

Reflective Essay

As a community, the English Department is an amazingly supportive conglomerate of invested students and faculty members. As part of this group, I am proud of everything that I have accomplished and of all the achievement that I have witnessed among my peers and instructors. I hope that what I perceive as great success in my undergraduate career – my mastery of the English Department’s goals and objectives – is something that reflects positively on the department.

In choosing evidence from my undergraduate work, I realized that, although different documents have different strengths, the entire collection shows my mastery of the “English Department Program Goals.” These goals (writing, critical reading and analysis, history and theory, collaboration, and research) promote growth in skills vital to being a successful reader writer, academic, and member of society. Although I prove my mastery of each goal using a specific set of papers and projects, all submitted documents are examples of the quality of work that is produced when a number of these goals are met simultaneously.

It is when I look at the portfolio as a whole that I see how much I have been able to achieve and learn over four short years. From *Engl. 101* through my capstone course, *Engl. 489*, I have done so much more than earned a degree. I have learned new ways of looking at the world and at myself that are both personally and professionally rewarding. By learning how to successfully research, collaborate, analyze, theorize, and – of course – read and write, I have become a capable and confident individual. Although each piece of the portfolio demonstrates what I am capable of doing, it is the entire collection that shows me who I have become. I am a writer, a critic, an academic, an editor, a researcher, a linguist. This portfolio is not only a

testimony to what I can do, but it is also a representation of the multifaceted person I have become.

Part of the person I have become is an improved writer. Although I never planned to be a writer in the traditional sense, my courses here at UW-Parkside have required me to grow significantly in this area. When I look at the papers I first composed in *Engl. 101* and *Engl. 266*, I can't believe the same person who wrote those also wrote "Horror Films: Exposing our Old World Fears of Wilderness" or "Intimacy and Gender as Influences in Dyadic Conversational Overlapping." I evolved as a writer during my undergraduate courses, and the person who wrote these later papers is someone who has more fully mastered an ability to effectively communicate through writing. For this, I am very grateful.

My growth as a writer is also seen in the large variety of projects composing the portfolio itself. Much of my growth as a writer has been aimed towards an ability to masterfully respond to vastly different rhetorical situations. Throughout this portfolio, I apply many different theories and strategies to poems, plays, short stories, novels, films, technical documents, discourse, and pedagogical theory. My ability to interpret and evaluate so many different texts and other forms of communication goes a long way in proving my mastery of the English Department's Writing Goal: "students will become writers who know how to employ a wide range of strategies as they write and to use different writing process elements appropriately to communicate with different audiences for a variety of purposes" ("Program Goals"). In particular, I found that three documents, one from *Engl. 247: Introduction to World Literature*, *Engl. 202: Introduction to Technical Writing*, and *Engl. 489: Teaching Composition*, demonstrate my mastery of this Writing Goal.

An ability to communicate through writing is important, but perhaps even more vital to me is the ability to think critically. As a critic, I use many different methods of interpretation and analysis, although not all are included here. After taking *Engl. 266*, I continued applying new strategies and theories to the texts and other media I encountered – inside or outside the classroom. Within this portfolio alone, I apply deconstructionist theory, psychoanalysis, ecocriticism, feminist criticism, reader response, linguistic analysis, and historical analysis. This portfolio is concrete evidence of the variety of interpretation strategies I use, often in combination.

In combination with theory, I use various analysis strategies to help inform and support my claims about each text. From close reading of individual words and sentences to a complete genre analysis, I approach texts and other media from many different perspectives. I examine textual features, such as narrative, and use biographical information to glean subtle re-readings. I draw connections between multiple texts to make points about genre and culture. I use quantitative and qualitative data to help support my claims and sharpen my theses. There is something incredibly exciting about using new ways to approach different materials, which is something I have been fortunate enough to do in our English Department.

Overall, I feel that the portfolio as is represents my mastery of the Writing, Critical Reading and Analysis, and History and Theory goals in part by the variety and quality of the many types of analyses presented. For the Critical Reading and Analysis goal, which states that “students will become accomplished, active readers who value ambiguity and complexity” and who can “demonstrate a wide range of strategies for understanding texts, including interpretations with an awareness of, attentiveness to, and curiosity toward other perspectives” (“Program Goals”), I use one document from each of the following courses: *Engl. 266: Literary*

Analysis, Engl. 354: Young Adult Literature, Engl. 320: Shakespeare, and Engl. 202: Technical Writing. For the History and Theory Goal, which requires students to “develop a comprehensive knowledge of the variety of texts in diverse time periods and in diverse locations, as well as know the critical and historical principles behind the construction of literary, linguistic, and cultural histories” (“Program Goals”), I provide as evidence papers from *Engl. 460: Ecocriticism, Engl. 247: Survey of Modern World Lit, Engl. 320: Shakespeare, and Engl. 487: Sociolinguistics.*

As I previously mentioned, each of the documents submitted could support my mastery of more than one goal. The research and collaboration goals were often met concurrently through many of the projects assigned during courses required for the Professional Writing Certificate. Although all of my assignments and courses within the English Department required some element of collaboration and research, these goals were most prominently met through my writing courses. In this portfolio, I prove my mastery of the Collaboration Goal, which includes an understanding of “how sharing and coordinating ideas sustains and develops the larger intellectual sphere” and “the connection between collaborative learning and their intended professional field(s)” (“Program Goals”).

Perhaps due to the feeling of community and encouragement that I have found to be a staple of the English Department here at UW-Parkside, my experiences with group projects and other forms of collaboration have been very positive. In terms of the quality of collaboration, the documents I have submitted attest to the high quality I have been able to co-achieve in group projects and papers. I have co-authored several different documents, including a research paper, an instruction manual, and a syllabus. These documents are submitted as evidence and are drawn primarily from writing courses, with the exception of *Engl. 487: Sociolinguistics.* I have also

worked with peers to co-edit professional documents, to design handouts and presentations, and to conduct field research. Each of these projects required significant amounts of research that clearly show in the finished product. Through several of these and other documents, I prove that I meet the Research Goal as defined by the English Department: "Students will be able to follow a research process from proposal, research, drafts, to final projects" ("Program Goals").

Although I have reserved more specifics about just how I have met each one of these goals for the individual introductions, I am confident that the entirety of my portfolio reveals my mastery of the skills valued by the English Department. This collection has certainly reminded me of my many and varied accomplishments and has given me a confidence in my ability to continue to expand and apply these skills as I look forward to my graduate studies. This portfolio is something of which I am very proud, and I am very appreciative of the many opportunities provided by the English community here at UW-Parkside. My experiences here have helped me become the skilled writer, reader, critic, artist, academic, editor, researcher, and linguist I am today.

Works Cited

"English Department Program Goals." *English Department*. University of Wisconsin-Parkside,
n.d. Web. 10 Dec. 2013.

Writing Goal

In this essay, I show that I have mastered the English Department's Writing Goal through the following three documents:

- "Different Politics, Same Message: Antiwar & Feminist Sentiments in Two Japanese Works"
- "Philosophy of Teaching Writing"
- Document and Design Plan

In completing my undergraduate coursework, I have been required to write very different documents for very different rhetorical purposes. Among the different rhetorical considerations mastered in the provided documents are the following: citation and formatting mechanics, tone, word choice, visual elements, organization, and medium. Additionally, evidence of conscientious editing for clarity and rhetorical effect is obvious in most of these documents.

In my paper "Different Politics, Same Message: Antiwar & Feminist Sentiments in Two Japanese Works," I use MLA citation and formatting methods appropriate to the discipline of English and as described for the assignment. Following all quotations with the author's last name and the page number from which the quote was obtained, I adhere to the MLA citation format when quoting both secondary and primary sources: "(Rabson 47)." and "(Yosano 2, 12, 17, 26, 40)" (Student, "Different Politics" 1). Additionally, all punctuation is placed outside of citation parenthesis, which is the appropriate convention when using MLA citation².

Within "Different Politics," I also arrange all quotations according to MLA standards. When I quote two lines of the poem "I Beg You, Brother: Do Not Die," I use the backslash dictated by MLA guidelines¹: "What concern is it of yours / If the Russian fortress falls or stands?" (Student 2). Where MLA requires a particular format due to the quoted section being

three lines or longer², I do this as well (Student 2, 10-11). Lastly, I correctly modify tense according to MLA guidelines²: “Shinji is ‘the sun about which her whole world revolve[s]’” (Student 10).

The above examples of successful MLA guidelines in “Different Politics” shows my ability to follow mechanics and formatting guidelines appropriate to the given rhetorical context.

The second document, “Philosophy of Teaching Writing,” was written for a very different purpose. While “Different Politics” was written to argue a close reading and comparison of two works of literature, “Philosophy of Teaching Writing” was written to explain my personal beliefs on a specific topic, that of teaching writing.

As part of my capstone project, “Philosophy of Teaching Writing” demonstrates my ability to use tone and word choice in ways that are appropriate to the given rhetorical context. Using first person narration throughout the document, I choose a personal tone that is consistent with the assignment to express my personal opinions on the given topic. Keeping the document free from contractions and slang, I succeed in using the rhetorical strategy of word choice to produce a professional tone that fits the context of an undergraduate, capstone course assignment.

Given the purpose of the “Philosophy of Teaching Writing” paper, I use appropriate evidence to support my opinions and explain my position clearly. For instance, when explaining my understanding of the writing process as a method of learning and discovery in itself, I say the following:

In addition to providing students with opportunities to experience different modes of writing, I believe that writing can, in itself, be a process of self-discovery. As Berthoff says: “In composing, we make meanings. We find the forms of thought by means of

language, and we find the forms of language by taking thought” (293). Through writing, the writer creates meaning with language (Student, “Philosophy of Teaching” 4)

This document, then, illustrates my ability to use the rhetorical strategies of tone, word choice, and evidence to write successfully for a given rhetorical context that is greatly different from the one in which “Different Politics, Same Message” is written.

Perhaps the best example of my ability to write for a given rhetorical purpose is my document the Getting Started Guide (see “Collaborative Goal” supporting documents). This instruction manual, written for *English 202: Technical Writing*, was a group project completed jointly with two other students. In a forerunner of this document, the Document and Design Plan, my ability to define and write collaboratively for a specific rhetorical context is made evident through both the composition and the content of these documents.

In the first document, the “Document and Design Plan,” the thinking processes behind the final version of the instruction manual, which is included with these documents, is explained. Covering medium, design, and organization, the “Document and Design Plan” directly addresses the rhetorical situation and the strategies proposed to meet it. With my group members, I critically analyzed the rhetorical purpose of the document and made decisions concerning language such as is described in the following excerpt:

Jargon will confuse the younger audience and the older audience, who may not have any experience with guitars at all. Therefore, we aim to eliminate as much of this language as possible from the “Getting Started” guide (Student et al., “Document and Design” 3)

This quote reveals a conscious choice regarding tone and language in response to the rhetorical context. A similar justification of rhetorical strategies is made for both the medium and the visual aspects of the guide (Student et al., “Document and Design” 2, 3).

On the final version of the Getting Started Guide can be seen further rhetorical choices that reflect the documents' purpose, including choice of tone in the introduction on the second page of the document, choice of medium in keeping with genre expectations, and choice of visuals such as fonts, colors, and graphics that adhere to design standards employed by the hypothetical parent company of Squier.

These documents, while examples of a variety of rhetorical strategies, are also examples of my ability to “revise for content and edit for grammatical and stylistic clarity”¹. This is evident both in the low number of grammatical errors which appear in the documents and in my attention to specificity and reiteration. In addition, my editing abilities can be seen throughout this essay and the others included as part of this portfolio.

¹ "English Department Program Goals." *English Department*. University of Wisconsin-Parkside, n.d. Web. 10 Dec. 2013.

² "MLA Formatting and Style Guide." *The Purdue OWL Family of Sites*. The Writing Lab and OWL at Purdue and Purdue U, 2013. Web. 10 Dec. 2013

Critical Reading and Analysis Goal

In this essay, I show that I have mastered the English Department's Critical Reading and Analysis Goal. To do so, I reference the following papers:

- “‘The Gingerbread House’: Under Deconstruction”
- “Identity, Egocentrism & Resolution: Young Adult Literature Tailored to the Adolescent Psyche”
- Sonnet Paper
- Instruction Set Analysis

As an undergraduate English student, I have successfully applied “a wide range of strategies to comprehend, evaluate, and interpret texts”¹. In applying many different theories and perspectives to a variety of texts and other media, I have displayed an adept ability to critically analyze to form new meanings and interpretations. I have engaged in critical reading that required close examination of textual elements, an understanding and awareness of other texts and contexts, a familiarity with genre, and knowledge of language and graphics.

The first paper that proves my ability to use my knowledge of theory, genre, and literary features to interpret texts was written during my freshman year in *Engl. 266: Literary Analysis*. This purpose of this assignment was to explore deconstructionist theory in relation using one of the Grimm fairytales assigned as a reading. Composed so early into my English education, the paper itself bears the marks of a more novice writer than the experienced writer I have become, lacking clarity of direction and presenting a more casual tone than that which I have since adopted. Despite this shortcoming, the content of the paper is solid evidence of my experience with and mastery of the Critical Reading and Analysis Goal.

In “The Gingerbread House: Under Deconstruction,” I explore the ways in which a

postmodern twist on a classic fairytale employs deconstructionist theory: “within the text, we find many incongruities that display deconstructionist philosophies” (Student 1). The first element of deconstruction in the text that I discuss uses intertextuality between Coover's postmodern rendition of Hansel and Gretel and the Grimm predecessor to produce a deconstructionist understanding of language and truth:

According to Nietzsche, we -- as users of language -- have a tendency to categorize the world around us (263). Through this process of categorizing by similarities, we overlook minimal differences between one object and another. All ideas are formed by “equating the unequal,” and “through a forgetting of the differentiating qualities” of one object to another (Nietzsche, 263) (Student, “The Gingerbread House” 2)

Applying Nietzsche's theory to this text shows how “Coover’s “The Gingerbread House” alerts us of this desire to categorize” by both its similarities and dissimilarities to the classic tale (Student, “The Gingerbread House” 1). I conclude that the texts’ “differences are too apparent to allow the illusion of categorizing the two tales together,” by which the text draws our attention to “the tendency to deceive ourselves through categorizing with language” (Student, “The Gingerbread House” 2). This analysis is evidence of my ability to apply theory and intertextuality to a text in order to create a new understanding of that text.

I also offer critical analysis of many of the textual and literary features present in “The Gingerbread House” that create a deconstruction theory of truth: “other characteristics of the story are there to remind us that truth is, in fact, unattainable” (Student 2). Referring to the chronological structure of its narrative, I claim that “reading “The Gingerbread House” is reminiscent of flipping through TV channels; you catch glimpses of plot that cannot possibly belong to the same program” (Student 3). In explaining this phenomenon from the perspective

of deconstruction, I use reader analysis to show how “the reader is baffled when trying to decipher the true state of the characters in the story,” claiming that “truth, after all, is a deception. Nietzsche says that we must resign ourselves to 'obtain[ing] illusions instead of truth'” (Student, “The Gingerbread House” 5). After some further analysis on narrative and chronology, I present my final comparison between deconstruction and the text:

Society is no longer “woven with a single thread” of philosophy (Lyotard 360) ... The chronologically-challenged paragraph formation seen in "The Gingerbread House" prevents a single, underlying unity within the text, illustrating this collapse of metanarratives (Student, “The Gingerbread House 8)

In closely analyzing the narrative structure in terms of coherence and chronology, I demonstrate an ability to analyze textual features for their larger effect in the context of a particular theory.

In “Identity, Egocentrism & Resolution: Young Adult Literature Tailored to the Adolescent Psyche,” I take quite another approach when interpreting two novels. Written as a final paper for *Engl. 354: Young Adult Literature*, this paper proves that I have analyzed textual features and content to form a conclusion about the genre of Young Adult literature as a whole, using both close reading and audience analysis.

“Identity, Egocentrism & Resolution” ultimately claims that, Reflecting the psyche of their intended audience, *Annexed* and *Speak* both display egocentric characteristics, while also dealing with the adolescent issue of identity...these books manage to produce hopeful endings that are typical of the Young Adult genre, while also offering an interesting solution to issues of identity within the text (Student 1).

Using a combined form of reader and psychoanalysis, I make a claim concerning the conventions of a particular genre. This reading of two young adult novels is both qualitative and quantitative,

in that I offer critical analysis of formal textual features of each novel in combination with quantitative data about the genre to support my claims. Doing so illustrates my “ability to recognize” both “how formal elements of language and genre shape meaning” and “how writers can ... fulfill [generic expectations]”¹. Drawing on my own previous experience in psychology courses, I made the connection between particular textual techniques and content to inform my evaluation of these texts.

When discussing the issue of identity as a staple of Young Adult fiction, I draw on a narrative technique found in *Speak*, written in first-person, that subtly draws attention to this issue: “the script-like dialogue reveals to her tendency to assign characters roles... In dictating roles to the other characters, Melinda neglects her own role, demonstrating her clear lack of self-perceived identity” (Student, “Identity, Egocentrism & Resolution” 4). I further analyze the narrative technique and relate it to genre expectations, saying that “it is important to remember who is narrating the events of the two novels – Peter and Melinda. In both *Annexed* and *Speak*, we encounter this first-person narrative style that runs rampant [in] Young Adult literature.” (Student, “Identity, Egocentrism & Resolution” 6). In both of these critical analyses, I not only note the use of a particular literary technique, but I use this data to support my overall claims about these novels and the genre of YA literature.

Overall, “Identity, Egocentrism & Resolution” shows that I can apply formalism, psychoanalytic strategies and my own previous knowledge to interpret and comprehend texts, using this information to make a claim about genre expectations.

My “Sonnet Paper,” written on William Shakespeare’s Sonnet 146, was for none other than *Engl. 320: Shakespeare*. In this paper, I examine the sonnet intertextually and focus on how it “subverts generic expectations”¹.

Drawing connections between sonnet 146 and Biblical text, I show how the sonnet's message is parallel to that found in Christian scripture, an "entreaty for the soul to concern itself with the divine" and focus on "spiritual investments" (Student, "Sonnet Paper" 4). In using the bible to gain a fuller reading of a Shakespearian sonnet, I demonstrate an awareness of both intertextuality and cultural context.

I also discuss in my "Sonnet Paper" how Shakespeare is subverting the expectations of genre by composing a sonnet that, while technically "adher[ing] to the sonnet's meticulous couplet formation," "is not concerned with romantic emotions, but instead works through the issue of death" (Student 2). This critical reading of a famous sonnet shows my ability to apply my knowledge of genre and to evaluate how a text deviates from the norms dictated by genre.

Lastly, the "Instruction Set Analysis" I have included shows my ability to analyze texts that are not at all literary. With a group of two other students in *Engl. 202: Technical Writing*, I analyzed ten sets of instructions for electric guitars as a precursor to creating our own set of instructions that had a similar purpose (included in portfolio under "Getting Started Guide"). This document is an example of my ability to analyze a non-literary text. In analyzing this technical document, I demonstrate my ability to evaluate texts for "graphics," "knowledge of word meaning," context, and medium¹. The strategies I apply include, but are not limited to, my "interactions with other readers and writers"¹.

Showing a sensitivity to language in the "Instruction Set Analysis," I made the observation that:

Many of the manuals provide a friendly introduction to the product, using informal, friendly grammatical choices, such as contractions (Squier, Deco, Bassman, Marshall, Hartke, Champion). The introduction for the Bassman manual, for instance, calls the amplifier's tone "magical." Using these sorts of lexical choices, the introduction

motivates the prospective guitar player, getting them excited about the product. (Student et al. 3)

And yet, as I continue to observe, "other sets such as the Frontman and Sidekick instructions speak a little too plainly; their descriptions are simplified to the point of uselessness" (Student et al., "Instruction Set Analysis" 3). In evaluating these documents, I show my understanding of how the lexical choices and "formal elements of language" can "shape meaning" and have multiple rhetorical effects¹.

Further analysis on the instructions show an evaluation of aesthetics, as we identify several sets of instructions as "less inviting": "right after the table of contents, the reader is immediately greeted by a sheer wall of uninviting text. This text meant to serve as a greeting; instead, it serves as a deterrent" (Student et al., "Instruction Set Analysis" 2). Further, we determine that "each manual is equipped with some sort of graphic representation of the amplifier's respective panels and knobs for adjusting the settings...providing a more or less thorough explanation for each, depending on intended audience" (Student et al., "Instruction Set Analysis" 4). In these sentences can be seen my ability to analyze texts for their aesthetic and visual content.

Our evaluations of language and visual features as are detailed in the "Instruction Set Analysis" were eventually converted into a writing strategy as we composed our own final product, carefully selecting our words and graphics for a less experienced audience.

With these four documents, I prove that I have critically read and analyzed a large variety of texts and used an equally wide variety of strategies to "comprehend, evaluate, and interpret" them¹. Although my portfolio as a whole also goes to support this claim, given the large variety of documents and strategies applied throughout, these three are examples of quite different

¹ "English Department Program Goals." *English Department*. University of Wisconsin-Parkside, n.d. Web. 10 Dec. 2013.

readings applied to very different materials. Offering critical analyses of YA novels, Shakespearian poetry, postmodern short stories, and technical documents, I have mastered the Critical Reading and Analysis Goal.

History and Theory Goal

In this essay, I show how I have mastered the English Department's History and Theory Goal through the following provided documents:

- "Complications with Jaques' Dark World"
- "Different Politics, Same Message: Antiwar & Feminist Sentiments in Two Japanese Works"
- "Horror Films: Exposing our Old World Fears of Wilderness"
- "Linguistic Purism and Prejudice on Facebook"

Many of my undergraduate courses at UW-Parkside have required me to "read texts in relation to their historical and cultural contexts"¹.

In the following papers, it is evident that I have mastered an ability understand texts and other media from vastly different historical and cultural perspectives. In the papers provided, I examine fiction, poetry, film, Shakespearian comedy, and social media in relation to cultural and historical contexts "in order to gain a richer understanding of both text and context"¹. In doing so, I demonstrate a sensitivity towards social context and knowledge of appropriate literary and cultural terminology.

In my paper "Complications with Jaques' Dark World," I begin by immediately referring to the historical and cultural contexts that would provide a meaningful reading of the "seven ages of man" speech in Shakespeare's "As You Like It":

It shouldn't surprise us that as modern day readers of Shakespeare's "As You Like It," we are missing aspects of the play that were no doubt understood by its original audience. It has been suggested that one such instance takes place in the play's 'seven ages of man' speech, wherein the melancholy character of Jaques reflects on man's lifelong journey of

change. Taken at face value, this monologue presents ample opportunity for critique regardless of historical context. But it is when we examine the intellectual and philosophical background in Shakespeare's time that we discover deeper implications and contradictions in this famous portion of literature. (Student 1)

In this introduction, I not only acknowledge the different readings that can be formed when approaching a text in relation to its historical context, but I suggest that looking through a cultural-historic lens illuminates "deeper implications and contradictions" (Student, "Jaques' Dark World" 1), showing that I understand and use this method of analysis to "gain a richer understanding" of the text examined¹. By forming my written discussion of "As You Like It" around the historical and cultural understandings of a particular aspect of the play, I demonstrate that I understand the value of examining texts in light of their social contexts.

Throughout the paper, I continue to use historical insight to help support my argument and to illuminate the text:

That Shakespeare was not the first to segment man's life into seven parts has been readily accepted by scholars over the years (Bradford 171). In fact, it is the planetary system as known in Shakespeare's time that dictated the seven-fold separation (Student, "Jaques' Dark World" 4)

In this quote, I use an outside source to explain the "seven ages of man" speech in relation to the dominant cultural trends in literature and science during Shakespeare's time.

Overall, the historical approach used in "Problems with Jaques' Dark World" shows how I can read, analyze, and interpret texts in relation to their historical and cultural context.

The second paper, "Different Politics, Same Message: Antiwar & Feminist Sentiments in Two Japanese Works" likewise illustrates my mastery of the English Department's History and Theory Goal. In this paper, which was written in response to an open-ended final paper assignment in *Engl. 247: Survey of Modern World Lit*, I use historical and cultural information related to gender, politics, war, and individual authors to support inform my thesis.

In "Different Politics," I show a more mature and complex reading of several texts in their historical and cultural contexts, highlighting the similarities in the messages of both works:

These Japanese works of literature were written by authors with differing ideologies at different periods in Japan's history. Both works, however, lead the reader to the same conclusion about the disastrous consequences of nationalistic war and the submissive and dependent role of women (Student 1).

Support for my thesis requires a very close analysis of the texts and their social contexts. As evidence for a pacifist reading of "I Beg You Brother: Do Not Die," by Yosano Akiko, I quote biographical information about the author and the original reception of the poem as an act of political betrayal (Student, "Different Politics" 3).

However, I go beyond this well-accepted historical understanding of the poem to my own assertion that "the poem also seems to be commenting on traditional gender roles as established in Japan during the Meiji period" (Student, "Different Politics" 4). Pairing biographical and cultural knowledge, I show that "it is more likely that "I Beg You, Brother" and its helpless women are themselves a statement" wherein "[Yosano's] portrayal of women as entirely dependent can only be a protest against such dependence" (Student, "Different Politics" 6). I demonstrate my mastery in understanding the importance of analyzing texts in their historical context when I conclude this particular poem's reading with: "to neglect [Yosano's] outspoken

gender ideologies in a poem that is already so clearly political leaves half of the poem essentially unread" (Student 6). In the rest of the paper, I continue to demonstrate my ability to use historical and cultural facts to inform my close reading.

My ability to think historically and culturally is not limited to textual analysis, however. In "Horror Films: Exposing our Old World Fears of Wilderness," written as a final paper for *Engl. 460: Ecocriticism*, I analyze six horror films to make an informed claim about Western society's current cultural attitudes towards nature: "By selecting a remote woods as the setting to horrific displays of carnage, horror films reveal an inner fear of the wilderness in Western society" (Student 1). This claim differs from the previous two papers in its attempt to define the culture in which I am currently situated, which illustrates my ability to "become more aware of [myself] as situated historically and culturally"¹. In the conclusion to this paper, I explain the implications of my research for both current and future Western cultural ideologies: "A strong cultural tool, the horror film exposes the viewers' hidden wilderness fears and perpetuates an Old World wilderness by using the woods as a recurring setting of unnatural death and disaster" (Student, "Horror Films" 14). This quote shows my attempt at understanding my own current culture and the relationship between film and society.

In "Horror Films," I "demonstrate knowledge and terminology of literary and/or cultural periods"¹. Following prominent ecocritic Greg Garrard, I use the descriptors "Old World" and "New World" to differentiate between the two Western concepts of wilderness. These two terms refer to different periods of ideology concerning wilderness in the history of Western society, which are thought to be historically located.

Another example of my ability to use appropriate terminology in my discussions of culture can be found in my paper "Linguistic Purism and Prejudice on Facebook," which was

written during my time in *Engl. 487: Sociolinguistics*. The assignment itself required us to evaluate the sociolinguistic elements of some aspect of popular culture. For this paper, I chose to analyze the social network Facebook for linguistic prejudices and ideologies.

In my discussion of the linguistic ideologies exhibited on the Facebook page "Grammarly," I use the appropriate terminology "linguistic purism" to describe the attitudes of those who "resist new linguistic terms or structure on the basis that additions or changes sully the language" (Student, "Linguistic Purism" 2). Although this term does not refer to any specific historical or literary period, it is the proper reference to a linguistic – and therefore cultural – ideology.

This paper also proves my ability to "employ theoretical approaches to literary and/or cultural study"¹. In "Linguist Purism," I apply linguistic theory to culture as seen through public discussion on a popular social network site, showing how: "The many comments on Grammarly reveal their respective Facebook users' ideologies about language and those who use it" (Student 1). In my analysis of the Facebook discussions, theory, and secondary sources, I conclude that "whether a certain lexical item is a word is based on communicative ability; whether it is accepted is up to society"(Student, "Linguistic Purism" 7). This shows an informed reflection on my current culture, which meets the English Department's proclaimed goal for students "to become more aware of themselves as situated historically and culturally"¹.

The four papers cited in this essay show my ability to understand and interpret a variety of texts and other using appropriate historical and cultural perspectives. Through my examination of "literary, linguistic, and cultural histories," I show mastery of the History and Theory Goal¹.

¹ "English Department Program Goals." *English Department*. University of Wisconsin-Parkside, n.d. Web. 10 Dec. 2013.

Research Goal

In this essay, I prove that I have mastered the Research Goal as required by UW-Parkside's English Department. Although all of my English courses have required research, I use the following papers to show that I have met this goal:

- "Intimacy and Gender as Influences in Dyadic Conversational Overlapping"
- "The Effects of Exporting E-Waste"
- Annotated Bibliography

As a final paper for *Engl. 487: Sociolinguistics*, "Intimacy and Gender as Influences in Dyadic Conversational Overlapping" was co-authored by myself and another student in the course. The draft I will be referring to is a revised version of the original, which I substantially edited before submitting as a contestant for the Teresa Peck Award.

"Intimacy and Gender" was composed in response to the course assignment to conduct both scholarly and field research and report our findings. In this paper, my and my peer's ability to "identify and formulate questions for productive inquiry" is apparent throughout¹. In the paper's abstract, the impetus and hypotheses behind the study are clearly stated:

Based on previous studies, the hypothesis was formed that: the rate of overlap between a couple will increase as they become more intimate and their social anxiety lessens. The second hypothesis of this study sought to determine whether a greater equality between sexes in recent decades has influenced simultaneous speech between males and females (Student and Other 1)

In this section, we present a hypotheses informed by other scholarly work done in gender and linguistics. By working from both our own understanding of culture change and the scholarly research we conducted, we formed a new hypothesis concerning cultural and emotional

influences on language change. Because much of the research on this topic was conducted more than a decade ago, our research was productive in its attempt to reevaluate the current situation.

This impetus and our hypotheses also reveal our ability to "evaluate sources for credibility, bias, quality of evidence, and quality of reasoning"¹. In conducting our research for this project, we noted that many years had elapsed since the original studies on the subject. After finding the sources credible, we evaluated these sources for their applicability in today's culture, concluding that further studies should be undertaken to determine any corresponding shift between dyadic discourse and society's continually shifting gender roles.

Although both hypotheses were disproven by the data we collected, our research was still productive in that "the results oppose[d] many other studies' findings" (Student and Other, "Intimacy and Gender" 9). The conclusion of our study was, also, productive in that it showed that "on average, men interrupt/overlap less as the relationship continues," which "suggests an interesting relationship between our social and linguistic variables" that are further described in the Results & Discussion portion of the paper (Student & Other, "Intimacy and Gender" 9).

"Intimacy and Gender" also provided us with an opportunity to practice citation methods in a field other than literary studies. In all of our citations, Other Student and I used the appropriate APA formatting. For instance, when citing direct quotations with multiple authors, we followed the format prescribed²: "(P. Blumstein et al., 1985, p. 42)" (Student and Other 1). At another point, we again quote directly and use proper citation methods¹ by including the authors' names and the publication information: "In a study conducted by Natale, Entin and Jaffe, it was found that 'speech interruptions correlate positively with intimacy' (1979, p. 875)" (Student and Other 3). Lastly, when general observations are made, we include the appropriate information in the prescribed manner²: "previous studies have found that men interrupt significantly more than

women (Natale et al., 1979) (Kollock, Blumstein, & Schwartz, 1985) (Wardhaugh, 2010)" (Student and Other 3). By following these proper citation methods, I demonstrate an ability to "use citation methods and structures appropriate to their field of study"¹.

Overall, the assignment and resulting paper in *Engl. 489: Sociolinguistics* was a good opportunity to both "formulate questions for productive inquiry" and to follow up on those questions with quantitative and qualitative data analysis. The study itself was productive in its attempt to understand gender and relationships as they relate to conversation in our current society.

The second paper I have submitted as evidence for my mastery of the "Research Goal" is "The Effects of Exporting E-Waste," composed during *Engl. 201: Advanced Composition* in response to a cause/effect paper prompt. In this relatively short paper, I inform the reader on the current situation regarding the treatment of E-waste (electronic waste) both in the United States and abroad, where E-waste is often sent. In this paper, I illustrate my ability to evaluate sources by using appropriately recent and academic sources.

In selecting my sources for "E-Waste," I was careful to select the most recent sources available, given my purpose to inform the reader on the current practices regarding electronic waste in the United States. On the Works Cited page for the paper, my oldest source is from 2007, while the other three sources are from 2012 or later (Student, "E-Waste" 7). Also, the journals from which three of the four sources are collected have extremely relevant concentrations, including the "*Journal Of Industrial Ecology*," "*Environmental Science & Technology*," and "*Waste Management and Research*" (Student, "E-Waste" 7). Only three of the four sources used in "E-Waste" are from scholarly journals, as using scholarly sources was mildly discouraged by the professor. However, I selected appropriate sources because of my

undergraduate instruction prior to taking *Engl. 201*. Given the expository purpose of the paper, the information presented needed to be as recent and as trustworthy as possible, which informed my decision.

"E-Waste" ultimately shows my ability to locate and use quality sources based on a critical evaluation of their date of publication and credibility. It also shows my commitment to doing so, regardless of the original parameters of the assignment.

For my final document reflecting my mastery of the Research Goal, I have submitted an annotated bibliography. As part of my independent study, *Methods of Linguistic Analysis*, with Dr. Spartz, I was required to submit an annotated bibliography. I have included it here because it shows my ability to evaluate sources.

The purpose of this bibliography was to help inform the article Dr. Spartz and I are co-authoring on the research conducted during my assistantship and independent study. After scouring the databases for obscure articles on the relationship between adjectives and adverbs and the morphology-syntax interface, I was able to put together a bibliography that is sound in its credibility and quality. So much so, that this bibliography will be heavily drawn upon for the literature review portion of the forthcoming article on adjectivization.

My mastery of the English Department's Research Goal is supported by my ability to evaluate sources and my active approach to research, illustrated in each of the documents presented here.

¹ "English Department Program Goals." *English Department*. University of Wisconsin-Parkside, n.d. Web. 10 Dec. 2013.

² Conventions followed for APA formatting are those found in Diana Hacker and Barbara Fister's "Research and Documentation: Online" published by Bedford St. Martins: http://bcs.bedfordstmartins.com/resdoc5e/RES5e_ch09_o.html

Collaborative Learning Goal

In the following essay, I show how I have mastered the Collaborative Learning Goal established by the English Department at UW-Parkside. I use the following papers as evidence that I have met this goal:

- Getting Started Guide
- Postmortem: Syllabus Revamp Project
- Recommendation Report Final Edit
- "Intimacy and Gender as Influences in Dyadic Conversational Overlapping"

Many of my courses at UW-Parkside have required some type of collaborative element. All upper-level literature courses that I have taken provided many opportunities to "engage in thoughtful and critical debate"¹. These courses include but are not limited to *Engl. 460: Ecocriticism*, *Engl. 467: Post-apocalyptic Literature*, and *Engl. 367: African American Women Writers*. Each of these courses required students to engage in critical peer discussion regarding the class material, and these and many others implemented some level of peer review. While the literature courses provided peer review and discussion time to foster collaboration, I found that my most collaboration-intensive courses were those taken for the Professional Writing Certificate.

In *Engl. 202: Introduction to Technical Writing*, I worked with two other students to complete an instruction set assignment. We chose to create a Getting Started Guide to a Squier Pack, a guitar ensemble that includes both a guitar and an amplifier. This guide is meant to assist consumers in setting up and using their instruments.

In composing the Getting Started Guide, I had to work with my two other group members in many group meetings, through online co-editing over Google Docs, and during class time. For

this project, much peer review was required, due to the technical nature of the deliverable. Each member completely reviewed every part of the project before it was submitted, suggesting revisions and making edits where necessary to produce a final, error-free, and rhetorically sound deliverable. Considering the many weeks spent on the project, the time and energy contributed, and the peer work required, the Getting Started Guide illustrates my ability to "produce quality collaborate projects"¹.

Engl. 402: Advanced Technical Writing also required a very large amount of collaboration. The course implemented several group projects that required extensive amounts of collaborative writing, editing, and decision-making. One such project was the Syllabus Revamp, in which we were asked to revise the professor's course syllabus. For this assignment, we worked with a partner. From the document I have provided, which is a reflection on the project and the collaboration involved, it is apparent that I am able to engage in collaboration effectively through respectful time management and communication.

One of the difficulties of group work is finding a time when all group members can meet. For the Syllabus Revamp, "Other Student and I had a bit of a challenge in arranging our schedules, but we were both patient and understanding" (Student, "Postmortem" 6). As I say in the Postmortem, "time management was essential with this project, as I worked a 44 hours on the last weekend before the project was due" (Student 7). However, "Other Student and I had both worked ahead when we had free time," illustrating our commitment to the project and to our teamwork (Student, "Postmortem" 7). On pages 5-6 of the Postmortem, there is a time management outline detailing exactly which parts of the project were completed on which day, showing my ability to effectively collaborate through conscious time management.

Throughout the Syllabus Revamp project, "I tried to be especially considerate in

communicating with Other Student about my progress on the project or my availability"

(Student, "Postmortem" 6). For this project, as with all group projects, communication was vital to its success. My partner and I were committed to effective communication, exchanging phone numbers, sending e-mails, and using Facebook. Without effectively communicating, we would not have been able to manage our time or make progress with the assignment.

Lastly, during the Syllabus Revamp project I was able to not only listen and critique my partner's ideas, but I also asserted my own changes and contributions to the project. Most of the rhetorical decisions surrounding the project were made jointly, and none were made without previous discussion. Concerning our choice of font size for the document produced, I asserted my choice based on previous experience with technical writing and audience in general:

"Although Other Student originally chose a 10 pt. body font, I insisted on no less than 11pt. and ended up selecting a 12 pt. font" (Student, "Postmortem" 2). At another point:

I also suggested the move of the course title/heading from the right side of the syllabus to the left. I made this rhetorical choice based on our discussion in 202 on the reading habits of American readers...We also moved the UW-P logo to the top left, but moved it back per Other Student to the right side to balance out white space on the final version of the document. (Student, "Postmortem" 2)

In this paragraph, I not only make my own informed contributions to the project, but I work with my partner in doing so. We were able to make a successful project, which received an "A" grade, by collaborating effectively. Overall, the *Engl. 402* Syllabus Revamp project and resulting Postmortem shows my ability to collaborate effectively through time management, communication, and discussion of ideas.

A group project from *Engl. 487: Advanced Professional Editing* perhaps most clearly

shows my ability to effectively peer review. With a partner, we were asked to edit another group's work. These other students were from *Engl. 402: Advanced Technical Writing*, and the document they provided was a lengthy recommendation report. With my partner, I electronically edited this document using Microsoft Word's "Track Changes" function.

Several methods of peer review were used in editing the recommendation report for the other student group, as we made and suggested both holistic and mechanistic edits. My contributions are marked in red, and my partner's in blue. Throughout the Recommendation Report, I make suggestions for revision based on clarity (3, 4, 5), credibility (2, 3), tone (2, 4), accuracy (4, 6), and consistency (9, 11). I did this throughout the document in joint consultation with my partner. In our final report to the group, we also offered several suggestions regarding organization.

Lastly, my group work during *Engl. 487: Sociolinguistics* illustrates my ability to collaborate through critical discussion, peer review, and overall project quality. For the final project in this course, students were required to choose a partner with whom to conduct research and produce a final paper. Partnering for this project, Other Student and I chose to perform discourse analysis, concentrating on how gender and intimacy effect a heterosexual couple's speech patterns, particularly their tendency to interrupt or overlap one another while talking. The paper resulting from this research project, "Intimacy and Gender as Influences in Dyadic Conversational Overlapping," is an example of quality collaboration.

The paper itself, which required plenty of peer review between the two of us, was co-authored. Both Other Student and I contributed to the research cited in the paper, as well as to the way the data is interpreted, providing two different readings of the data collected (Student and Other, "Intimacy and Gender" 9-12). We then worked to integrate each section into a

seamless narrative. The final rendition of the paper, after some editing, was honored with the Teresa Peck Award, showing the high quality of this collaborative project.

The collaboration I have been required to do during my time as an English major has been very beneficial for both personal growth and for the quality of my projects. My experience shows that I have been able to engage in effective peer review and collaboration, producing quality projects and papers for multiple rhetorical purposes.

¹ "English Department Program Goals." *English Department*. University of Wisconsin-Parkside, n.d. Web. 10 Dec. 2013.