

Artist Statement
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I really wanted the Writing and Critical Inquiry (WCI) video to be a fun and informative introduction to the WCI program. Often times freshman and others who have yet to take the Writing and Critical Inquiry course have no idea what the course is, why it is important, and what they have to do in it. At first glance, it may seem like a regular writing course, but it's actually fundamental to doing well in your college career. Writing and critical thinking are used in every facet of our lives. As a result, I wanted to make a video that would make the course and its programs easier to understand. By using many mediums of video like stop-motion animation, claymation, speed drawing, and live action, I hope that I was able to better engage the audience.

I have always been a big fan of animation and one of my biggest dreams is to become an animator myself. I loved stop-motion movies like Coraline, Wallace and Gromit, and of course Nightmare Before Christmas. The way the characters move fluidly without being real always fascinated me. I didn't think my dreams would be a reality since the equipment used is expensive and the process itself is intimidating. I didn't even know how to start an animation, it wasn't until Junior year of high school that I started learning. The film teacher in my school had a lot of equipment available to make 2D stop-motion animation and she encouraged me to use it. This was the first time I thought becoming an animator would actually be possible. I am extremely grateful for my high school film teacher, Mrs. Ceballos. I learned a lot of fundamental animation and even learned techniques that allow you to make characters move and change

facial expression. Eventually I was able to enter competitions using what I learned such as the ABC Studios PSA competition two years in a row, which required students to make 30 second PSAs on any important topic. I made a claymated anti-littering PSA and the following year I made a 2D stop-motion video about the importance of self-love and acceptance. Since then, I have continued to try out new techniques and figure out the best ways to convey certain information.

In order to make the Writing and Critical Inquiry video, I started researching about everything that the WCI Department entails. After gathering all the information needed, I knew the next step was to figure out a theme for the video. I had to take into consideration what kind of video would best portray the information on the screen while still being fun. I went through a lot of concepts like Rpg style gaming tutorial, having a fantasy setting, a wacky infomercial, but those were all take too long to animate with my given schedule or it would be too costly. Ultimately, I decided the video would be about any challenge, concept or thing that people are trying to learn more about. I figured an unidentifiable fish-alien-looking creature would be a nice personification of trying to figure out the unknown, or at least trying to better understand something that is already known. I wanted to use clay since it would be easier to make more unique and malleable shapes. I used live action for some parts because there was some information that was simply easier to understand if they were recorded live, such as the location of the WCI department and the faculty. Wherever I ran out of time I just did a speed draw.

One of the things I enjoy the most about making videos is adding a funky or comedic element to video. Animation is really great for making serious topics seem more light-hearted

and understandable so that's why I really like using it. Also, it allows the creator to be more creative with how they portray their information. I probably would not have been able to include a blue-green fish creature, erase an entire scene, or include certain animals and objects in the video if I had to make it in real- life as opposed to just drawing or molding one.

When I initially created the clay models, I figured that it would be easier to make the entire thing have a skeletal structure that I could put the clay on, but I realized that I didn't have the appropriate materials to make a very sturdy spine. I didn't have epoxy putty to stick the leg joints and arm joints to a cohesive back so I had to improvise. My clay girl was too tall which made it tricky to sculpt more detailed features on her or to add a lot of clay to her top portions. So, I scraped the skeleton of the legs and I only kept the arm skeletons, I shaved off a lot of clay from the arms and torso, then I made the head smaller while making the legs way thicker. For the clay fish creature, I took an empty roll of toilet paper, stapled the end of one side and then stuffed it with old newspaper. I covered the creature in a thin layer of black clay to give it more heaviness at the bottom and I made a face and hood out of clay as well. I added this little keychain that broke off of one of my favorite charms and I used it as a drawstring for the alien's cloak. The only other part of the alien that is made of clay is the face which I mixed green, blue and white clay in order to make. I really wanted to make the fish creature's cape out of the dress since it would make it easier for the reveal later on in the short, but my stitching skills were not advanced enough to make a good-looking hood.

For many of the static characters, I made them out of cardboard and then I painted over them in order to make them more colorful, such as the people in the conversation essay portion of the video. The backgrounds and other props like the podium and signs are also made

of cardboard that friends and I painted over with a white acrylic base coat and then I colored in the design for the background where it was needed. I borrowed mirrors from my friends to make the mirror scene, hopefully, the image of the mirrors amplified the reflective aspect of the personal essay. For the conversation essay, I was able to just use a washboard and put clay figures on it.

This experience really taught me a lot about weight distribution in claymation as well as material preservation and momentum. One of the most important rules of making a clay figure work is to make the base heavier than the top in order for the character to stay upright and balanced. I learned this the hard way when I first created my protagonist and I realized that making a dress out of clay was going to be challenging since the head, arms and body were disproportionately larger than the legs and feet. If this was 2d drawn I wouldn't have to worry about that, but the nature of weight and gravity in 3d characters make it difficult to have top-heavy figures, so I had to substitute where I could.

After I did the animation, I recorded the live action video with a few friends that offered to volunteer some of their time. That portion was a lot of fun to make since I was with friends and they already had a general idea of what goes into the video making process, plus it allowed me to interact with more people since I had to do the animation and editing on my own. In order to record one second of animation, an animator has to take 12 pictures of slightly different movements in order to make a fluid stop-motion animation. The video contains roughly 2 minutes of animation, not including the animation that didn't make it to the video. I had to take at least 1,440 pictures in order to make the animated portions of the video. Parts of the animation were substituted with whiteboard speed drawings while a voiceover explained

the remaining programs and amenities of the WCI department because I simply did not have time to animate more. The speed drawing method still provides an engaging visual element to the video while saving time in production since the only elements needed are things to draw with, and things to draw on. I just drew a regular drawing and then I sped up the video on iMovie to make it go along with the speed of the audio.

This experience has taught me a lot about video production on a larger scale. I had to plan out how to allocate time, resources and pay attention to more elements in the video making process. I used more materials since I had multiple backgrounds and locations, as well as more materials to make more characters. During the research portions of the video making process, I learned a few new things about the WCI Department such as the Peer Mentoring Program and what it entails. I didn't know that the WCI program gave students the opportunity to teach others while earning credit, which I thought was really cool. I hope to be able to do more work that involves informing people in creative ways in the future.