

When I chose my major at Northeastern University—Computer Science & Design—formal writing became minimally emphasized in my coursework. While high school classes demanded research papers and rhetorical essays, my design and computer science classes placed a distinct priority on the production of digital and physical materials and, at most, a succinct record of our creative process in the form of documentation. Writing has always been one of my passions (though I usually lean toward fiction), and though I was resolved to practice it, this shift in coursework priorities severely cut into my formal writing time and therefore caused me to be “out of practice” with many of the communication skills I had fostered since high school. Advanced Writing this semester was thankfully able to reacquaint me with many of those skills, as well as improve upon several of them. Throughout the course, I was able to create several writing pieces of which I am quite proud. I also believe that these pieces demonstrate significant fulfillment of the course objectives.

Our first writing project of the semester was a genre, rhetoric, and discourse analysis (otherwise known as a close reading). Though we were encouraged to use a document written by someone in our field or industry (in my case, computer science or design), I decided to instead use an op-ed on a topic relevant to my industry, written by someone outside of said industry. This choice was still an appropriate selection of material for class because the op-ed was rife with skillful use of rhetorical strategies, and further, the issue raised by the op-ed had not been sufficiently examined for its moral implications by the people in my field. I did consider other works such as Computer Science papers and papers, but they simply did not elicit the same response that the op-ed did, and I wished to examine why.

My rough draft of this discourse analysis was, admittedly, quite rough—I was out of practice and it showed. My control of language was faulty and I examined the author’s strategy superficially, pointing out but not properly examining a large number of key rhetorical moments. My revision club group remarked that I should attempt to integrate more evidence to support my general analysis of these key moments, and I accepted this criticism. For the final draft, I narrowed my analysis’s scope to only four

key moments and attempted to deeply examine the implicit discourse, rhetoric, and efficacy of these moments. In doing so, I gained a greater understanding of not only how to identify an effective rhetorical strategy, but also how to identify the considerations and circumstances that make those strategies effective. Further, in my final draft, I think I eloquently and comprehensively discussed these learnings (and my writing seemed far less “out of practice”). The following blockquote examines one of the most—in my opinion—interesting moments of the piece, which I was able to really break down and explain in full:

His subtitle, in particular, reads, “When will we finally learn we cannot predict people’s character from their appearance?” The emphasis on the word “finally” establishes the article’s tone, reframing the sentence like a repeated reprimand to an insolent child (i.e. a parent asking, “When will you learn not to play with matches?”). In doing this, Chinoy conveys a great deal of information before his article begins. First, he expresses the fallacy in placing too much stock in people’s appearance. Next, he observes that this faulty methodology is something we, as a society, still attempt to pursue regardless. And last, he highlights the repeated nature of these mistakes and our failure to learn from them. The people reading this article may not yet know the history of facial recognition, but Chinoy’s tone in this one sentence has disclosed everything worth noting: the history isn’t something we should be proud of, and we should know better than to keep trying.

I believe that this section of my analysis demonstrates the successful achievement of the goal of close reading. It offers an articulate observation from the text, a judgment on the significance of the observation, an explanation of what makes the moment successful, and scrutiny of the thick logic behind the inclusion of this subtitle. This section became a template for the other key moments contained in my analysis, and I believe that it allowed me to develop a more meaningful and fluid writing style than the rapid-fire identification of rhetorical elements in my rough draft.

The second writing project for this class—the reference document—provided an opportunity to create something that I had hoped to make for a long time: a guide to accessible to front-end development. Working my past two co-ops, I had frequently observed a lack of regard for accessible web development and often had to correct those oversights myself on the job. Further, I had often discussed the issue with fellow designers and CS majors, only to discover that most Northeastern students were unaware of the

topic's significance. In my cover letter to Dean Carla Brodley, I was able to clearly articulate the absolute necessity of the distribution of the knowledge contained in the reference document:

Accessibility is critical to ensure that software serves users of any ability, disability, or socioeconomic background. Many students graduate with some knowledge of Hypertext Markup Language (HTML) but very few of those students are aware of the careful considerations required for website accessibility. I fear that many students simply do not recognize accessibility as a concern in the development process and therefore do not think to seek out resources on the subject.

In this quotation, I note the vital issue that directly led to the creation of my reference document, and later in the letter, I was able to explain how my reference document solved that issue.

I really think my writing skills were best showcased by the reference document itself. Of particular note is that I did not cite sources for this document. I was pulling directly from my own knowledge and experience with web development. Additionally, I took careful strides to ensure that the document was understandable to web development beginners—particularly people with no CS background whatsoever. The points and guidelines in the paper were carefully organized within a hierarchy and presented with adherence to proper design principles. I did my best to emulate an articulate but simple “textbook” style of writing within the document, and I think that really improved people's ability to understand and apply the material. Last, I think the document really emphasized the importance of the knowledge gap it was trying to fill. When this document was examined by my revision club groupmates, they had few critiques outside of adding some additional pieces of information such as “Further Reading” and “About the Author” sections, which I gladly incorporated. In turn, I attempted to help my group mates achieve the same level of organization and informative simplicity in their own reference documents

My final assignment prior to this reflection was the literature review. Out of all the assignments, I believe this paper—which was written on the rise of artificial intelligence in recruiting practices—best encapsulates the goals of the Interdisciplinary Advanced Writing course compared to my other writing

projects. I chose the topic because it was relevant to both my field of study and my life at that moment—I had just finished searching for co-op and noticed a distinct uptick in AI-based recruiting during my hiring process. For that reason, I wanted to research the issue further, and in order to present a proper literature review, I knew this paper would require careful integration of information from many sources.

Throughout my research, I read and examined a great multitude of peer-reviewed sources, eliminating countless documents until I had collected twenty-one potentially useful academic pieces. I ultimately used eighteen of those sources in the references section of my literature review, citing each one in the Chicago Manual of Style format. The range of sources was quite interdisciplinary—I integrated peer-reviewed content from business journals, computer science journals, law reviews, company distributed business proposals, and HR research dissertations.

I admittedly went over the word limit with this paper, but there were some really interesting points that I wanted to make based on my research findings. Particularly, I wanted to demonstrate the imbalance in research between on why AI in recruiting is useful and the apparent lack of research on whether AI in recruiting actually enables recruiters to find the best employees for open positions. When I discussed the limitations of quantifying employee success using AI, I pointed out “It would be easier to accept a company’s measures of “good employee” qualities if there were data to support that these candidates performed as well or better than past employees after accepting an offer. Companies who use AI in recruiting—such as Unilever—have not yet released such results, instead focusing on the HR time and money saved using the software.” The more I researched, the more I realized just how true this was for all companies who use AI in hiring. Far more research exists, however, on AI’s potential benefits, which have been fleshed out and quantified. A perfect example of this contrast was when Unilever reported that their AI hiring system “narrow[ed] down the list of potential candidates by over 50%” alongside many other clear statistics of the time and finance-based benefits of their software, while, as I

mentioned in the previous quotation, almost no information exists as to whether the employees selected were right for the job.

The literature review also provided a great opportunity to review classmates' work. I believe I provided meaningful advice to revision club groups on how to clarify the more technical aspects of their paper, as well as how to make their literature reviews more comprehensive in the examination of existing literature.

Over the course of the term, I believe I achieved if not exceeded the goals set by the advanced writing course. Though the goals listed weren't relevant to every single writing project, the wholistic collection of work from this course provided opportunities to achieve these goals. Writing to learn and communicate was present in all three projects. By choosing my own topics for many of these projects, I was also able to negotiate audience expectations for my writing. Each project required a certain stance or judgment, and I believe they delivered to satisfaction. My last paper, in particular, required a great deal of inquiry, research, consideration of multiple types of sources, and citation, which covered multiple goals associated with the course. I also put my full effort and attention into both revising my own work and suggesting revisions to my classmate's work. Critical reading was certainly pivotal for revision club as well—and for the first and last projects. And finally, I think I really practiced and honed my control of language and detailed exploration of ideas, which both act as important markers of success and care in the creation of these documents.