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### A Reflection On My Writing Over The Years

Having taken numerous Advanced Placement courses during my high-school years, yet not truly encountering collegiate-level writing until my freshman year at Carleton, I think that I have grown most as a writer in my ability to cohesively express my ideas, provide proper documentation for my claims, and provide sufficient support for my arguments no matter the subject. For my Argument and Inquiry seminar, I had originally selected a course about America as seen through European eyes but decided to take Geology out of sheer interest for the subject itself. True to its name, much of the course took place in the field in which we practiced making inferences about the history of the Earth with very limited information. We looked at a lot of rock formations – the towering and cracked basalt cliffs of the river valley, the subtle presence of ooids in rock, and thousand-year-old Gneiss near the limestone mines – and in this process we had to generate a cohesive summary of the geologic history of the state of Minnesota.

My A&I paper is a striking example of something that I have observed and later written about – first beginning with a chronological history of the state, it progresses to what we saw – the banded iron formations – and how they were created. I wrote about the brachiopods and other organisms that we saw and coupled this observation with a cohesive history that explains how they got there. The ancient waves creating ripples (shown as stromatolites in the stone) in the ocean floor during stormy times, and the deposition of glacial meltwater that makes Minnesota what it is (the land of one thousand lakes) were accentuated by my implementation of helpful graphs and other visuals.

My paper on a modified version of the German Tank problem provides an excellent description of the original problem as well as a thorough quantitative analysis that explicitly details the methodology that we used to solve the problem. It is a great example of these characteristics in that it shows how we can extrapolate models based off of a very limited selection of data, just as in the Geology paper. Due to the fact that it was done in R Markdown it demonstrates how we can use the context of the problem – a discrete and uniformly distributed population of tags – and be able to infer information about a population. I included histograms, summary statistics, as well as an intricate detailing of the theoretical equations that we used in order to guide the reader through the whole process.

The fourth paper that I have included in this portfolio proposes a new installation for a beautiful stained-glass roundel set that I saw at the Minneapolis Institute of Art. This paper required me to interpret deeply the mind of the artist and their intent in creating a functional piece of artwork that was designed to be included in a small family church. Essentially, it shows how my perception of the work changed after doing preliminary research. I understood, by understanding the work of the artist Schüffelein in the context of the historical period and religious symbolism, how to interpret what artwork is supposed to do and how percepts can

provoke certain emotions that first require understanding the concepts that are presented in a visual format.

Most of my citations were done in Chicago style; while citations and footnotes were used extensively in my AP courses, I did not fully understand the purpose of footnotes until I came to Carleton. It was here that I learned how footnotes are meant to be very precisely located in order to enable the researcher or any other type of reader to effectively reconstruct my writing process from the very beginning. Thus, I learned to ensure that my footnotes correspond precisely to specific moments in the original text, to annotate them with short descriptions describing their intent, and to place them in such a way that the reader can easily infer what is original content and what is taken from said sources. In essence, I learned some of the techniques that are needed for proper documentation and a real academic quality of writing.

As for thesis-driven arguments, I would say that my best example is the essay on Aristotle's ideal form of government, the very first paper that I have included in my portfolio. My use of the word "constructs" refers to the Aristotelian method of argument wherein he starts with basic premises and leads the reader to his conclusions. I differentiate his method from Plato's dialectical arguments by describing his purpose – the happiness of the entire city – and that it is brought about by the successful support of a middle class. This thesis alludes to Aristotle's love of moderation and his philosophy of life.

My essay on Malkiel's take on the efficient market hypothesis is also an important aspect of this portfolio because it delineates my learned ability to first present the argument of an economist and then provide some critical points based on common sense reasoning. I use both Shostak's demonstration of how central banks can create market inefficiency as well as Malkiel's own embellishments on human ability to correctly evaluate companies in order to construct a progressive argument, based on empirical evidence, against Malkiel's exaggeration of the market's efficiency. In this essay, I always refer back to Malkiel.

I believe that my professors at Carleton, Bruce Dalgaard in particular, have taught us how to effectively understand academic writing by encouraging discussion in every class. I think that such discussion was an essential part of my learning. Coming from a high-school background in which I was taught to write essays in a very rigid, formulaic process I think that it was very enlightening and emboldening to discover different methods of discourse. While I have had some weaknesses in justifying my statements in the realm of statistics, understanding that introductions should grab the attention of the reader, and not jumping around too much in my writing, I think that I have improved very much in my technical writing. Furthermore, I think that in the future I have to focus on reproducibility in my data analysis papers, making sure that I do not overuse commas, ensuring that my citations serve the purpose of allowing the reader to reconstruct my thought process, following the prompt and understanding what the professor wants, and not making too many broad claims. I believe that my writing could be improved by more rigorous peer-editing as well as envisioning my audience as one with mild but sufficient

knowledge of the subject involved. Essentially, I need to write in a simple way that is precise yet informative.