I had no idea where to begin. I researched story generators to find a possible route for my story. I ended up writing a story that I thought was decent. My professor's feedback was that the story's timeline was too long. The story was basically a summary of a novel. Going into the second story of the class, I chose a scene and wrote a short story based on a specific scene. Through several classes and semesters, I finally am able to come up with several stories that would be interesting to write and read. The classes gave me insight through examples of different works of literature. By having examples, I was able to see what worked and what did not for short stories.

The biggest area of self-critical awareness area that I work on is revision. Revision was

hard in the beginning of my writing career. I would change the wording in sentences or omit paragraphs. I would never completely change the ending or beginning. Drastic changes were foreign to me. Now, after learning how to let go of things, I know where to apply my revisions. I still need more work with the revision process, but it has progressed over the last four years. It helps when I can put aside a piece for a month. Once I come back to it, it is so much easier to see what I wrote and how much revisions are necessary. When a writing is fresh, it is difficult to let things go. I always want to hang on to them. But I understand that in order to grow as a writer, revisions are necessary for improvement.

6. Writing Arts students will understand the impact evolving technologies have on the creation of written texts.

Technology makes for an interesting world. We are constantly creating new forms of technology to have the world try out and become accustomed to. Technologies of writing have evolved through the years. Technologies, such as pencil and paper, typewriter, and computer, affect how anyone would begin to write to the mode in which our writings are delivered. The computer has become the most influential tool to writing that I am aware of. Professors require students to type all assignments. While I believe that handwritten material provides a story in itself, I understand the need for typed assignments. Another aspect the computer offers is an audience. When posting writing online, such as on a blog, the author is addressing an anonymous “you”. The audience is increased which has enhanced the accessibility of writing. Anyone can write and post it online. I have my own blog and, while no one reads it, I still enjoy the idea of having my writing online. It currently serves as an archive that I can see the progress of my writing and revision processes.

Throughout my experience with the Writing Arts program, I have been introduced to several technologies. In Introduction to Writing Arts, I was required to create a Twitter account. I was also required to create a paper with my group members that researched a specific technology closely related to social media. The most influential assignment that incorporated technology and my writing would be the Twitterive created in my Writing, Research, and Technology course. The project showed how dancing allowed me to cope with having Tourette's Syndrome. I used multimedia and various writing genres to get my point across. I used a website as the foundation of my project. Within the project, I used screen shots, videos, and links. By using multiple devices, I was able to experiment with technologies. Each device was chosen carefully. The YouTube video was a private confessional from my point of view. The video format was chosen because of the emotional content. As I said in the video, writing into the website would not have the same effect as me talking. I also used flashbacks alongside a picture from the time period. This allowed for a reader to have a visual of me at five years old as well as text. There are several other genres inside of the project. The project allowed the audience to create their own understanding of my writing using technologies.

My portfolio also shows how technology impacts my writing. My portfolio is incorporated in my personal writing website. I initially created the website for my Writing, Research, and Technology course. After the class had ended, I formed the website into my online portfolio which also serves as my blog for my current writing. This site allows me to look at an archive of my past work versus my present and allows me to grow as a writer. The site also allows others to view my portfolio. I connected my site to my Twitter in hopes of gaining an audience that would enjoy my writing. I also hoped that the audience would provide feedback on ways to improve my writing via my blog.

7. Writing Arts students will show an understanding of the power of the written word and that such power requires ethical responsibilities in its application.

In every class, I am handed a syllabus that thoroughly defines the course. The syllabus also includes a statement about academic honesty and plagiarism. I understand the severity plagiarism has. To include someone's work in my writing and claim it as my own or not include a citation, has serious consequences. As a Writing Arts student, the reason I am in the program is to improve my own writing. Using someone's writing directly would defeat the purpose my education.

There were certain ethical responsibilities within my Collaborative Research Project that our group needed to be aware of. There were four names on the assignment. Therefore, four people were responsible for the writing that went onto the site. If someone put slander or obscene language, we would all be held accountable for the writing. It would not matter who wrote it because the website and components of the assignment were controlled by the four of us. During the assignment, we interviewed people based on our topic and their thoughts and opinions were recorded. We had them sign waivers that we were allowed to use the material they let us shoot. If we were to portray them in a bad light, we would not be upholding our ethical responsibilities. Also, if we took their words out of context and stated false information, we would be held accountable.

There were also ethical responsibilities that needed to be understood when writing the Evaluating Writing piece. Since the assignment was an academic piece, there were certain rules that needed to be followed. I could not make up an information because it was a research based paper. If I made up information, the reader(s) of the piece would not rely on me as a person and

an author. Also in that piece, there were two sources, *The Philadelphia Inquirer* and The Elements of Journalism. Both sources had to be referenced to throughout the paper. If I did not cite the sources, I was taking their words and ultimately using them as my own. Sources in academic writing are extremely important to note.

When writing, a person assumes all responsibility of the text unless noted otherwise. In today's world with the availability of technology, it is very easy to identify when someone has plagiarized or not. There are sites where the professor or reader can enter the text and check if any of the paragraphs, sentences, and phrases are repeated without references. This is not something to be taken lightly. As a writer, it is very important to keep in mind the power of the written word. The power of the written word is extremely influential for people. They read what is written and form opinions around it.

8. Writing Arts students will be familiar with the current standards and dynamic nature of grammar, mechanics, and usage and will be able to apply them appropriately.

The elements of language are important standards to keep in mind when writing. When writing an assignment, I write the entire assignment first. After the entire work is completed, I go back and reread what I have. There is always awkward phrasing or elements that should be omitted. In areas of academic writing, it is more important to pay attention to the proper mechanics and usage of the English language. Academic writing should follow all the rules set for grammar, mechanics, and usage. If it does not, it is reflected in the grade. I have had professors who are much more critical than others when it comes to grammar. Truthfully, I wish all professors would be more critical when it comes to grammar and the structure of language because it helps me with my writing.

Creative writing is much more lenient with these standards. The author of a piece has more freedom to break the rules of the language, grammar, and syntax. Creative writing could involve characters that do not necessarily follow the proper guidelines, either in dialogue or first person narration. There are several possibilities in creative writing to not follow these conventions. In my short story “Indica”, there are some sentences that are fragments. They are appropriate to the story and the narrator. The same idea follows the Twitterive assignment. Some ideas are disjointed but they fit the piece; therefore, the disjointedness is allowed. Creative writing depends upon the writer. For the most part, however, it is important to follow the basic standards to allow the reader to understand what he or she is reading.

Revisions and multiple drafts also help when understanding the use of language. There may be errors that went unnoticed in the first draft that a peer reviewer or myself noticed and changed in the second or third draft. Having a record of drafts helps to track improvement of these areas. During my workshop for “Indica”, a peer informed me that I had several compound sentences, mainly towards the end, that needed commas. I was unaware of such errors and I was lucky enough to have a peer inform me of them. Knowing the standards and nature of grammar, mechanics, and usage is important for any writing.

9. Writing Arts students will have knowledge of the post-graduate options available to them in professions and/or graduate studies.

Once I graduate from Rowan University, I plan on becoming a special education teacher. I chose the Writing Arts program as my dual major because I enjoyed writing creatively on my own and wanted to further my creativeness. I never knew the effect the program would have on my education major. In the education major, I am constantly referring to writing. It is the one

subject I wish for my students to gain an appreciation for. I am not currently teaching but I do have to teach miniature lessons to students in classroom where I am placed. Most of my lessons are writing based. Since I have the creative writing concentration, I would like to have my students gain an understanding, like I have, about the concepts—even in the primary grades. What I have learned in the program is vital to the basics of writing, as well as the complexities. I want my students to understand this as well.

My ultimate goal is to teach at a college level. After I teach for a few years, I want to continue teaching and receive my Master's. I understand that Rowan University has a Master's program that is designed for this goal I have. The Master's in "Writing, Composition, and Rhetoric" encompasses the courses that would enable me to teach at a college level. I would want to teach composition classes at a community college. It interests me to instill the appreciation of writing for others.

Towards the end of my Writing Arts program, I have become more interested in the careers writing offers and the variety of fields that I could possibly go into in the future. To be honest, teaching is what my parents want me to do and paid for me to do. In order to please them, I have to first get established as a teacher. Once I have done this, I want to see if there are opportunities for me to grow as a writer. After all, I have two degrees. Why should one go to waste?