

May 29, 2020

To the Communication Studies Department Faculty:

My name is [First, Last], also colloquially known as [CWID]. I am applying for an Associate's degree in Communication Studies with a proposed specialization in Rhetorical Criticism. By completing:

EWRT 1B Reading, Writing, and Research (5.0 units)

INTL 33 Introduction to Peace and Conflict Studies (4.0 units)

JOUR 80 Introduction to Public Relations (4.0 units)

I have gained a much more holistic interpretation of communication. These three courses reinforced my understanding of the effectiveness of language, both written and spoken. Rhetorical criticism is the process of defining, classifying, analyzing, interpreting, and evaluating language. My Reading, Writing, and Research course enhanced my command of language and comprehension of written words while acknowledging how the author's background influences their works as a whole. The Introduction to Peace and Conflict Studies course analyzed how rhetoric can escalate or deescalate a conflict, especially within each region's status quo and perpetuated norms. My Introduction to Public Relations class applied rhetoric in order to achieve the desired results from a target audience through published methods of communication. As Julia Wood wrote: the self arises in communication with others. Each class furthers my knowledge of the comprehension, application, and promotion of communication. I plan to continue to apply these skills in my personal and professional environments.

To begin, my Reading, Writing, and Research course (EWRT 1B) defined my introductory interpretations of rhetoric. In this course, we studied culturally and historically diverse authors such as Zora Neale Hurston, Sherman Alexie, and Langston Hughes. EWRT 1B addressed works with such themes as feminism and racial oppression as well as how identity scripts and linguistic determinism create meaning behind the authors' messages. Through in-depth research, I studied Sandra Cisneros' life in detail. Analyzing her writing through the lens of communication studies opens up the realm of deeper understanding. Cisneros' work was defined by the feeling rules she faced. Feeling rules uphold social values, as the term defines what we have a right to feel or are expected to feel in given situations. Such works as "Woman Hollering Creek" illustrate Cisneros' characters breaking cultural norms--like machismo--and avoiding surface acting. The principle of surface acting involves a controlled outward expression of emotion. This set the stage for my improved understanding of the process of intercultural praxis.

My Introduction to Peace and Conflict Studies course (INTL 33) thoroughly covered peace, conflict, and culture. This class studied domestic and international norms and the impact of religious, philosophical, social, and cultural influences on relationships. The process of

establishing social change and maintaining peace involves recognizing our positionality. For instance, conflict prevention and/or de-escalation involves identifying elements of and reasons for conflict--such as the frustration-aggression hypothesis or relative deprivation. Rhetoric is specifically used as a means of addressing intercultural conflict. Through our improved practice of language, we become aware of our shortcomings in communication and can choose to address these in conflict. Although peace is the desired ending to all conflicts, true peace is likely unattainable due to a lack of equity. The main takeaway I got from this course is that peace is not characterized by a lack of violence; peace is about improving the quality of life for all intersectional identities.

Lastly, my Introduction to Public Relations course (JOUR 80) built upon my previous knowledge of communication and applied it to crafting effective messages. Before crafting our public relations campaigns, we analyzed the effectiveness and ethicality of other campaigns, including those that addressed crisis management. After analyzing other campaigns, we then identified strategies that involved forms of multimedia, such as social media. An important characteristic of a successful media release is defining and addressing one's audience. This is done through specific message design and distribution. Public relations agents typically employ strategies like using affective language (to create similar feelings between an audience and a brand) or code-switching when speaking for a brand. These skills will be applied throughout my future interactions in a work environment--such as a Back to School night.

The three previously mentioned courses have furthered my command of language. Each element of rhetorical criticism directly applies to communication as a whole. The act of analyzing rhetoric aids in my comprehension of encoded messages through verbal or written means. Communication, in its very nature, is the process in which one generates meaning. I've come to understand that rhetoric takes this a step further; it is used to persuade the communicator through all means of communication. Studying this subject matter has ignited a newfound passion of mine. I plan on continuing my practice with communication through my additional education plans. I have been admitted into San Jose State University to study Social Sciences with Preparation for Teaching. I plan to apply for the Single Subject Credential Program to teach at a secondary level. I am also considering furthering my education by receiving a Master's degree in Emancipatory Leadership. Thank you for your time.

Best regards,

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