1. **Background Information**: My name is Mike Taber and I was accepted into the program in Fall 2018 and graduated in Spring 2022. My concentration was Film and New Media Studies, and my thesis focused on the films of Terrence Malick and George Lucas.
2. **Advice**: My main advice to future applicants is to have confidence in your abilities and take pride in the work you have done. As I was working on my thesis, I often doubted myself – sometimes rewriting the same sentence over and over again because it just wasn’t good *enough*. I know now, it was good enough. I am incredibly proud of the work I did during my time at USF.
3. **Current Occupation**: After graduation, I accepted a teaching position at a small private school in Sarasota that focuses on providing a safe and welcoming environment for students with different learning styles. Currently, I teach students ranging from 9th to 12th grade. I have taught American History, World History, Geography, Economics, U.S. Government, and Film Studies. When building this curriculum, I took everything I learned during my years in the USF HCS program and poured it into the Film Studies class. My time in the USF HCS program not only provided the knowledge needed to design a Film Studies course, but I also learned what it means to teach and communicate. I developed the essential mix of preparation, improvisation, and empathy needed to be a teacher.
4. **Favorite Department Memory**: Many of my favorite memories from my time in the department come from the late nights spent with my fellow graduate students as we all rushed to meet the various deadlines. Writing a thesis and earning a master’s degree is stressful. There is no way around that fact. However, as stressed I was at the time, I miss that feeling. The feeling of bouncing ideas off each other at 2am while crying laughing at the dumbest joke you’ve ever heard.

**Favorite Class/Professor Who Inspired You:** I worked with many wonderful professors – both as a student and a teaching assistant – but I should single out Dr. Amy Rust. Her guidance and genuine kindness changed the direction of my life and helped me discover my calling in life – teaching. I worked hard to overcome several personal issues during my time in program, and Dr. Rust always offered empathy and patience in response. Especially patience! As I began teaching, I tried my best to follow her example. Dr. Rust also taught my favorite class – Horror Film.

1. **Something That Surprised Me**: The thing that surprised me the most about the program was probably meeting my finance. That was a pleasant surprise! However, to focus more on the program itself I would highlight its intellectual diversity. While I came into the program with a specific focus on film, I left with a comprehensive knowledge of a variety of different forms of art that I had never considered studying.