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CWR4B Capstone Project: Research Reflection

Coming into this project, I was the most excited to tackle writing a scientific paper in the most formal way possible. I have already had previous experience writing scientific papers that mimicked manuscripts for lab reports and a little bit for research, but I was most looking forward to doing the same thing in an academic setting where I will be presented with rigorous feedback on how well I did and areas to improve upon.

While working on this project, one thing that I noticed was how all of the research tips I've accumulated in CWR4B continued to pay off. Specifically, when I was doing literature dig up and searching, the experience I had with annotating articles and determining their purposes, etc. allowed me to easily understand a lot of the scientific literature that I once previously was afraid of reading. Before coming into this class, it would always be a pain for me to read and annotate a scientific paper. I would often reread and re-highlight multiple times before getting some understanding of what is going on. However, because of this Professor Cole's training on focusing on the "trends" and "conventions" present, I was able to elevate myself to a "broader perspective" when reading such scientific papers during my research process which made it much easier to understand the content.

Speaking on the topic of focusing on trends and conventions, Professor Cole's training also helped me tremendously with the research process in my capstone project. Because my research focused on identifying syntactic patterns/conventions within the abstracts of biomedical research articles, having that broader focus on the trends and conventions and not getting lost within the details allowed me to easily identify key patterns and syntactic structures.

This was by far the most time I've ever spent on a writing assignment. But I somehow didn't think of this as a writing assignment. I thought of it as my own research and that kept me excited about the results that I would see. While my hypotheses and predictions were off, the results I found from this research capstone surprised me – top scoring journals (for Nature at least) have very similar syntactic trends within their abstracts. I initially thought there was more of a "creative aspect" in scientific writing, but it may turn out that I'm wrong.

In the next 3-4 months, this project will help set the stage of my MCB senior thesis and any other publications I will be publishing with my lab. I'm currently working on writing text for a publication for my lab (co-author) right now, and the experience I've gained in this class from the proposal writing all the way to the presentation and research writeup has made me much more confident in how I can write well in a research setting. This capstone project—and class overall—has helped me grow tremendously in terms of my writing. I cannot thank Professor Cole enough.

After I finished up my capstone project with Professor Cole, I had the opportunity to submit my work to her CWR4B website as a reference for other students. This follow-up reflection will be dedicated to updates with my writing journey after a year has passed since I graduated from Professor Cole's CWR4B.

Regarding recent writing, I cannot stress enough how much CWR4B has helped me with publications, proposals, and literature reviews. Soon after I finished CWR4B, I had the opportunity to co-author a paper that my lab was working on. My experience working with the capstone project allowed me to confidently put down drafts for sections I would have originally been inundated with to write. After this whole process, the paper was accepted to *Cell*.

On the other hand, I've also had to write research proposals and literature reviews this year as well for research and grants. Albeit a still very rigorous writing and revision process, my experience in CWR4B helped me tremendously with getting drafts down, analyzing papers, and writing succinctly.

If people were to ask me about the most rewarding / important classes I've taken at UC Berkeley, CWR4B would be on that list. CWR4B has taught me how to read and write within my own field [the sciences / biomedical sciences]. CWR4B has taught me how to interpret, analyze, and rationalize the fundamentals of text so that it can be applicable for whatever educational or professional circumstance I encounter in the present or future.