

A Reflection on Writing as a Computer Science Student

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Over my time in my UWP course, I gained experience in writing different genres under different contexts, and more importantly practiced writing for my career.

The first learning objective of this course was about analytical reading and writing within the career I am pursuing. I both read and wrote analytically for the first assignment of this course, which explored how blogs were used within my Software Engineering community. This assignment required me to read articles on genres, discourse communities, and blogs. I practiced effective annotations to get the important points from each article, and incorporated those points into my academic research article. Learning about how my career uses different genres of writing also helped me learn about how the writing that I am learning about now may affect my career in the future.

The second learning objective is on awareness when writing for different audiences. I wrote to three different audiences across three different assignments. The first assignment (academic research article) was written for a professional, academic community that consists of computer scientists. The second, an annotated bibliography, was written for myself. The third, a blog that covered side channel attacks, was written for those not within my community but care about privacy. Being aware of my audience is knowing what is important for my readers. It means to take note of why the content that I am writing about matters to my readers, and to mention how it may affect them. For my blog, this was particularly important because I needed to connect a technical topic to how it affected the readers, who did not involve themselves with this field.

The third learning object was about writing different genres. I did writings in three major genres, and a few other small ones. I wrote a formal, academic article; a casual blog; a research

focused annotated bibliography; free writes to convey my ideas; and other miscellaneous pieces. These covered a broad range of writing styles. I learned about the concept of genres, which I found very interesting. I do not think I could have given a good definition of genre before taking this course, and now knowing the meaning I feel more prepared for writing in general. Practice with writing in these genres has made me more used to writing in tones or styles that I do not have previous experience with, especially so in the blog.

The fourth objective was on gathering information and performing research. The first assignment required me to research different blogs in order to find their commonalities, and my third assignment required me to do broad research on academic articles. Researching blogs was a lot more informal, and since I had to find the commonalities, I needed to find the nuances that the blogs had. This went beyond just the content the blogs contain, and that is an important thing that I learned. The second area of research that I had to do was about a specific topic in my field, and was a more formal type of research that focused on content. I had to find academic articles, determine if they were trustworthy, and then work through the bulk of information that they were carrying. Gaining experience will be helpful if I ever want to do formal research in my field later on.

The fifth learning objective was about the language used when writing to different audiences. As I have mentioned before, the different audiences that I have written to. By writing for these audiences, I had to learn how to change my language and know when to explain certain topics or words in my writing. I learned about how easy it can be to just skip over a few words that may seem easy to understand, but may not be that way for every reader. The blog in particular was written to those unfamiliar with my field, and I had to make sure that the words I was using had meanings and were clearly defined for my audience.

The sixth learning objective was on how to prepare, plan, and manage a writing project. The process that I learned generally looked like this: find out what exactly it is that I want to write about, do research on the topic, write down all my ideas messily, gather all the ideas into a first draft, and then heavily revise. While I do not believe this will apply to all writing projects, I think I can use variations of it for all of my writing. I learned that most people usually have a poorly written rough draft, and that's alright.

The seventh learning objective was on giving and receiving feedback on writing. For two of the major pieces I wrote, I read and gave feedback to my peers and received some in kind. The few articles and discussions in class that covered peer reviews and criticisms were helpful. The most important thing I learned was the importance of asking questions when peer reviewing. It is a high level way of allowing a writer to improve their writing. Previously, I would attempt to directly give them how I would word things, and what I would do to replace what is wrong. However, by asking questions when I am confused about certain aspects allows the writer to fix these issues with their own ability and writing. I also used the feedback that I received from my peers to fix issues they found with my writing. Their feedback allowed me to realize parts of my writing where I may have used words I had not clearly defined, making it hard to understand.

The eighth and final learning objective is about reflecting on my writing. For most of my pieces, I wrote a cover memo that allowed me to reflect about what I did well on, and where I could improve. This essay that I write now is the same. I will use what I have learned in my writings in the future.