

Coming into this class, I did have much research experience, and I had only been exposed to a few different genres. Over the course of this semester, I have learned a ton about writing and creating media that I didn't know would change the way I think so much. One of my largest takeaways is that genres are not fixed but rather flexible. They can be adapted based on the audience and message being conveyed to form a more fitting structure for the context of the work. I learned this hands on during project 3 when I wrote a letter to the mayor of Toronto. While a letter to the mayor is normally a more formal and less personal type of writing, I didn't feel like that fit within the context of the letter. A young and ambitious engineer who is frustrated with the lack of support they are receiving from their elected officials would likely be less inclined to be formal and would rather want to be straightforward and personal. Adapting the genre to my specific message worked very well in this case, as I found the letter I wrote when trying to be less formal as more powerful in its message than the one I wrote when I tried to stick to the traditional structure.

During project 1, I also learned a lot about composition and that writing and research often happen at the same time. When I was conducting research for my first draft, I thought I would have everything I needed for the rest of the project, and that after that, I would be able to just focus on writing. This could not have been further from the truth, as I began to write, I found holes in my thesis and points that I could expand on. These discoveries drove me to research even further during the writing process, and in the end, I was still conducting research just hours before the final draft was due. From this experience, I learned that in the future it might be better for me to start writing earlier so that I can learn where my argument is lacking and conduct more structured research based on that, rather than doing broader research first and finding lots of information that I ultimately don't end up using.

When it comes to rhetorical strategies, what I learned that impacted me a lot is that the strategies you use should be primarily based on your audience above all else. This was a struggle I faced in project 3 when writing an op-ed, as it was hard for me to break out of my comfort zone when it comes to writing. I am generally much better at focusing on the logical side of things and basing my argument on numbers while keeping a more neutral stance by letting the facts speak for themselves. While facts and logic still have their place in an op-ed, it is important not to let them distract from the stance being taken by the author. The audience for an op-ed is usually the general public, and they want to hear my opinion more in this context rather than having a bunch of statistics thrown at them. My first draft of the op-ed was hardly focused on my opinion at all, and when I reviewed it, I thought it was pretty bad. Once I reworked it to be more opinionated and less stat-driven, it was much better. Since then, I now think about who the target audience is and what will be the most effective way to address them before I begin writing.

Overall, I learned a lot from taking this class that I didn't expect to impact the way I write and think as much as it did. I think both experienced writers and those less experienced like me have a lot to gain from the exposure to reach and different genres you get in this class. I am excited to use my newly developed skills from this course in my other academic endeavors, and I can confidently say I am leaving this class a better reader and creator of media than when I came in.