**Introduction**

Top of FormHigh school English class was always a breeze for me. All you had to do was have a topic sentence, some concrete details with commentary, and a conclusion sentence, right? That was true until my junior year when I took AP Language and Composition with Mrs. Phelps. That class truly taught me how to write well. It was an analysis-based class so I developed my analytic skills well but never really had to think of who my audience was. My audience was always my teacher, which meant my papers were somewhere in between a formal and casual tone. A bit awkward I would say. I developed my writing more during my senior year when I had to write my personal statement for college applications. This helped me develop my “show not tell” skills and I was able to put that in to my writing skill set.

            Coming out of high school and into college, I was nervous about those daunting 15 page papers that I knew were coming for me. Fall quarter I was in a history class that had two papers throughout the quarter that were around six pages each. Seemed easy enough to me. But when the time came for me to begin writing my paper, I felt completely lost with no starting point anywhere in sight. I had to go to my TA and ask him for some guidance, which ended up helping me be very successful in the class. Even with the success I had with the two papers in the class I still felt as though my writing wasn’t up to par with what I wanted. I knew I was a decent writer, my grades showed me that, but I wasn’t a confident writer and that’s what I truly wanted.

            Then winter quarter came and I walked in to my English 131 class. From the beginning I knew that this would be the class that taught me how to become a conscious, confident writer. Throughout the quarter I gained a multitude of skills. From audience to tone to claims, I was building an arsenal of writing skills that would help me throughout the rest of my life. The most I gained out of this class was the ability to cater my paper to a specific audience and/or discipline and the confidence that I could successfully write a college-level paper.

            The outcomes of this course really helped me acquire these new skills and forced me to become a conscious writer. I feel like my SA1, MP1, and MP2 are all works that I have done that demonstrate my ability to fulfill each of the course outcomes. This portfolio serves to display my abilities to fulfill each outcome and what I have improved in my writing through this class.

Bottom of Form

## Outcome 1

Top of Form

          Outcome 1 focuses on knowing your genre. This includes the audience, tone, and specific rhetorical choices that best cater to your genre of choice. It is necessary to know what you are writing to in order to successfully write a piece that will fit into that genre. You can’t write a news article in the form of a scholarly piece, it would be too hard to understand and full of jargon. Knowing who your audience is a skill that is crucial in writing, since not all papers can be written exactly the same. Another big part of Outcome 1 is realizing that metacognition is a big part of writing. Metacognition is basically thinking about your thinking. You must be consciously thinking about your writing choices as you are writing in order to make that piece rhetorically match your genre. My SA1 is a good example of my ability to demonstrate Outcome 1 because the SA1 was made up of two different genre pieces about the same topic. My topic was long distance relationships and my two genres were a diary entry and a how-to piece for a women’s magazine. With these two genres I had to constantly think, “Who am I writing this to?” for me to be able to keep my writing fluid and targeted at the genre and audience I chose.

           For the diary entry I struggled at first with the tone and making it feel like a true diary entry. It was hard for me to do this because it is a personal topic for me and I felt somewhat awkward writing my deepest, darkest feelings to my English professor. Nevertheless I was able to overcome that issue and truly target the genre of a diary entry. A major problem I had was that in general, my writing felt rigid and it seemed as though I was holding back a bit. In this sentence: “Today we argued about what I should get for dinner. Stupid stuff like that seems to create fissures in our relationship” (1), the work “fissures” is strange and isn’t something a person would say in their diary. They would say something more along the lines of “Stupid stuff like that is just pulling us apart” (1), that is how I changed the sentence to make it sound more like a teenage girl complaining about her relationship problems. Another sentence that has problems was this: “The stretches of time that we can’t see each other are painful and feel like an eternity, but when we are together it’s magical and wonderful" (1), this sentence sounds forced and doesn’t mesh with the complete feel of the entry. In order to make this sentence fit better in to my genre of “Teenage Girl Complaining to Her Diary”, I changed the wording. The sentence now reads, “The time that we can’t see each other is awful and feels like forever, but when we are together it’s like nothing has changed” (1). I also made the choice to leave out the partner’s name in the entry. At first I made this choice because I felt strange putting in a name because of my own relationship, but when my instructor commented that it was a bit strange, I thought about it and I always had put the person’s name in my own diary when I wrote about them. Because of that, I decided to put the name “John” as the partner’s name to make the piece more personal and fit into the genre.

           In the how-to piece, I struggled less with staying with the genre. The main thing that I had to change about the piece was adding a small introduction in the beginning. My instructor advised that I add a short intro to introduce the topic and what I was going to advise the reader about. The introduction asks the reader, “Are you in the midst of a long distance relationship?” (2) to make it obvious that I was going to give a how-to on long distance relationships. I also described that this piece will help “revamping” (2) your long distance relationship. By making these changes I made the piece fit more into the genre of how-to’s. I also have a list of five major things that can help improve a long distance relationship. In one of the points, I clarify that this piece is directed towards women in a long distance relationship: “Take a yoga or cooking class to have some fun, and girls just wanna have fun, right?” (2) By adding the comment about girls, I clarify that this article is aimed at women.

           All in all my SA1 effectively demonstrates my ability to do a genre analysis and then utilize my own skills to effectively write a piece under that genre. The way that I edited my SA1 to shift both pieces more towards their respective genres show cases that I am able to write with awareness and be conscious of what choices I am making as I write a piece. Each genre has different conventions that would normally be used when writing in that genre, I have showed my ability to do this in my SA1.

Bottom of Form

## Outcome 2

## Outcome 2 focuses on sources and how the sources are used in the text to support the argument. It is split into five subparts: understanding the sources well, applying the rhetorical strategies of the sources into our own work, effectively employing intertextuality throughout the piece, using a variety of sources to support the argument, and correctly using MLA formatting. Being able to understand your sources and integrate them into your own argument is important for all kinds of writing, especially academic writing. The purpose of academic writing is to “add to the conversation” of the discipline. In order to do this, you must understand every facet of your sources; the argument, the rhetorical choices, and how to use the information in your own argument. Outcome 2 looks for the writer to use their sources effectively and create an argument using the information in the sources to deepen the argument. This outcome also includes the use of MLA formatting in the paper. Being able to properly cite sources is crucial to all writing, because you don’t want to be accused of plagiarism, especially if you’ve gone to great lengths trying to avoid it. Also, citations give the reader the information they need to look at the actual sources to broaden their understanding of the topic. Especially important to Outcome 2 is intertextuality, which is putting various sources in conversation with each other as well as your own arguments. My MP2 is a piece that adds to the “conversation” of the scholarly field it is in. I feel as though my MP2 demonstrates my ability to use texts to support and drive my argument by integrating their arguments with my own.  I also use MLA citation in this paper, since it’s an academic piece.

            In my MP2 I have multiple pieces of evidence that show I understood my sources and was able to use rhetorical strategies from the sources in my paper. Most of the sources I found were informative and precise. I used employed these rhetorical choices in my own piece as well. For example, on page five of my MP2, I stated:

Young children have a higher need for warm and secure living conditions in order for them to develop correctly mentally and emotionally. Homeless families are normally in an unstable state both physically and emotionally, as they have no stable living situation and are most likely running from an abusive father and husband (Haber et al 135).

This chunk of my MP2 displays my ability to understand my sources and integrate the rhetorical choices I see into my own work. This is a quote from the original source, Haber and Toro’s “Homelessness Among Families, Children, and Adolescents: An Ecological–Developmental Perspective”:

It has been noted that many parents who are homeless do not have their children with them while in the shelter, perhaps because they wish to protect them from the harshness of being homeless... Among families that are homeless, many prior housing moves are also common… Cohen and Toro (1999) found that domestic violence tended     to be present as a risk factor more frequently among Whites (many of whom were from suburban areas) whereas poverty was a more frequent risk factor among African Americans (most from urban areas).

In this quote, there is a rhetorical choice that I was able to use in my own piece, conciseness and precision. In the quote, the authors are very specific about who and what they are discussing with sentence structures that vary in length to fully explain their point. I my quote from my MP2 I used different lengths of sentences to be able to explain the problem. Although I cut down on the length of the information, I was able to effectively consolidate it into my own words and apply it to my argument.

            Another example of my understanding of my sources is on page four, where I examine a study done on policies and homelessness. I effectively summarize the study: “They found that policies must be put in place that are clear and are available to the public in order for homeless mothers to know what options they have for housing and food options for their children (Brush et al 2).” Then I relate it back to the Seattle Union Gospel Mission and their 2014 Annual Report to support my argument that the policies need to be implemented in the UGM and that it could be possible with their annual support and revenues (4). This is also an example of intertextuality, using the texts in conversation with one another. Intertextuality shows a complete understanding of the texts because in order to use the sources together, the writer must understand the arguments of the texts.

            In my MP2 I used a multitude of sources to support my argument about women and children’s centers in the Seattle Union Gospel Mission. Some of the sources were scholarly and others were from different Union Gospel Mission locations and their information. I was able to use multiple sources in each paragraph and to support my argument as a whole. I cited a study done by the National Center on Family Homelessness that is an example of how I am advising Seattle’s UGM to construct their own women and children’s housing services. While I explained that project, I also brought in another source, Brush et al, who did a study on policies and family homelessness (3-4). These two sources work together well to contribute to my own argument because they prove that policies must be clear to the families in the shelters in order for them to have access to everything the shelter offers for them. My use of these sources also make it clear that I am able to use them both in conversation with each other and myself. I explained that UGM needs to utilize the ideas of spreading knowledge of policy from Brush et al and also use the techniques from the project SHIFT (3-4). I was able to use all of the sources in a conversation that drove my argument.

            Outcome 2 also requires that we are able to use a variety of sources, not only scholarly sources but also news articles or websites that are not scholarly but can add to the conversation as well. In my MP2 I used many different sources to contribute to my argument. I used three scholarly sources that included studies on different aspects of homelessness to get a good picture of what family homelessness is (2-5). I also used a few different Union Gospel Mission sources to support my argument surrounding the Seattle Gospel Mission (1-5). Throughout the paper and on the works cited page I used MLA formatting to fulfill Outcome 2.

            My MP2 shows my ability to understand, use, and cite sources in many different genres of writing. My sources are used wisely and are integrated into my piece of the conversation surrounding this topic. This piece also includes MLA formatting throughout.

Bottom of Form

## Outcome 3

Top of Form

          A big reason that Outcome 2 is so crucial is the way that its goals support the goals of Outcome 3. In both outcomes, the main point is to synthesize evidence and form an argument using that evidence. Outcome 3 builds off of Outcome 2 because Outcome 3 uses the sources and intertextuality to create a complicated argument. In Outcome 3, the main stress is on the complexity of the argument and by using your understanding of the sources you can integrate them into your argument and create a deeper argument that involves multiple sources in a conversation with one another.

            Outcome 3 is focused on creating a complex argument. A complex argument must contain a complex claim which has: A claim, stakes, evidence, a counterargument, and a roadmap. Each piece must be used in the complex claim in order to make it elaborate and multifaceted. Three of the bullet points of Outcome 3 are included in the “Big 5” of a complex claim. The other two bullet points include an analysis of the sources and effective organization---how the entire paper is working toward making a complex argument. This outcome also stresses the importance of avoiding binary thinking in the argument. This means that the argument is not black and white, it is nuanced and deep. It’s not about taking sides on a position but trying to understand how or why that issue exists. Finally, this outcome gives the writer the ability to write an argument that is able to become part of a “conversation” in an academic discipline. I think my MP2 is the best piece to showcase for this outcome because it includes each component of Outcome 3.

            The claim that I make in my MP2’s complex claim is, “Seattle's Union Gospel Mission must allocate a majority of its funds to the homeless women and children programs they have.” (2) This is the most basic form of my argument. The stakes in my claim are numerous, but I specifically state in my complex claim that these “families [are] running from abusive fathers and husbands” and “these families consist of young mothers, around their 20's, and their small children ages ranging from 0-5 years (Haber 134)" (2). The stakes I put in my claim add pathos and also show the reader that my argument matters because it describes the real dangers that these families face. I also provide evidence for my claim and stakes when I write, “these families consist of young mothers, around their 20's, and their small children ages ranging from 0-5 years (Haber 134)” and “young children of homeless families have a much higher need for nutrient-rich food (Mayo) and a safe place to sleep” (2). These two sentences use studies that have looked at the needs of children and the dynamics of homeless families effectively using a bit of evidence to support my claim. While one offers a concrete definition of the term “homeless family”, the other specifically states the needs of homeless families. I also include a counterargument in my claim: “Homeless men and women also need secure living areas and healthy meals, but the young children of homeless families have a much higher need for nutrient-rich food (Mayo) and a safe place to sleep” (2). This shows that I have also looked at the issue of homeless adults and concede to the fact that they are also in need, but then I use a rebuttal that children need even better care in order to develop correctly. Finally, I include a roadmap that tells the reader where I am going with my paper and how I will examine this issue: “In this paper, I will use research on homeless shelters, costs of emergency housing plans, and the dynamics of homeless families to improve understanding of the needs of these families and the best ways to give them the specific resources they need to get off and stay off the streets” (2).

            The demonstration of close analysis and understanding of my sources is displayed throughout my paper through my analysis of these sources and intertextuality to drive my own argument. I feel I was able to understand and effectively analyze Bassuk et al’s article, “The Service and Housing Interventions for Families in Transition Longitudinal Study”, in this piece. This source was the basis of all of my information about the different types of housing that can be offered by homeless shelters. On pages three and four I examine this source and utilize the information I got out of it to benefit my argument. I am able to explain to the reader how this study can be used by the Seattle Union Gospel Mission to create a women and children’s housing plan for their own shelter, thus synthesizing it into my own argument (3-4). My evaluation of this source helps to make my argument more complex and less binary. I use the information in the source to add to my argument and make it go deeper than just supporting or refuting the housing plans.

            Finally, Outcome 3 states the organization of the piece needs to be intentional. You can’t just throw some paragraphs on a paper randomly and expect it to be a good paper. In my MP2 I organized my piece in a certain way so that each paragraph built off the previous one. I begin by introducing family homelessness in the Seattle area and what Seattle’s UGM does. This simply shows the reader what I will be discussing and determines if it will be of importance to them or not. I follow the introduction with my complex claim, immediately telling the reader what I am arguing and how I will examine my topic. Following the complex claim, I introduce a couple of other Union Gospel Mission locations that have different women and children’s centers to show the multiple ways Seattle’s UGM could lay out their women and children’s system. Then I go into explaining the different types of housing and the housing study, SHIFT (3) to examine this as a possible plan for Seattle to integrate into their shelters. Since my argument is also focused on making the policies of the shelter known to the homeless, my next paragraph examines a study done surrounding policies and homeless shelters. Finally, I offer a counterargument about homeless adults’ need for a safe place to live. I refute this argument with more information of children’s needs and putting the children above the adults. My organization is intentional, each paragraph builds off the other, each one going deeper into my argument.

            I believe my complex claim in my MP2 effectively shows my ability to write a complex claim. It includes all five parts of the “Big 5” and avoids binary thinking with an intricate and nuanced argument.

Bottom of Form

## Outcome 4

Top of Form

            Outcome 4 is all about revision and using edits to revise your paper to the best paper it can be. We have done a couple of peer reviews and our instructor has given us feedback on all of our pieces in order to help us revise them. Outcome 4 also stresses the ability to fix lower-order concerns that are distracting to the reader and bring the piece down as a whole. Lower order concerns are small mistakes in a paper that tend to distract the reader. Fixing these problems puts the fishing touch on the paper and makes it a polished final product. Demonstration of Outcome 4 requires a full revision of the paper and explaining how the revisions improved the paper. This does not necessarily mean that the paper needs to be completely torn apart and put back together again, it means that the writer must be able to fix problems with his or her paper depending on the feedback given.  In my SA4 I made revisions that show case my ability to edit my paper both with peer and instructor feedback and eliminating lower-order concerns. Although we didn’t do a peer review with this piece, I feel as though I used Denise’s feedback well when I edited to the higher-order concerns.

            There were a few issues with my annotated bibliography that stood out. In the last two annotations I didn’t explain how I would use the sources in my MP2. I just summarized the articles and left it at that. I needed to explain how and why I would use the sources in my paper. On pages three and four I examined how I would use the two sources in my final piece. For example, in the paragraph about the policymaking study on pages three and four, I stated "This study will help drive my argument because it was found that homeless shelters do not advertise their policies and mothers of homeless families are unsure of what they will get from the shelter. I can use this information to build my case about implementing policies that are easy to understand and clearly stated in the shelter." I revised this paragraph so that I explain how I plan on using my source, which is one of the major parts of the annotated bibliography. The feedback I was given by my instructor shed some light on that and I was able to fix the problem. I also had a bit of a problem with being concise and precise with my words. That was also brought to my attention by the feedback given by my instructor. In one paragraph I stated “this website is particularly helpful when looking for the aid that is offered to homeless families living on the streets of Seattle” (2) and the comment by my instructor read, “in general or by this organization specifically?” I realized that although this sentence made sense to me, other people may get confused by what I was trying to say. To be more precise, I changed the sentence to “This website is particularly helpful when researching what types of aid this organization offers to homeless families living on the streets of Seattle.” This made it clear that I was only focusing on UGM in Seattle and I cleared up some of the language to make it more concise. Higher-order concerns are extremely important to fix because they are problems with the piece as a whole, and it can make the piece not follow the prompt as well as it could. Lower-order concerns are also a major revision because they are very distracting to the reader and take away the credibility of the author.

             I had a few lower-order concerns that I needed to clean up, a couple sentences had missing words and run on sentences. I didn’t notice these issues until they were highlighted by my instructor in her feedback. I had to do a couple revisions to make the sentences make sense. “Most families and driven to the street by an abusive father and husband” (1) doesn’t make any sense. What I meant to say and what I changed the sentence to is: “Most families are driven to the street by an abusive or unstable father and husband.” (1) Another sentence with wording problems was this: “All three authors work in School of Nursing at the University of Michigan” (3), this sentence doesn’t make sense either, it sounds like caveman talk. So, I added a “the” to the sentence to bring it back into the 21st century: “All three authors work in the School of Nursing at the University of Michigan” (3). I also had a problem with run-on sentences, this problem was brought up by my instructor. In one sentence, I just put a comma instead of a period: “This site is concerned with the health and well-being of homeless families, it explains that homelessness can be highly stressful on a family and can cause the family to ‘dissolve’” (3). Instead of making this one long sentence, I followed my instructor’s suggestion and added a period in between “families” and “it”. These lower-order concerns played a major part in my credibility, people aren’t going to trust a piece that forgets or misplaces words in some of the sentences or doesn’t use correct grammar.

           Overall, I feel like my SA4 has been revised well and hits all the major points of Outcome 4. I used my instructor’s feedback and was able to do some line edits to make sure the final piece didn’t have any blatantly obvious issues that are distracting to the reader. I made sure to re-read my piece multiple times to make sure I fully revised all of the problems that it had in the beginning.

Bottom of Form

## Conclusion

Top of Form

          Throughout this class, I have learned so much more than rhetorical analysis and “show not tell”. My high school classes gave me some basic writing skills that I thought would be enough to get through college. But I was wrong. English 131 has taught me so much about being a conscious writer and what that term even means. I learned how to cater to a specific audience and genre which is something I didn’t have much experience doing. Also, learning how to use intertextuality was something that I knew how to do but I needed to polish my skills. Now I am confident that I could write an academic paper and use multiple texts in conversation with one another. One thing that was brand new to me in this class was complex claims. I had never heard of a complex claim before and I think it would have been really helpful to know about them. Complex claims make your argument more elaborate and multifaceted instead of black and white. The ability to avoid binary thinking was something I was able to do before this class, but after writing complex claims and making sure I avoided a binary argument I am sure that I can write a complex argument that drives a conversation of a topic forward. Finally, we practiced revision. I had done peer revision a hundred times in high school, but the instructor feedback was different. I enjoyed having the feedback rather than a straight grade and I think that was helpful when I was editing my papers for this portfolio. Even though I may not have peer reviews or instructor reviews in future classes, the suggestions and feedback I was given during this course has made me more conscious of my writing. I can look at my papers and see both higher-order and lower-order concerns that need to be fixed. As a whole, this class definitely prepared me for the rest of my college career.

            The thing that I will keep with me the longest from this class is my confidence. All I wanted was to become confident in my writing skills and to be able to write a “shitty first draft” and not feel like an awful writer. I can now say that I am much more confident in my writing. I think I will be able to write consciously and understand why I am writing what I am writing. I truly appreciate everything that was taught in this class, even down to how to format an essay correctly. Thank you for all your hard work and effort you have put into this class. I am most definitely going to remember a lot of things from this class that will help me throughout my life.

Bottom of Form