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UWP1 Final Reflection Letter

This portfolio represents the growth of my writing throughout UWP1, shaped by projects that pushed me to think, write, and reflect in new ways. My literacy narrative and discourse community essay helped me understand how audience, genre, and research shape writing and how revision isn't just about fixing errors but about developing meaning. Both projects also gave me a better sense of who I am as a writer and how to use writing to express, analyze, and connect.

Rhetorical Concepts

Before this class, I didn't think much about audience beyond "the teacher." But now I understand that every piece of writing exists within a rhetorical situation. In my literacy narrative, I wrote with college students in mind especially those who, like me, might've relied on the Dining Commons and felt unprepared for life in a kitchen. I used casual language and storytelling to keep it engaging and real. I wanted the reader to laugh a little, relate a lot, and see how cooking, something I once feared, became a personal literacy I grew into. I focused not just on what I cooked, but on how I began to read instructions differently, interpret smells and textures, and follow logic without strict measurements.

Then in my discourse community project, I had to completely shift my tone. I was no longer telling a personal story I was analyzing how blackjack card counters use literacies to beat the house. That meant adopting a more academic voice, using structured sections like “Findings” and “Methodology,” and backing up my claims with research. I explained the group’s symbolic and mathematical literacies and framed my essay using Melzer’s ideas about discourse communities—shared goals, communication methods, and genres. Each writing task asked for something different, and I adjusted my choices to fit.

Processes

The biggest change for me this quarter was in how I revise. I’ve always been the kind of person who finishes a paper the night before it’s due and turns it in without looking back. But UWP1 forced me to slow down, rethink, and actually treat writing as a process. The feedback I got peer reviews, open reviews, and professor comments shaped both of my projects at every stage.

For my literacy narrative, I first worked on a video version. One of my peer reviewers suggested I add clips of different dishes I had cooked and show how my skills progressed more smoothly. When I turned it into a written essay, I kept that advice in mind by weaving in those “in-between” moments when I started making noodles and fried rice before attempting pesto again. Another peer pointed out that I should show how the language of recipes began to make sense to me, like how “cook until fragrant” meant nothing to me at first but became something I could recognize over time. My professor’s feedback was to highlight those key moments of change and make the transitions clearer. So, I rewrote the second half to focus more on how each small step taught me something new and built up my confidence.

In the discourse community essay, my peers were confused at first about what exactly my topic was. I was trying to cover too much about blackjack in general. Based on that, I narrowed it to card counters and rewrote the introduction to be more focused. Later, I was told to explain how these techniques help players succeed not just to name the literacies, but to show their effect. I added more about training, role assignments, and strategy, and made sure each literacy was tied to the idea of winning. My professor also asked me to improve the ending to answer, “so what?” I revised the conclusion to say that literacy is what separates casual players from professionals. That revision made the project feel more complete.

Rewriting wasn't always easy, but I realized how much better my writing became each time I stepped away from it and looked at it again with fresh eyes. Reading Nancy Sommers' ideas about how experienced writers revise helped me rethink what revision is it's not just fixing things, it's rethinking what you're trying to say and how to say it better.

Knowledge of Conventions

This class helped me get comfortable with different kinds of writing. In my literacy narrative, I followed a looser structure with a casual tone and personal storytelling, which matched what's expected in a reflective, first-person genre. I used pacing and emotion to guide the reader through moments like my failed pesto attempt and later success. Lines like, “I was going to store all of it in the fridge and go back to the dull black bean burger,” helped show how I was feeling in the moment and kept the voice honest and conversational. Writing this way helped me understand how personal genres rely on a different set of expectations. The ones that prioritize voice, detail, and emotional development. In contrast, the discourse community project followed academic expectations more strictly. I used MLA formatting, formal structure, and cited outside

sources. I also used specialized terms like “Wonging” or “true count” to show I understood the community’s shared language. Working in both personal and academic genres helped me learn how to switch styles based on audience, purpose, and context. It also helped me explore how my background and interests could connect with more formal communities I want to join, like professional or academic spaces.

Research

My discourse community essay was the first time I really had to combine multiple sources and use them to build an argument. I used *Beat the Dealer* by Edward Thorp as my foundational text and Ben Mezrich’s *Bringing Down the House* to show how the theories played out in real-life teams. I tried to explain how the techniques described in those books shaped the group’s practices and helped them achieve the goal they worked towards. For example, I showed how symbolic literacy helped counters communicate without speaking and how strategic literacy helped them decide when to bet big or leave the table. I also make use of visuals to support my findings. I incorporated a graph explaining the most essential technique for card-counters. One of the things I improved during revision was citing more consistently. My professor reminded me that every idea coming from a source needs to be clearly marked. I also learned how to balance narrative and technical research and use both to create a full picture. I used sources to explore how literacy forms and works in a real-world context.

Metacognition

This course has helped me become a more reflective writer. I now have a greater understanding that writing is not simply capturing ideas but involves adapting those ideas based on who you are writing to, what you want to express, and how you want the reader to feel. Before this course, I

did not really think about my strategy. I wrote and hoped for the best, but through feedback, revision, and reflection, I have become more aware of how I write and how I want to improve. I was especially taken with Anne Lamott's "Shitty First Drafts". This reading taught me how to write without any restriction at the beginning and fix up things later on, which allowed to overcome a lot of my initial hesitations. My writing is now constructed entirely around the idea of getting the ideas out onto the page and knowing that later I work to shape them. I also think differently about invention. I now see that I was drafting my literacy narrative, I did not see at first it was about literacy. As I was writing and revising, I could see the process of learning to read and comprehend recipes instructions, understanding the different smells and tastes was its own type of literacy development.

Further Revisions

If I had more time, there are a few things I would still work on. In my discourse community project, I'd like to include more updated information on new techniques that card counters use today. There's a lot of recent strategy that builds on the basics, and I think adding that would show how the literacy continues to evolve.

For my literacy narrative, I'd expand on how my understanding of cooking literacy grew over time. Different dishes taught me different things—some focused more on timing, others on flavor or preparation. It wasn't just one skill I developed, but many small ones that built on each other. I'd like to show more of that range.

Final Thoughts

These two projects taught me different things, but together they changed how I see writing. I used to think of it as something you just finish and turn in. Now I understand it's something you shape over time. With each draft, I got better at noticing what worked and what didn't. I've learned how to adjust my tone depending on who I'm writing for. I've learned that structure and voice change with the purpose.

The literacy narrative helped me find a personal voice. It taught me how to bring someone into my world through small details and honest reflection. The discourse community project showed me how to work with sources, stay focused, and build a stronger argument. I didn't expect these two styles of writing to feel so different, but switching between them made me more flexible.

Most importantly, I don't feel stuck when I write anymore. I know how to start, even if it's rough. I've learned to revise with intention. I write now knowing that I can always come back and improve.