

REFLECTION ESSAY

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IDS 493

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1. Introduction

As an interdisciplinary degree undergraduate student, I strive to make connections between the vastly different disciplines of professional writing. Collectively, my courses create a harmonious portfolio. Part of that portfolio is this reflective essay. Self-reflection is a learned skill that helps us analyze our successes and setbacks. The goal of this reflective essay is to establish the main themes of my class assignments. In conjunction with my education experience, I want to connect how these assignments from different disciplines affect my critical thinking skills and professional writing abilities. I will discuss the importance of each artifact and how it relates to my profession. Through the process of self-reflection, these articles helped me create my final portfolio project.

2. Communication

a. Proposal Project (ENGL 436)

I strongly recommend anyone who is pursuing a degree in IDS to take ENGL 436 or Writing for the Government. This course taught me more than I expected. I created a mock proposal for the integration of Artificial Intelligence for my proposal project. Proposals are a form of written communication and a common genre encountered in government workplaces. Dr. Romberger created a prompt for the project: Imagine you are on the Norfolk Grant Management Team, and you are proposing for or against the integration of AI programs. Using the readings from the textbook and presentations from class, I researched how to present my proposal. Having taken previous professional writing courses, I felt prepared for this project. Writing a proposal requires persuasive writing skills. Logos is a rhetorical skill that appeals to the audience's sense of reason. I learned about logos in ENGL 436, IDS 493, and COMM 335W. [It is] a persuasive appeal to support an opinion, argument, or conclusion. By providing logos, I delivered a competitive proposal project. I presented the information logically, appealing to my target audience, my supervisor. Learning this skill has prepared me for proposal writing that I may encounter in my future career.

b. Federal Resume Project (ENGL 436)

I learned the difference between a federal resume and a common resume. Resumes are written communication to potential employers, and they help to make a good first impression. Federal resumes include specifics (Job Posting Number, contact information, etc.) and KSAs. KSAs are Knowledge, Skills, and Abilities. Here, I used ethos, or my credibility and experience, to persuade my audience. KSAs are not specific to federal resumes. This is a valuable skill for any recent graduate or career changer. Many of the skills gained from education or work experience apply to every industry. Soft skills and hard skills are equally important. Purdue Global's article, *Top 8 Soft Skills that Employers Want*, helped me identify desirable skills in my industry.

c. Public Communication Presentation (ENGL 436)

Our final project required strong communication and teamwork. Group projects can be difficult without these skills. We worked together to take a complex government document and make it accessible. Our document for this project was an RFP, or Request for Proposal. We presented a PowerPoint that summarized the RFP for the public. RFPs are not typically open to the public, adding to the challenge. As a team, we created a Gantt chart for the project. The chart outlined clear milestones we needed to reach to complete the project by the set deadline. We used plain language, simple sentences, and focused on clarity. These are concepts I learned not only in this course, but in COMM 335W too. In the end, we accomplished our goal and presented a publicly accessible document to the class. We took the feedback from the class to complete the final edits on our project before submitting for a grade. The feedback gave us an opportunity to self-reflect and make necessary changes. Self-assessment is a typical part of performance reviews. I learned about the power of self-assessment in Module 5.1 of IDS 493. This module stressed the importance of self-reflection, or the first step in self-appraisal. Harvard Business Review's, *Acing Your Self-Appraisal*, by Liz Wiseman, assisted my self-reflection.

3. Research

a. Neo-Aristotelian Criticism Analysis (COMM 335W)

This was the first essay assigned in COMM 335W. I watched a presidential speech and used Neo-Aristotelian Criticism to conduct my analysis. Research papers were not a new genre to me, but I did not understand the methodology. *Messages, Meanings, and Culture: Approaches to Communication Criticism* by Malcolm O. Sillars explained the characteristics of the criticism. Conducting research was the first step in writing my critical analysis. Researching these characteristics is a great way, even for experienced writers, to become comfortable with an unfamiliar genre. I applied these same research skills to my Government Genre Analysis project in ENGL 436, a project that explored the concepts of new genres.

b. Content Analysis (IDS 493)

I completed a content analysis of a job advertisement in IDS 493. I had never conducted this type of research before when applying to online job boards. Purdue's *Understanding Job Ads Part One and Two* helped me realize this assignment. I had completed similar research in the Federal Resume Project for ENGL 436. Performing a content analysis of a job ad provides useful information to the applicant by reviewing its organization, listed requirements, descriptions, and definitions (Purdue University, 2025). This is a valuable skill for a soon-to-be graduate like me and anyone applying for jobs. Performing content analysis of a job advertisement will help me shape my resume to fit the job I want.

c. Meme Analysis (ENGL 307T)

Memes are unavoidable in today's social media-run society. They are a unique form of communication, accomplished without a word. Memes are messages that convey an emotion between the sender and the receiver. For this analysis, I conducted research on the topic of

political memes and their meaning. Research is a valuable skill regardless of the subject, and I always learn through research. Research allows us to make meaningful connections in unexpected places. In COMM 335W, I completed an analysis of political cartoons. It was interesting to see how memes and cartoons both communicated political culture.

4. Digital Writing

a. Social Media Marketing Certification

I earned this certification while taking a course in digital writing. This industry-recognized certification is for Social Media Marketing. Hootsuite Academy provides the course materials to earn the certification. The course gave me access to Hootsuite's core dashboard and app. I demonstrated my skills in content planning, post-scheduling across multiple platforms, and content creation. I used skills that I learned in my digital leadership course at ODU. Digital Leadership stressed digital footprints and why they matter. Our social media leaves a digital footprint, viewable to our friends, acquaintances, and employers. I will always consider these ethics when employing my social media marketing skills.

b. Midterm Project (ENGL 307T)

For our midterm project, I created a podcast with my partner. This project required creative writing skills and critical thinking. I chose the topic of COVID-19 and its effect on how, as a society, we choose our movie-watching experience. We may not consider podcasts as digital writing, but what happens behind the scenes is. I created an outline for my podcast to guide my creative process. I had no control over what the co-host said, but I guided the conversation in the desired direction using prompts. To create my outline, I used the five canons of rhetoric: Invention, Arrangement, Delivery, Style, and Memory. These concepts reappeared in my COMM 335W course this semester. COMM 335W allowed me to apply these concepts to a different platform, rhetorical analysis. *Rhetorical Criticism: Exploration and Practice* by Sonja K. Foss applied these concepts to speeches. Speeches are forms of written and oral communication, and podcasts offer a similar, yet digitized rhetoric.

c. Digital Leadership Reflection Essay (CPD 417)

This quote from Module 5 summarizes what I gained from this assignment: "Self-reflection involves thoughtfully reviewing and evaluating your own work performance over the past year by looking back at your goals, accomplishments, challenges, and growth areas to gain insight into how you performed, what you learned, and how you can continue developing." – Instructor Jessica Stanely. I referenced this project in my development of this reflection essay. I see just how far my writing skills have developed since then. This essay shows my growth in my writing skills and demonstrates the experience I gained in digital leadership. I analyzed my successes and losses throughout the course and documented them in this essay. Documenting my growth allows me to see where I am succeeding and where I need to adjust.

5. Conclusion

In conclusion, the process of self-reflection allows me to make important connections between my assignments and my desired profession. I feel grateful for the opportunity to be a part of such a unique and diverse degree program. An interdisciplinary degree forced me to look at things differently. It is a combination of my education, personal, and professional experience that has gotten me this far. I have gained valuable experience throughout my entire educational career. I feel prepared to re-enter the workforce after seeing my growth from my first semester to my senior year. I explored my creative writing abilities, technical skills, and soft skills, all equally important to becoming a successful professional writer. These assignments challenged my critical thinking skills and, together, make my portfolio an outstanding example of what an interdisciplinary degree student can accomplish.

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