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Intermediate Composition 2089

Reflection Final Draft

25 April 2016

Semester Reflection

In my opinion, I believe that writing reflections are slightly difficult. I find it hard to evaluate myself to the fullest extent because in some instances I have not performed at my fullest potential, however, throughout the term of taking Honors English 2089, I am proud of the work that I have put forth. This course is the first English course that I have taken since being in college and it has pushed me to be cautious of my grammar, develop solid ideas, and analyze texts more efficiently. I have learned a lot about myself and how I write an essay from start to finish while enrolled in this course.

We began the semester with an introduction to literacy and how one’s literacy has been shaped throughout their life. During this time, we read two excerpts; one from Sherman Alexie and the other from Malcolm X, each describing a personal literacy narrative. These two readings from our textbook *Writing about Writing* were probably my favorite texts to read. A prominent line from the Malcolm X reading that stood out to me was that “anyone who has read a great deal imagine the new world that opened”. This line stood out to me the most because it reminded me of my own personal literacy and how it was shaped. For the very first essay assignment, we were to develop a personal literacy narrative and recount two instances where we believe our literacy was developed. I decided to recount two stories both occurring when I was very young. My favorite part of this assignment was describing my two experiences because I tried to make it seem like the reader was right there with me in each moment. I described both how I felt mentally and physically when taking a reading class at four years old, or visiting Dinosaur World when I was in second grade. For this essay it was a combination of both analysis and description, which always seemed slightly difficult for me to accomplish all in one essay. However, I felt very confident in my writing for this first assignment. I went to the Academic Writing Center (AWC) and received feedback on areas I should change and even grammar mistakes that I had made. In addition to going to the AWC, I also received advice from my peers who reviewed my essay during class before it had to be turned in. With all of this guidance before turning in the first essay, I was so sure that I would at least get an A- or A. I felt as if I was putting my best foot forward. I would be lying if I didn’t say that I was slightly disappointed when I received a B+. I was so sure that I had included everything, but this was a learning experience and I was able to revise the essay to receive and A, so an A- average overall. This essay assignment was probably my favorite because it allowed for me to really think deeply and critically about memories that I had not realized contributed to the development of my literacy.

The second essay of the term was definitely a lot harder than writing the first essay. The first essay was written from my point of view and I was analyzing memories that I believed contributed to my literacy development. For the second essay, it was somewhat like writing a research paper because we chose a topic and had to analyze three articles; a popular source, scholarly source, and a source of our choosing. One of the requirements of the assignment was to choose a topic that related to our major. I decided to discuss embryonic stem cells because it relates to my major, Biological sciences, and I found the topic to be interesting. This assignment was not like a normal research paper, but it was a genre analysis. Whenever I see the word analysis, I get slightly nervous because I tend to struggle with analyzing texts sometimes. I knew that I had to really work extremely hard on this essay if I wanted to do well. I began by actively searching research databases to find articles that I found interesting and articles from different types of sources. I ended up choosing two articles from a database and one article that I found from the *New York Times*. The hardest part about this essay was figuring out what the points of the essay would be and I how I was going to display them within the essay effectively. I decided to focus on literary technique, tone, content, and length in relation to the three sources that I used. Even though I was hesitant about the analysis portion of this essay, I believe that it was actually one of my strengths. For each source I described how the author used rhetorical devices to grasp the audience’s attention, all the while still managing to discuss embryonic stem cells in an informative manner. I believe that when it came to analyzing the texts for rhetorical devices I did not find it to be so difficult, because I had taken AP English in high school and that was a major focus of that course. I enjoyed this essay from start to finish and I believe that is because we were given the opportunity to choose our topics. I believe that having a set plan for this essay was why I was so successful and received an A-. By having the chance to write three drafts and receive feedback from my peers, I was able to develop a solid essay.

The last and most difficult essay assignment was to write an ethnography on a discourse community that you are a part of or would like to know more about. Before choosing a discourse community, we read an excerpt by John Swales, a linguistics professor, about the six defining characteristics of a discourse community. This allowed for us to become familiar with what a discourse community is and how it is different from a speech community or a community in general. It took me some time to try and pinpoint exactly what discourse community I wanted to write about, but I eventually decided to write about the Louis Stokes Alliance for Minority Participation (LSAMP) Scholar Program at the University of Cincinnati. I am a member of the discourse community, but it was not until I started doing research for this essay did I truly understand how a community I was a part of was also considered a discourse community. This essay assignment required us to have both primary and secondary research. I decided to interview two people from the discourse community and to gage their personal opinion about the community and if the community has benefited them in some way, while they have been a part of the discourse community. It was somewhat hard finding time to meet with individuals in person, so I decided to do an interview through email and I asked one person three questions and the other two questions. This assignment tested my ability to incorporate primary research into an essay effectively and in a way that helped to emphasize reasons why LSAMP is a discourse community. I did struggle with one portion of the assignment and that was effectively conveying the genres that are present within the discourse community. I probably could have included more to explain my reasoning behind this and why I thought that “professionalism” and “networking” were considered genres. I believe that for this essay I had to incorporate everything that I learned from the first two essay assignments, whether it be about analyzing texts or developing a solid essay idea efficiently. I was very proud of the A - that I received for this assignment because I worked so hard on this essay and it was a significant portion of our overall grade in the course. This assignment may have been difficult and time consuming, but I believe that the advice that I received from my peers and the AWC helped to contribute to my success.

Throughout this semester I have truly learned a lot about myself and how I go about writing an essay. Once I know what the topic of the essay will be, it becomes easier for my main ideas to come together and I am successful in completing the final product. I have learned that my weaknesses include grammar mistakes and my new strength is analyzing texts. As I move forward in my college career I will be able to work on my weaknesses and strengths both in and out of classes related to my major. I have enjoyed the essay assignments and hope to continue to practice the techniques that I have developed while enrolled in this course.