

# Cover Letter

This portfolio is all of my writing work during the spring 26 semester and shows my development as a writer. It reflects the progression of my assignments and my growth as a writer. The purpose of this portfolio is to demonstrate how I have met the course learning outcomes and show the strategies, challenges, and growth that created this work. The intended audience is my instructor and anyone evaluating my work. The evaluation of my work is what influenced me to present my work clearly and thoughtfully in this portfolio.

Throughout the semester, I completed four major assignments and one smaller one: Literacy Narrative, Rhetorical Analysis, Annotated Bibliography, Synthesis, and a Remix respectively. All of the assignments except for the Literacy Narrative built on the previous assignment, increasing in depth and complexity.

My literacy narrative, Mechanical Literacy, focused on my personal experiences developing skills and interest in mechanical systems and the physical world. Writing this assignment taught me how to connect my personal experiences with broader concepts, such as sponsorship, as well as teaching me how to convey things efficiently and effectively. My rhetorical analysis, Comparing Use of Rhetoric in Two Sustainable Agriculture Websites, was much less of a learning curve, as I had already written some in previous years, but still taught me more about rhetorical devices such as logos, pathos, and ethos as well as introducing me to kairos. Writing the rhetorical analysis strengthened my ability to analyze and argument effectiveness and its use of rhetorical devices based on its audience, purpose, and wording. My annotated bibliography required me to gather, evaluate, and summarize sources related to my research question: How do the Financial Risks of Transitioning to Sustainable Agriculture for Farmers Align With or Contradict the Food Affordability and Security Concerns of Non-Farming Consumers? Finally, my synthesis brought the rhetorical analysis and annotated bibliography together. It required me to integrate multiple sources not only into an evaluation on the arguments of those sources, but also using those sources to form an argument of my own using those sources as evidence.

One of my biggest successes this semester was improving my ability to write analytically rather than writing to be descriptive. In my literacy narrative, I focused on telling a story, whereas the synthesis is analyzing many different sources, creating an argument with those sources, and weaving in a counterargument to strengthen my argument, using the sources as evidence.

The biggest challenge was with writing my annotated bibliography, as my research question was very specific, making it difficult to find sources. Eventually, though, I was able to find the exact sources I was looking for. Another challenge I faced was integrating those sources smoothly. It was hard to balance summarizing the source to a degree where I could convey exactly what the source was about, and analyzing that source's relevance to my research question. Integrating those sources into my synthesis was much easier as I could connect it back to my thesis that I was developing while writing my synthesis. The final challenge I faced was keeping my writing clear and organized in the longer essays. I overcame this by outlining my ideas before writing and revising instead of developing ideas as I wrote.

My understanding of genre improved significantly throughout the semester. At the beginning, I viewed genres as being much broader, but I now understand that genre is much more nuanced and complex, each with its own audience, purpose, and situation. For example, I viewed the literacy

narrative and rhetorical analysis as having the same genre, but I now know that the literacy narrative is more personal and reflective while the rhetorical analysis is more formal and analytical. This understanding of genre helped me to adapt my writing to better suit each genre's situation and form a more effective essay.

My research process improved significantly over the semester. Initially, I was more focused on sources directly related to my topic. However, through writing the annotated bibliography, I learned that it can be beneficial to find sources indirectly related to a topic or only covering part of a topic, as well as evaluating those sources' credibility and relevance. This also helped me overcome my biggest challenge while writing, which was finding sources related to my research question. Overcoming this challenge was simply finding sources that relate to one part of my research question and finding enough to cover all of the parts.

Throughout the semester, my writing process became much more structured. Early on I tended to write as quickly as possible to get it done, whereas later on, I spent more time planning and outlining to create more coherent and effective essays. Revision was also a huge part of my writing as after I would write something, I tended not to revisit, which led to long sentences and disorganized paragraphs. Feedback from my peers is what brought this to my attention and that feedback played a key role in making my writing truly efficient and effective.

Overall, this course helped me develop skills in writing and research and how to connect the two. I learned how to analyze arguments and rhetorical situations, evaluate sources, and construct arguments stemming from that analysis and evaluation. This course also helped me prepare for continuous learning by showing me how to make complex topics simpler and how to improve both as I do something and after.

In conclusion, this portfolio demonstrates my growth as a writer over the course of this semester. It highlights my ability to write in different genres, integrate research into writing, and develop clear and cohesive arguments. Overall, this course has strengthened my confidence in my writing skills and prepared me for future academic writing and assignments.

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