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### Dear Dr. Leston,

### I feel that this semester has changed me as a student in several ways. Some more obvious than others, but all can be clearly explained. In some ways though I do feel that I regressed as a learner and as a student. The work had an impact on the way that I saw many things in my life. The things in my life though are what I feel had to do with me regressing on some fronts, and in some ways as a learner. In this letter I’ll address both. You told me that “you want to work with people who are outstanding.” And that you feel that I should be one of those people that is outstanding in the eyes of my teachers and my peers, but that my inability to complete my work took away from that perception, and in fact made me appear to others as a slacker and a person that cannot be relied upon. For the better part of a year now, you’ve been a mentor, a person to which I look up to as a scholar and a learner, a person who has propelled me to open up my mind to see the broader picture, and most importantly to me, a friend. Showing concern about my personal life in times of distress, and offering emotional support when you deemed it necessary to offer, both things that you were in no way required to do, but did anyway. Letting you down as a student is my biggest regret as a student this semester, and while some of the reason that I did so, may not have been directly my fault per say, I had control over my actions, but chose to let the detriments in my life dictate my actions, and for that I am sorry, to myself, and also to you. You went above and beyond in your duties as a professor, and I drastically underperformed my actions as a student to you, so also for this, I’m sorry. So in addition to the information that was assigned for this letter, I’ll do my best to express some of personal and emotional issues that have held me back as a learner and as a student during the semester.

### Many of the assigned readings that we tackled throughout the semester have had a real effect on the way that I function as a student and as a learner. The one though that I felt had the greatest impact on me as a person, as well as, as a student, was the “6th Declaration of the Zapatista’s”. One of the ways that I feel that this piece had a tangible effect on me as a person, and as a student is, connecting the ideas that I have to the ideas and struggles of people all over the world. Especially in the world of computing, which as you know I have great interest in, the way that people tackle problems in today’s world, is by working together and talking about the issues that we face as a people, not as individuals. I draw on this idea often these days, posing questions about games, or computer hardware issues, or philosophical concerns that I have to people of various groups from all over the world. I take this idea from the portion of the “Zapatista’s 6th Declaration” when they state, “What we want in the world is to tell all of those who are resisting and fighting in their own ways and in their own countries, that you are not alone, that we, the Zapatistas, even though we are very small, are supporting you, and we are going to look at how to help you in your struggles and to speak to you in order to learn, because what we have, in fact, learned is to learn.” I feel that all people can relate to this, and in fact that all people should try and relate to this. Connecting to the issues that people in other parts of the world are facing is that way in which we as a people on this planet can grow, something that while I thought of before, I genuinely believe after studying the Zapatistas so in depth. They are truly motivating and awe inspiring people, and having knowledge of their movement is something that I will no doubt draw upon in my academic, and even social decisions, for some time to come.

### The blog posts are where you can clearly see my overall lack of concentration and inability to work efficiently on the semester. As you might be curious, my lack of concentration stemmed from many things, but mostly due to poor mental health, and an, at times crippling, depression. A depression that really began to develop towards the end of last year, which if you think about the drop in the quality of work in Journalism, makes a fair bit of sense. Without going into too much detail, a combination of both my parents rampant spouts of disease, a relationship that was very meaningful to me coming to an abrupt end, and just general fear of where my life was headed, all fed into me entering a dark time in my life overall. My general way to combat these negative feelings was, at the time, frequent, and excessive consumption of alcohol. Which eventually did lead to me becoming more depressed and highly reliant on the alcohol to be able to just generally be alone, because at times it felt as though without it my thoughts were consuming me. This is no excuse for the lack of academic effort for such a long period of time, but I do feel that it’s a large part of the reason. As I know, what you just read all but surely alarmed you, but you can relax. I’ve dropped the drinking habit, and through the help of some amazing people in my life, and the appearance of some new people, I’ve generally been able to cope, and in fact I’ve even begun to feel happy.

### Of the blog posts that I was able to complete, a few of them stood out to me, and were things that I put a fair bit of thought into, even after the submission of the post itself. One of these is most definitely, the response that I wrote in regards to Postman’s little story at the opening of the course book, regarding “Thamus” and the invention of writing. I feel that a story such as this one is a timeless classic, and is something that all people should really think about and try to analyze. Simply reading the work of a talented author gives you a great deal of information, but being told to think about a work “intellectually, literally, and emotionally”, gives you a new insight to the work itself. The quote that I chose to analyze the piece was, “It leads to my second qualification. As the spirit of Thamus reminds us, tools have a way of intruding on even the most unified set of cultural beliefs. There are limits to the power of both theology and metaphysics, and technology has business to do which sometimes cannot be stayed by any force. ” (Postman, 26). Analyzing a piece of text with something so profound to say, is something that will certainly have resonated with me a student. Postman’s work overall, has kept me aware of the technology that is so important in our daily lives, and even more so in my life, as a person who has such an interest in technology on a whole.

### One project that we focused on throughout the semester was particularly special to me was the exploratory project. For that paper, I tried to go out on a limb and research something that I didn’t have a huge amount of knowledge on already. That topic ended up being rape culture and the feminist movement. This was another project that my lack of focus on the work was clear in a way. Even though at that point I had started to make some level of recovery, sometimes you feel like you’re right where you started mentally, and you need all of your energy just to not return to that desolate, vacant mindset. Once again though, all of this is really in no way an excuse, it is though what was holding me back for the most part. Not to say that I’m the most proactive person, but that level of lethargy isn’t like me, and for having it show up in my work, I apologize. Back to the project, learning so much more than I already knew on the topic is something that really opened my mind in many ways. It gave me a desire to learn about even more things that I wasn’t all that familiar with, gaining knowledge has always been something that I loved, and this was just another way of doing that. This project certainly gave me the drive to step outside my comfort zone for any project, regardless of the topic or course in the future.

### One way that I certainly changed as a citizen is through my interpretation of my classmates work. Reading their blog posts on a weekly basis, surely had quite a large impact on the way in which I respond to other people’s work on a general level. For quite a long time I feel that I have been a person that could listen to an opinion that differed from mine, and to still be able to process their argument, and see it as it is, and not as an opposition to my work. However, having to respond in the comments to the work of others made me think carefully about what I was saying about their work. It changed the way in which I respond to any scholarly idea that is posed to me. I try to objectively analyze the work and words of others after having to do assignments such as those, which has had a direct effect on me as a citizen. I think being able to articulate a counter argument, offer solid feedback, and show support without gawking, is a strong set of skills that all citizens should strive to possess, and I think this work certainly made me do just that.

### As I said I would, I went off topic in quite a few places. I’m not exactly sure how you’ll perceive this work of mine, and the things that I say in it. What I’m not asking for is sympathy, things happen in life and I could have dealt with them far better than I did, but I made the active choice not to, and like I stated earlier, for that I am quite sorry. As pretentious as it sounds, being perceived as a person who is less than excellent is quite a difficult thing for me, and a thing that I don’t take well to. I hold myself to a certain standard of work and I fell well short of that, both by my standards and by yours. I still am grateful for the work that you have put into this class, and into me as a person. I do feel this course has aided me in growing as a reader, writer, learner, and as a citizen, contrary to what my level of work might indicate.