Chris Liu

Mark Baker

Writing 2 05

3 October 2018

Letter to Mark

Dear Mark,

I am glad to have this letter as the first essay assignment, and this is what I do not have in any previous writing classes. I think it really helps when professors and students know about each other since this is a process of building connections, and connections allow us to work with each other better. Just like what I just learn from the reading, that district neighborhood without connection can be "chaos and barbarism."

Writing 2 is the fourth writing class I take at UCSC. Knowing the course difficulty and challenging works, I still want to take this class because writing is an essential skill both during the rest of my university life and later in my career path.

So far, I think my writing is okay but needs improvement in many aspects. In my previous writing class, we focus on rhetorical analysis and research paper most of the time. I am always excited when we are assigned research papers. I am interested in the process of doing research, but I never write good research papers, which has been confusing me for a long time. So I guess writing research papers is my weakest point, and I look forward to improving writing it with the help of you and this course. As for the strongest point, it must be informal writing. I am a computer science major student, and according to my schedule, I do not have technical

writing classes until the third year. Thus, informal writing may be the most frequent writing I do in daily life or other courses involving such writing.

In the past year, I completed all my writing in my room. Perhaps it is because I am used do serious works in the comfort zone (with high psychological safety and low-performance pressure). I can never concentrate in the library or the study area when I was surrounded by other students even if it is so quiet. If there is one or more writing assignment due, I will work on it during the day, especially in the morning, since morning is a new starting point and I am the most motivated during that period.

To be honest, I do not like reading before. It is because either I have no time for it (excuses) or would rather play video games. My opinion change after I realize that most successful people are readers, and I honestly feel the power and value of reading when I do so. At the beginning of the year 2018, I start teaching myself machine learning from scratch, which also requires reading a lot of blog posts and research papers. Blog posts are easy to understand because they are not written by professionals, and many of them are for novices. When I start learning deep learning, I read a blog post named "For Dummies – The Introduction to Neural Networks we all needed!" on Medium. It explains the advanced concept in English and is a great starter guide for absolute beginners, leading you to step by step to what is a neural network and how it works. I would say I read these blog posts for pleasure. Later when I read machine learning research papers, things are entirely different. The research paper assumes you have prior knowledge of the related concepts and is much more difficult to understand regarding its length and level of complexity. Although I do not enjoy reading it, it influences my thinking and ways of writing in some way at least (not sure what it is for now).

Again, I hope I can learn a lot from you with this course. I would instead call it an experience of connection since we can also introduce you to our culture and our understanding of "urban landscape."

Best,

Chris Liu