An Example of an Outstanding Outcome Reflection

(Outcome 2)

 The second outcome for this class involves reading, analyzing, and incorporating multiple kinds of text into our writings.  The first part of this outcome is demonstrating an understanding of course texts, and the second, similarly, is using these texts in strategic and focused ways to provide ample support in our papers.  It is also important to this outcome that the writer not only be able to use multiple types of evidence in a paper, depending on the purpose, but that the writer can use these in conversation with each other to make the support even more potent.  Finally, it is important to have a consistent and genre-appropriate format in using and citing these sources, so that will be assessed as well.  I chose Short Assignment #4 and Major Assignment #2 to display the parts of this outcome.

Throughout my SA #4, I used two course texts to support my claim: Susan Bordo’s “The Empire of Images in our World of Bodies” and Marjane Satrapi’s “The Veil.”  “Empire of Images”, as we commonly referred to Bordo’s piece in class, centers on the world Bordo sees around her.  She sees women who grow older yet look younger due to modern plastic surgery and young girls who are influenced by these women to care far too much about physical appearances.  She does not like this focus on physical appearance she sees around her.  “The Veil” follows events from Satrapi’s childhood as she grows up in 20th century Iran where woman are seen as inferior to men and describes a few specific times sexism played a role in her childhood.  In one of my paragraphs I am trying to show that young girls are too often berated with images in the media which persuade them to care too much about appearances.  To establish credibility, I quote Bordo when I write “Bordo claims that idolizing these women and supporting the products they do creates ‘fantasies of re-arranging, transforming, and correcting’ bodies in ways which remove the unique features of that woman’s body” (SA4, 2).  Few would readily see me as an authority on the media’s influence over women, so using Bordo’s words here was best for my paper because it eliminated the possibility that I mistakenly misrepresent her on this complex topic.  Later in my SA 4, while discussing Satrapi’s struggles with religion as a child, I desired to use a hint of pathos to make my point, so I summarized what Satrapi wrote in her work by saying “Satrapi dreamed of speaking with God and becoming a prophet, but no one took her ambitions seriously because she was a girl”.  While I could have scoured for an appropriate quote instead here, there was too much implied in this part of “The Veil” and too much content I would have had to mention from earlier in the work, so I found that I could get a lot more information more concisely into this part of my paper if I summarized; I resolved to do so here.

While my MA #2 did not necessarily use texts required for this course, I would argue that I used the resources I gathered even more effectively in that work than in my SA #4.  This is not to say I have regrets about my SA #4, as I am pleased with how it turned out.  MA #2 was much longer and I had much more flexibility while choosing my sources, so I was able to pick some which would fit together very nicely.  Over the course of my MA #2 I used a variety of sources, including peer-reviewed articles, a movie, a tv series, and a conversation with one of my professors.  The choices I made in including the array of types of evidence were purposeful.  For example, early in MA #2, I felt I really needed to prove that there is a gap between the statuses of men and women in STEM fields, so I used reliable sources.  I discuss a study performed at the University of Pennsylvania which “analyzed over 250 nodes and 35,000 connections in the brain of each of [its] participants” and found “[o]nly 6 nodes and half a percent of connections differed” between men and women (MA2, 4).  The fact that the University of Pennsylvania is a reputable school and this study size was large both serve to add a good amount of ethos to my MA #2, which is exactly what I felt I needed to do to convince people to work to change the growing gender gap in STEM.  When I wanted to bring my topic even closer to home, I discussed a personal example which centered on a conversation between Professor Stuart Reges and me.  In doing so, I hoped to show dedication and interest in my topic and I hoped this would help the readers believe my claim and see me as invested in this paper.  If I could convince the audience of this, I felt it would significantly strengthen any claims I might want to make later in the paper.

            But using these various types of evidence in conversation with each other proved to be tricky.  I succeeded in several spots in both papers, but more so in MA #2.  While discussing my primary examples, the film War Games and the television series Mr. Robot, I mention how the two bridge 30 years of media and show we still have not come much closer to gender equality in STEM.  I felt I needed to use primary examples here because, unlike secondary sources, they allowed me to look at the portrayal of women from an objective standpoint and draw my own conclusions rather than reading someone else's.  After using both in this way, I conclude “years of subliminal messages like those in War Games and Mr. Robot have done much to build up this stereotype at the root of gender inequality in STEM fields” (MA2, 4).  Using these two examples together made them both much stronger because of the difference in time between them, so pointing this out in my paper helped me prove my point.  Earlier in my paper I used two peer-reviewed articles in conversation with each other to show how the two align with each other.  I quote Linda Sax in claiming around 20% or less of the degrees awarded in STEM go to women and then quote Berman and Bourne in explaining that a similar percentage of the STEM workforce is made up of women.  These two sources allow me to write “If roughly 20% of women are getting bachelor’s degrees in STEM fields, it makes sense that roughly 20% of the individuals in the corresponding fields are women” (MA2, 2).  This quote may seem obvious, but, in my opinion, being able to end the paragraph with this quote adds a lot of credibility to my claims from then on.  I was able to find two independent sources which supply aligning information, which makes the information much more credible.  In using these two reputable sources together, I was able to establish a firm foundation for my argument early in the paper and establish credibility, which allowed me to use evidence throughout the rest of the paper which, while still true, did not have such overwhelming support.