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UNIV 301A: Practicum for Writing Consultants and Associates
Professor Ishikawa
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IWrite Series Transcription

Marc: Welcome back to the IWrite series podcast where we talk about writing, the process, the philosophy, and growth of a writer and much more. This week's guest we have Grace Miles. Grace is a studio art major at DePauw, she works as an after school programmer at Greencastle Middle School, and she hopes to be an art teacher after she graduates. Grace, welcome to the pod!

Grace: Oh, thanks for having me.

Marc: No worries, no worries. Okay. So for those who may not know Grace, and I go way back, so we actually met in our first year seminar course. For those who don't go to a liberal arts college like that's kind of like the cornerstone of the liberal arts like experience, like that's where you go as a first year to learn about writing and what not and hone your skills. So I've known you since you're like beginning of your college writing career. And I kind of want to go back to that. And, like, revisit those memories, like how would you describe yourself as a writer? In that first class in that first semester? Were you confident in your writing? Did you have a writing process? Just tell me a little bit about your first semester in that class and your writing.

Grace: My first semester, I was a super insecure writer, I did not have any confidence in my writing ability. I still used the same format that I had from like high school. That was like, your intro paragraph, your three supporting paragraphs, your conclusion paragraph. And I used it like religiously. But I've grown so much since then. But yeah, when I--my freshman year, I would not say that I liked my writing style.

Marc: Yeah, okay. That's, it's funny to hear that you like stuck to the normal conventions of writing, you're like, "no, I'm not going to deviate." At what point in that semester did you feel like, okay, I'm growing, or like I'm picking up new tricks?

Grace: Well, I think I that, like the beginning of the first semester, we turned in our first paper, and I don't think it got a very good grade on it, actually. And that's when we realized that like, my professors weren't expecting the same things that my high school teachers did. So I don't know, I would say, after the first paper, I really did try to start fixing my writing style. And I don't remember our professors name, but she was really nice. And she had like a ton of like helpful things like every single paper we turned in, like, she had like pages of feedback on like, how you could do better and stuff. And I think I might have even gone to a writing tutor that first semester to try and, like fix my papers. I also had a ton of friends by freshman year that were really good at writing papers, even then, and I'd have that I'd like send them my paper before I submitted it and have them fix it up for me.

Marc: That's funny. That's hilarious. All right. So like, kind of going off of that, like now as a senior, like, how do you think your processes evolved? Or like, how do you think your writing has evolved? Do you think you're more confident? Or do you think there's still more to grow? Now that you're near the end of your college career.

Grace: I'm a way more confident writer. Now, I definitely am. I, I don't have to write papers as much in like studio art. But I also had a global health major that I was doing for a while, and we were writing papers all the time. And I actually really liked it. It's more of like, it was more of like a research style paper. And I love research papers, I really do, I enjoy them. So I'm a way better. I think I'm a way better

writer now. And I get better grades on my papers. I started... well, I did get like feedback from my friends freshman year, and now I still have my friends, like go through my papers a lot of times. I don't use the same format that I did my freshman year. And I also started doing a lot more like, like inserting myself, like personalization of my papers. I think my professors also really enjoy. Obviously, don't take over the paper with my personal stuff. But I do like add myself in a little bit to my papers, which I think makes it a better paper. What else do I do differently? I spend a lot more time working on my papers that I did my freshman year.

Marc: That's important.

Grace: Yeah, I actually tried to like start doing like, one of my classes. I'm in an education class, and she has us doing-- what is it called? It's like you have like a bubble. And you have like your main idea in the center bubble and then you like, go out from there and you have like smaller bubbles each time until you kind of like figure out what you would be like, would work for your paper, like what you have the most information on. And I actually really liked it, I'm pretty sure to style people using like middle school, but like, creative writing style that is used then, but I really liked it actually. I like to pre plan my papers way before I do a lot of notes before my papers, like bullet points and stuff to figure out what my main ideas are gonna be. I think that helps a lot.

Marc: That's, that's great. It sounds like as like a first year you just kind of like went into to paper, like, let's just see what I come up with. And now you're more like articulate and then I really liked the point where you're like I'm gonna personalize so it's like coming up with your own style. That's really cool. How do you think you got to that? Like, how do you think you like, you're like, "you know what, I'm gonna start like personalizing these papers, and I'm gonna put my voice." Did you have a professor that advise that? Or, like, just talk a little bit about that.

Grace: Oh, I had this professor, I thought he was amazing. Harry Brown. And I had a, I was like a fiction class or something. And like, fiction and folklore and stuff. And I loved the books we were reading. And I don't know, I think the first paper that he had, like, he asked us to add some personal information into it, like not a lot, but just like he was like, if you have any, like connections to like the books that we've been reading, like, I want to hear about it. And so that was the first time I tried like, I never tried actually like putting my own, like personal personalization into my papers. And he gave me really good feedback on it. And he actually really liked it. And from that point on, I really tried to do it more and more. And I noticed that like all of my professors really enjoyed it too. Like even in my research papers and stuff like just like one paragraph where you kind of talk about like your own connection to it, I think really helped me and I noticed that it worked with my professors and they liked it too.

Marc: So kind of like going off of like reflecting because like since we're seniors like is there a part of... Is there a favorite writing piece that you have like you look back at that paper and you're like "this this is great as my as this is like my writing this is Grace Miles like the best thing I could come up with" and then also vice versa, or does a piece that you're like, "I never want to look at it again. I want no business with it." And kind of going off of that like what do you define like what's good for you like what is like an acceptable piece for you?

Grace: I hate to say it but I really rely on grades like I've always just been someone who really like I flourish when I get a good grade and like when I get like-

Marc: You're not the only one.

Grace: -good feedback for my professors and stuff. So I think the more that I got good grades on my papers The more I started to like my papers and my writing style. I don't know what my least favorite

paper was. I'm sure if I read my first paper I ever wrote in our orientation class I would just hate it. My favorite paper... I wrote this really good final paper in Harry Brown's a class I think I just like really like enjoyed it I don't even remember the whole what the whole paper was about but I do remember it was about like your growth through I think it was from like the beginning of class to the end of class he was just like like how do you think that the readings that we've done in this class have like shaped you? Or like have they shaped you at all? And I... I like I've spent so much time on that paper because I was like really enjoying it like I I was having fun figuring out like because I did do all the readings in that class thank goodness no and so I really liked the books and it was a lot of I'm really until like fiction so I was really entertained by it and I loved like bringing in my self and like how I had progressed throughout that class. It was also my first English class my first writing class I've ever had and it was my first W that I ever took so it was like that class as a whole was like a huge process because we had so many papers in it so by the final paper I was I think I just got so much more confident in myself and I knew the kind of writing that he was okay with and that he liked so like I could really like full, yeah, I could really go like all in with it. It was like I think it was a six page paper and I ended up writing like seven or eight he was okay with it though. But yeah, I think that was probably my favorite paper. I would still read it now.

Marc: So now that you're like a senior and you're about to graduate, do you think you've like mastered writing? Or do you think there's like plenty of room to grow and where do you think you're gonna you're ... Where do you think you're headed in terms of like writing what's what's your next step?

Grace: I think I would not say that. I've mastered writing even now, but I am more confident in it. And I do think I'm a good writer. I don't know, though, because there's so many different kinds of papers, like there's so many different styles of like paper, like, do I think that I would be able to write a really good? Like 30 page like thesis? I don't know. I don't know. I don't know if I'm ready for that. But I do think that I've kind of started nailing like the five to six page paper, because like most of my classes have that kind of like length, and I think I figured out like a good system for it. Yeah, I don't know if I would say that. I'm a master. But I am confident and like, I do think, like, even right now, if I had to write a paper, I'd probably be okay with it. It's just a lot of work. That's the only thing I hate about papers.

Marc: Yeah. about writing in general, like writing in general. Yeah, there's like so much you have to do pre plan, write it, and then revise it.

Grace: Like even a really good writer has to, like take time out of their day to write a paper.

Marc: So yeah, it's it's a whole process. I definitely agree with you that and maybe the last question, and then we can wrap up this this edition of the IWrite series. What advice would you give a first year student coming in to their first year seminar about college writing? Like what do you know now that you wish you had known in that first semester?

Grace: I would advise giving up on how you think a paper supposed to be written. I think that's just like such a big thing. Because I think all of us have been trained for so long on how a good paper is supposed to be written. But like going into college, that's just not what your teachers are looking for. Like, it's not in being able to give up that that foolproof method that you think that you have, and like being willing to try new things is like, it's my biggest piece of advice, because I really think that like, most of your professors know your freshman year that like you're exploring your writing style, and like what you want to do, and like how you want to express, like the stuff in your paper that you're supposed to be talking about. Like, they'll give you some leeway. Like they'll give you time to figure out your writing style. But yeah, I would just say, like, let let go of your like, five paragraph. Like, yeah, no, don't do that anymore. It's, it'll, you can do better.

Marc: It's- I definitely understand because like those conventions, is like, what we were taught is like, good writing, right? Yeah. And it's so it's so comforting to just stick with that. But at some point, maybe that could still be like a backbone. Yeah, like at some point, you still have to, like branch out and yeah, new techniques

Grace: And I really also recommend, I know that like, pre planning sucks, and like it's no fun and like, your initial like instinct is to just like write your paper, like, a couple days before it's due, but like--

Marc: The night before.

Grace: Yeah, like if you can give yourself the time to pre plan your paper, you will feel so much better about it. And if you feel good about your papers, like I think your professors are usually gonna feel good about it to like, they can tell if you feel insecure about your paper.

Marc: Grace, thank you so much for coming on the pod.

Grace: Yes, thank you for having me.

Marc: Yeah. And so with that, we wrap up an episode of The IWrite series. So thank you so much, and thank you everyone for listening.

Grace: Thank you.

Marc: And with that we are signing off.