

## Letter to the Instructor

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### Introduction

In **Junhui Li**'s *WRS 101 Exploring Writing* class, students were invited to write an inkshed addressed to the instructor in which they could talk about how their writing has changed a bit over the term, what surprised them about the course, classmates or instructor, and what writing strategies they found helpful or useful. They were also invited to include an interesting detail about their hobbies, likes or dislikes. Junhui wrote the following letter to his instructor.

*Keywords: cycling, learning, reflection, revision.*



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<sup>1</sup> *Writing across the University of Alberta* (WAUA) publishes undergraduate student writing from writing studies courses and courses focused on writing studies practices and scholarship at the University of Alberta. You can find WAUA online at <https://writingacrossuofa.ca/>.

How time flies; I can't believe it's already the last week of this course as I write this letter. I can still remember clearly the first time we met on Zoom; I was still quarantined in a hotel in Xiamen when we met each other. During these two short months, from time to time in our weekly class, we shared our recent experiences. This made me feel warm because I knew that you wanted to know more about me. Whenever you gave me advice about my writing, it felt more like a friend's advice than instruction from a teacher, and this made me feel at ease. Through your constant and patient guidance, I have really improved my writing. Although the changes may not have been dramatic or decisive, I still find myself more confident in writing and joining in discussions.

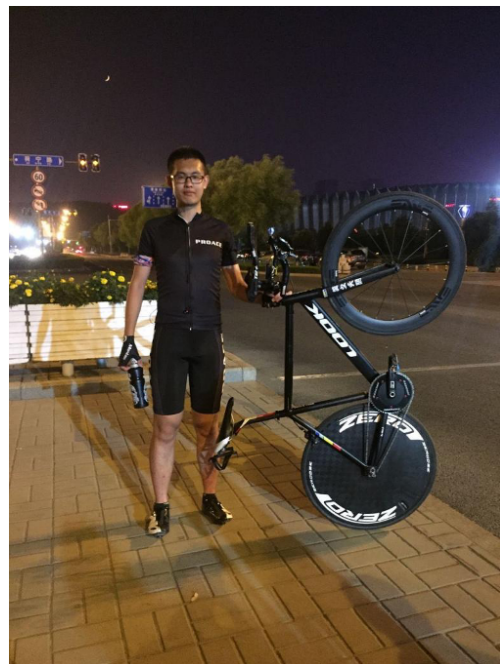
Although Writing Studies (WRS) 101 is a course about writing, the biggest thing I learned was not the writing aspect but the confidence. I can see from the design of the syllabus that you attached great importance to students' participation in class. It is no secret that at the early stage of the course, my motivation to actively participate in class activities was to get as many participation points as possible. Perhaps the temptation brought by 35% of the total score was stronger than my shyness or fear, and I gradually lost my inhibitions and spoke out what I thought. Two weeks into the course, I was no longer motivated by my grades but by my desire to share. This was the first time I realized I had changed. What's more, I can clearly see from this course how important revisions are. The first time I read "Shitty First Drafts" by Anne Lamott, I could hardly believe that professional writers also need to iterate on their first draft to get a better final draft. However, when I met with you about the first draft of Paper 1, I realized that Lamott was right because you suggested a large number of modifications. I revised my draft according to your suggestions, as well as to suggestions from our class tutor Crystal and other students. When I finally finished several revisions, the quality of my writing improved by leaps and bounds, and, to my surprise, I received an A-minus grade. Although my writing is still not perfect, I can see from this experience that even a C-minus piece of writing has the potential to become an A through revision.

When it comes to the course itself, I think weekly tutorials with Crystal, conferences with you, and student comments on each other's writing were very useful. This was a great opportunity for me to get advice from people with different knowledge backgrounds and different writing abilities. It is true that revision is a painful process, especially since it is difficult for me to discover my shortcomings, but the pain was greatly alleviated by help from you and others in the class.

What surprised me most in this course is about you. In the first class, you said you are from Poland, and your first language is not English. In the example of your Paper 1, if I

remember correctly, you mentioned that you were a poor English writer when you first began attending university. Your situation was almost the same as mine now, and it is hard to imagine how much writing training you went through to become who you are now. I don't think it's a miracle; it's a result of your effort, so maybe we international students can do as well as you in the future.

In the end, I want you to remember that I have the same hobby as you, which is cycling (although I'm so fat now that I'm out of breath after riding for a while). I started cycling in junior high school, initially just for commuting. In 2012 when fixed-gear bikes became popular among Chinese teenagers, I followed the trend and bought one. I joined a club called Grape Tree, which was founded by a famous track cyclist. Back then, I was full of enthusiasm and energy, went to informal competitions, and gradually made a lot of friends (even foreign ones, as I mentioned in Paper 1). I used to be so crazy about cycling that I even thought about giving up the chance to go to high school to become a professional cyclist, but finally, I gave up the idea after my parents scolded me. Of course, thanks to my parents, this was the right decision. Otherwise, I would never have had the opportunity to sit here and write this letter, or I would not be studying English at all. Here are some old photos of me that I wanted to share but never had a chance to show you. These are photos of me in high school when I was still in normal body shape.



*Junhui and his bike*

Ok, so this will be the end of my letter. I will return to Canada in September 2022, and I hope I can meet you on campus then. In addition, I will bring some Chinese tea for you to

try. If I remember correctly, you are also a tea drinker. I hope you stay healthy during the COVID-19 pandemic and have a happy day, every day!

Your student,

Junhui Li

2022/6/17

## Works Cited

Lamott, A. (2005). Shitty first drafts. In P. Eschholz, A. Rosa, & V. Clark (Eds.), *Language awareness: Readings for college writers* (pp. 93-97). Bedford/St. Martin's.