

American Public University System

A Look Inward

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The joy of learning something new, regardless of the purpose, can be an addictive feeling; this is especially true when that pursuit of knowledge is in a field or subject one is particularly interested in. Part of the adventure is in discovering new paths to take, and new ways to look at old ones; I have found this last part to be especially true the past few years as I have worked on getting my Master's degree.

I have always enjoyed learning, be it for personal or educational reasons; I chose to go to college as a way to continue my learning adventure because it is what suited my needs best. I originally intended to just go for my Bachelor's degree; when I started, my focus was more on art and art history, but that expanded along the way due to some of the courses I took and the degree options when I had to change schools. At some point during my educational journey, I decided to try my hand at getting my Master's degree in Humanities; it has not been a short, or always easy journey, but it has most certainly been worth it.

I began the Master's degree in Humanities program with the hope of just being able to finish it; I had a vague idea of perhaps teaching after, but it was more of a possibility than a set plan. In many ways, I viewed getting my degree as a way to fill in the time while my husband was stationed overseas; something to fill the time while my son was at school, but flexible enough to accommodate the different aspects of my life. I thought that I had a firm grasp on what I would need to do for the degree program, based on how I had done in the courses for my Bachelor's degree, but also knew that I had room for improvement.

Now at the end of my degree program, I would definitely say that it was more than just a time filler; I had fun taking the different courses required and learning new things, as well as reviewing those things I already knew. I still find learning to be enjoyable, and addictive; I plan to take more courses in another year or so, but on smaller scale degree wise. I did have room for

improvement, but mostly in the technical aspects of studying and writing; I also needed to gain more confidence in my work, but that is something that will be an ongoing task. While teaching is still possibility, I am now leaning more to taking some research courses and looking into becoming a literary researcher for authors; I discovered that I enjoy looking up sources and figuring out which ones will work. I was reminded that while I enjoy the topics for some of the pieces I have done over the years, I am not a fan of writing papers; this as much as anything is why I have no desire to try for a doctorate.

I have learned a lot about how to improve my writing, and the way I approach a topic, but while my paper writing has gotten better, I cannot say that it is something I enjoy doing or want to do beyond what is required for classwork. That said, I do admit that the improvements to my writing and the way I think about topics has led to me being able to better identify issues with both previous and current works; this was most noticeable when I was revising the artifacts for my portfolio. I knew that I would learn more about different topics because of the courses required, but never thought about how much of an impact they would also have upon my writing abilities.

When I started the program in 2022, I was mostly focused on seeing if I could do it rather than on what I might do with my degree; I had some ideas of what I could do, and which of those options sounded the best to me, but I did not have much of a plan beyond finishing my degree. Now I have more concrete opinions of what I would like to do with my degree, and plans on how I can go about doing that; I have also learned a good deal about myself in addition to more about my chosen field of study. The journey may not have been the easiest, or shortest, to reach this point in my life, but it is one I would never regret having taken.