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Dear Dr. Xu:

Henceforth is my reflection on how the course affected my knowledge in writing; hence, proving that the goals and objectives - the course outcomes - of English 131 are fulfilled in me. Taking the course has, indeed, improved my writing style by making me more conscious and aware of my mistakes in writing. In order to showcase this improvement, I would be using my four previous writings: Arabic Spring, Liminals: Rhetorical Analysis, the annotated bibliographies submitted on 10 May 2014, and Analyzing Star Trek.

One of the most important lessons that I have learned from taking English 131 is to write in full sincerity and to write in truth while at the same time considering the majority of the people who might read your work. This means that a writer must always think of the implications and of the truthfulness of the information he or she is writing - especially, if he tends to sway his or her readers into doing something or siding with the ideas presented in the writings. In terms of minding the readers, I have made the effort to take into consideration the majority of the people who will read my essay on "Arabic Spring." This is not hard to figure out at all, since I am in the US, within a US university, then the majority of my readers are not the Arabs but the Americans. Moreover, since the majority of the people in this university are students, then my target audiences are the American college students of this school. Based from my personal experience, Americans, especially academic institutions in the US, would rather read a neutral sounding essay rather than a partisan. Hence I made the essay look and feel more like a narrative, rather than argumentative. Moreover, I have simply quoted and used existing documents or texts in order to avoid putting my

personal biased opinions regarding the topic. There is nothing more powerful than providing proofs or supports for each point raised in an essay. As I look back to my previous writings, I realized that this effort of providing support to claims was not strong in the essay entitled, "Arabic Spring." In this essay I made claims that did not have proofs from the references that I listed; for example,

"Poverty was another factor that moved people toward transition. People had been suffering from poverty for decades under the rule of Hosni Mubarak but did not have the conscious awareness that they could speak out against their poor condition. They [day they] got the awareness through social media; they came out to agitate against the governments failures to improve their living standards" (2).

In this essay, I have also implied that Hosni Mubarak is an evil man who deserves the fate of being overthrown by a revolution perpetuated by small groups of activists that "soon [there] developed into a revolutionary movement at the national level" (2). I have made this implied message without taking into consideration the "other side of the story." What I did in this essay is that I searched the World Wide Web and other knowledge repositories for papers and publications that communicate agreement to Mubarak's downfall. There was no representation of the other side - Mubarak's side. In my opinion, the essay would have been more valuable to read if I presented sources that are on the side of celebrating the Arab Spring and sources that go against it. After presenting both sides; I should have weighed them based from the proofs they presented and executed a judgment. As I read the said essay now, I realize that it is no more than a

one-sided, biased, narration of events that the rest of the world calls, “Arabic Spring.” Nevertheless, I should acknowledge the fact that I indeed analyzed the sources that I came up with a list of annotated bibliographies. From these sources I have successfully provided justifications on why Arabic Spring is an important event in the Arab world. This practice of annotating sources, in my opinion, is important in understanding their contents. What I could have done better in the assessment of the sources is the assessment of their authors as well – such as, researching on their bios.

Another important knowledge that I gained from English 131 is clarity on what we are trying to write about. As I reflect on my essay entitled, “Liminals: Rhetorical Analysis,” where I get to discuss Manuel Muñoz’s article entitled, “Leave Your Name at the Border.” I have achieved a certain level of clarity in this essay by first informing the readers what the essay is all about. Accordingly, I noted,

“ it tackles the implied cause and effect of changing Mexican names into their Anglicized versions among the Mexicans. Muñoz is a Mexican-American who lives in Dinuba, a small town in California. The author explores the difficulties that come with cultural displacement and assimilation through observed American customs. In the article, Muñoz reveals that he and his peers used to speak English while in school but when they went back home in the evening, they would speak Spanish. He states that the native Spanish was for privacy while English was for the public domain” (1).

Note that on the quoted parts of my essay, I have given the reader an idea about Munoz’s article – its topic and Munoz’s stand on the topic. I was also successful in putting clarity on what the dilemma described by Munoz came

about, “ In this premise, Muñoz implies that for one to study and get a quality education in America, he or she has to camouflage his or her identity or else success will be elusive” (1 - 2). Nevertheless, I must acknowledge that I have failed to make clear why the topic is relevant to the readers. It is also not clear in the essay I made why Anglicizing Mexican names hurt the Mexican people. I realize that my statement, “ Liminality as a state of transition and dilemma has been clearly shown in this article through the description of two conflicting cultures; the American and the Mexican. The American and Mexican cultures are portrayed in the spoken languages. The American culture seems to be the “ most modern” and everyone wants to ape it,” is good to read but hallow in meaning. In other words, my essay entitled Liminals: Rhetorical Analysis is successful in bringing clarity to the “ How” and “ What” questions, but not on the “ Why” question. When it comes to presenting points or ideas, I personally think that I was efficient in making my points clear by providing evidence for each of them from the original text written by Munoz. For example, for my statement, “ a Mexican is caught between displacing his native culture and adopting the American ways,” I have quoted Munoz stating, “ Our names stood barriers to a complete embrace of American identity” (2). For my statement that, “ There was also a liminal space between the culture and the job opportunities in America,” I also quoted Munoz stating, “ Every gesture made toward convincing an employer that English was on its way to being mastered had the potential to make a season of fieldwork profitable” (2).

The proper presentation of claims and arguments is also an important aspect of efficient writing that I learned from this course. In my essay entitled, “

Analyzing Star Trek,” I have made several arguments and claims.

Accordingly, I made that claim that two of Cohen’s seven monsters thesis can be applied in analyzing the movie, Star Trek. I claimed in the essay that, there is a “ similarity between the Borg and the monster explained in Cohen’s thesis” (1). I then proceeded of establishing my arguments; such as,

“ Some might write Cohen’s work off as being too generic. But rather than looking at the nature of his work this way, one can say that what may seem vague in Cohen’s work is intended to be nonspecific in order to be as all-encompassing as possible” (3 - 4).

I realized that in proving claims and making arguments a writer must be clear in making his or her premises. It is the premises which serve as platform for the entire argument to stand from. These premises in turn, are made strong by making meaning explanation on the definition of terms. I therefore took significant initiatives to dissect Cohen’s theses. Accordingly, I had to paraphrase Cohen’s own words and shape them in to my own, so I noted,

“ According to Cohen’s theory The Monster Always Escapes, monsters are difficult to control or manage, as they will, at some point, disappear by turning themselves into immaterial things, and then appear at some different place” (Cohen, 14). Cohen clearly states that the very future of civilization is at stake as the monster is likened to the cultural moments that always threaten to change and shift to appear later in a worse situation (Hark, Ina 34)” (1).

Note that putting an MLA in-text citation on the above paraphrases

strengthens reliability of the definition. What makes a strong support for claim, therefore, is the ability to utilize existing definitions made by other established writers and then building from their definitions. After giving the definitions, I then commenced on making parallelism between Cohen's "monsters" and Star Treks' "Borg." It is based from this parallelism which supported the rest of the arguments, which, eventually, led to the conclusion that Cohen's monster theses can be applied to other films aside from Star Trek. Another take away point which I learned in writing this essay is the importance in keeping a definite structure of presenting claims, arguments, definitions, and proofs. It is the structure that helps the reader make sense to what is written. It also the structure that helps connects all the ideas in the paper in a sensible manner, and "If no such connection is made, then the story loses its significance of demonstrating the Borg like monsters that appear and reappear and avoid any effort to re-structuration" (4).

Lastly, making revisions is one of the most important lessons I learned from English 131. As I reflect on the many revisions I made, I realized that a writer can never be done with making revisions. After you make one revision and review your paper, you will realize that there is still more to improve - and this does not end. It is through this cycle of review and revised that I have learned the significance of revisions - they make your work clearer and easier to read. As I review my essay on Arabic Spring, I was shocked by the numerous grammatical errors I made. For example, I have used the adjective "conscious" instead of the noun "consciousness" and interchange "can he" with "he can" in the following sentence, "If one has the [conscious] to feel the things; right or wrong, only then [he can] feel the bad things happenings

with himself and people around him" (1). I also realized that, sometimes, due to my desire to use more rhetorical words over simple words, I tend to confuse myself and the reader. Consider this sentence on the same aforementioned essay, " Initiated as small street protests, soon there developed into a revolutionary movement at the national level" (1). How this should have read is, " What started as small street protests, soon developed into a full blown revolution." I have also made significant revisions to increase the accuracy of the information presented in my essays. An example of such revision is when my professor commented that Manuel Munoz is not a Mexican, but an American. Revisions of subject verb agreement are also abundant on my first essays. In my essay, " Liminal: Rhetorical Analysis," I wrote, " The Mexican culture is losing ground as American start to start to dominate over it," (1) which should have read, " The Mexican culture is losing ground as white American culture starts to dominate over it."

There are still many things that I learned from taking English 131; too many that we can write an entire novel about them - this is a hyperbole, of course. The truth remains that I, indeed, had made significant improvements when I took this course. I can still imagine my essay when I was still in high school or beginning in college. They were in no way similar to my essays now. Nevertheless, I make no claim of perfectness in writing; as such, in my opinion, is unachievable, because language and the way we write continue to evolve. With the idea that perfectness in writing is unachievable and that we can continuously improve in it, I stand convinced that I have made significant improvements worthy for a closure for this wonderful course -

English 131. I hope that your kind office would come to the same conclusion as mine.

Sincerely,