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English 3307

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A Semester in Review: 7 over 2

When going into this class, I thought it'd be one that I could simply relax in, submit some subpar work, and grab my easy A. Instead, I found the class intellectually stimulating; it made me rethink the standards of my own writing, and how to approach types of writing within my field. Something particularly unique about my experience during the class is that I technically took the wrong class, but I think I've gleaned more from interacting with students outside of my discipline than I would have in the technical specific class, just by witnessing different contexts in which their writing lived compared to mine. By analyzing what the other fields were doing well, such as diagrams, I was able to augment my technical writing, and hopefully produce better content for others to consume in the future.

A good example of how I now plan for images from the start of a project is in the Reference Document project. One look at my rough draft shows that I was preparing to have visual elements from the start. Something I noticed in many blog posts of a similar nature is that the text content existed, but it wasn't very specific, and there was a dearth of well-crafted imagery. By using the hand drawn "circles" throughout my blog posts, I was trying to go for some affect where the weird shapes would draw someone's eye far enough to see what I was pointing at. After feedback from Lande Fu about the imagery not being quite clear – I also added arrows, which would help clarify what I was drawing attention to by providing more visual contrast. Sadly, I don't have any textual evidence of this feedback, this was during an in-class review. Through the feedback, I learned that while I was on the right track, even in an informal "blog post," images need to be crisp and professional for the audience to engage without skepticism.



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I wrote this guide for Advanced Writing in the Sciences!

📍 Somewhere over the Rainbow

✉ Email

🌐 Website

🐙 GitHub

📷 Instagram

🌐 LinkedIn

To Create a Homepage

🕒 5 minute read

The website has evolved into the ultimate form of self-expression. Having a personal website is an easy way to not only put yourself on display, but to help you stand out. And it's easier than ever to get a personalized blog online, whether it be through WordPress, Wix, Google Sites, or any other provider.

However, all of these sites still limit you with templates, and lock the source of your website behind paywalls – if the service goes down, your site is lost forever. What I'll be showing today is an alternative, using Github Pages to host your own website with your own code online, for free! Through this guide, even with no coding experience, you can get a personalized website up and running in less than an hour!

On this page

Getting Started

Starting Customization:

First Blog Post

Figure 1: Isabella's feedback on distracting elements

Another thing I learned from Unit 2 was to ensure that when I'm writing a blog post, I make the experience as streamlined as possible. Both the website name I chose, "To Create a Home Page," and the fact that I had a distractor (as seen in the figure above) made the post harder to read, since a reader wouldn't quite know what they were in for when they clicked on something, and then could be more confused by the fact that even though the blog post was talking about how to set up a website, the upper right corner also had a "Quick-Start Guide." Lande's feedback on creating a more robust table of contents was also helpful, causing me to add one in the final website.

Throughout the semester, I also got better at articulating the *thick logic* behind an author's writing. As seen in my original rough draft for my Discourse Analysis on *Why Functional Programming Matters*, I found points of interest to discuss. However, I couldn't home in on what made the excerpts shine. In the third body paragraph, I talk about an analogy Hughes utilizes, comparing the creation of a chair to the advantages that functional programming provides. In the original draft, I observed "[t]he last part of the analogy I find key. He's pointing at readers to look at this new viewpoint, but also gives a counterexample to why he thinks the other paradigms are inferior. In that, the analogy is placed to allow for Hughes to use a different medium to explain and draw in more people." While this on its own was a good *identification* of where Hughes deployed a specific writing structure to get a point across, it never dug into Hughes' point of why *specifically* he decided to use the analogy of the

chair. In my final draft, I dug in deeper. I first conveyed how Hughes threw back to the introduction of his paper, with “Hughes started to home in on the idea of glue throughout the intro, but he chose a chair analogy specifically to show the difference between the difficult of assembling vs. carving something monolithic.” Then I continued to dig in more about the chair vs languages, with “[t]he chair analogy flows perfectly from his claims about the glue of languages – being about literal glue and parts of a chair rather than the metaphorical glue and parts of a language.” While certainly imperfect, by drawing on the context in which Hughes wrote his lines, I was able to more effectively find the purpose of his analogy. I learned here that writing moments don’t live on their own, they’re all small parts of the symphony of words an author writes. Being able to tease out the meaning of snippets is important, but each snippet always must serve the bigger picture.

Finally, in my third paper, I learned how to synthesize the tables of science papers with the lack of “hard data” that most computer science papers hold. For this, I reached out to Professor Akbari for examples of Literature Reviews in CS. The paper he gave back to me, *Agent Based Modelling and Simulation tools: A review of the state-of-art software*, showed that even something as *information-heavy* instead of *data-heavy* as Computer Science could still have main points taken from them and collected in a tabular form for a reader, which was present in both my rough draft and my final draft. The dilution of information to data is an important skill, not only in writing papers, but to the practical applications of my field too.

Throughout the semester, I’ve been exposed to styles of writing in more disciplines than I initially bargained for – but I think taking a critical look at how other Sciences approach writing was important for Computer Science as well. By experiencing writing in fields where my domain-knowledge didn’t apply, and through having my peers who also didn’t have the same domain-specific knowledge that I did review my works, it led to more coherent writing, since I had to ensure my reading was readable for everyone – not just for fellow computer geeks. With that in mind, I hope what I gleaned from this class is reflected in my writing for the field in the future.

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