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Final Portfolio Reflection

Personally, I have found this course to be one of the most engaging, interesting, and beneficial English classes that I have ever taken in my educational career. English has never been a strong interest of study of mine, but this course helped change my view. Previously, I had viewed English classes as boring, useless, and just a requirement. However, this class showed me that there are more aspects to English than just writing tedious research papers.

My writing process has changed completely throughout this semester. I used to create my best work for my first draft, and make very small revisions to it for the consecutive drafts. However, I now compose a “shitty first draft” in order to get all of my thoughts down on paper. For my second draft, I now revise my first draft tremendously, making sure the structure, flow, and organization all work together. During the second draft, I basically attempt to turn my shitty first draft into an actual draft of the paper I am composing. For the consecutive drafts, I make minor revisions to help clarify things or fix typos.

For my specific discourse community, which is criminal justice, I think that ethos and logos are of more importance to me than pathos. Although it is almost impossible to eliminate emotion from your judgment and writing, I think it is more important to be logical and credible in the criminal justice field. One reason for this is that people working in the criminal justice discourse community will be more willing to listen to what you have to say if you know what you are talking about, are qualified, and are using logical arguments rather than using emotional appeals. For example, if you are writing about racial discrimination, it would be more effective for a criminal justice audience to use empirical evidence, data, and facts rather than emotional appeals.

Each assignment helped me learn different writing techniques and elements. For example, the rhetorical analysis taught me how to compare different types of writing as it relates to the use of rhetorical appeals and discourse communities. On the other hand, the multi-modal mini ethnography allowed me to use my prior knowledge of graphic design to create a text. I created three different brochures that related to my field. The major issues essay allowed me to research a topic in my field, see both sides of the argument, and then argue my point of view on the topic while backing up my claims with research.

I think the rhetorical analysis essay challenged me the most in the area of my rhetorical knowledge. My main reason for stating this is I had to analyze pieces written by two other authors, and notice their use of the rhetorical appeals, how the conveyed their point, who their audience was, and other things of this nature. In one of my high school English classes, I vaguely remember learning about ethos, logos, and pathos. In this course, however, I learned what the rhetorical appeals actually mean and how they are used in writing. I also learned about rhetorical situation and writing to different discourse communities.

I personally found the multi-modal ethnography to be the most enjoyable assignment that we were assigned. This project allowed me to view writing in a different way then I had previously been taught. After completing it, I now see that writing is not strictly for papers, but it can take on a variety of different forms. This project also showed me that images and graphics can be chosen to have a specific rhetorical effect. However, I also enjoyed constructing the major issues essay assignment. I personally enjoy argumentative papers, and being able to write one on a topic that I find interesting and to back my claims and arguments up with empirical evidence made this project even better in my opinion.

The feedback I have received so far points out the major flaws in my work so far, and I took the suggestions that I received into consideration and applied them to and revised my work. For the rhetorical analysis, I primarily separated my paragraph on ethos, pathos, and logos into three separate paragraphs, which go into more depth of each appeal. I constructed one paragraph comparing the pathos found in both articles, one on the ethos, and one on the logos. I also restructured the paragraph on the audiences, and fixed minor typos and confusing sentences throughout the entire paper. For the multi-modal assignment, I revised the second brochure on career opportunities. In this brochure, I replaced the columns on minimum education requirements and annual salaries for each job and inserted brief description of what people in these careers actually do. In addition to this, I also fixed minor typos throughout the brochures.  For the major issues essay, the main two changes were on the structuring of the introduction paragraph and the portion talking about racial biases. In the introduction, I included a clearer introduction to alcohol and tobacco. I also revised the racial bias paragraph and went into a little bit more depth into the topic.

In conclusion, I enjoyed this course for a variety of reasons. The main assignments, for the most part, I thought were not as tedious as previous English assignments that I have had to complete. I really enjoyed the multi-modal mini ethnography and the major issues essay. One of my hobbies and passions is electronic media, so I found the brochures I constructed for the second assignment to be fun and engaging. I also liked that assignment because it taught me that writing and rhetoric could be found pretty much everywhere, in a variety of different formats. I also think that some of the things that I learned in this class can help me in my future classes and when I enter into the criminal justice field. I learned how to construct brochures and websites, how to decipher rhetorical strategies that authors are using, when and how to use different rhetorical techniques, and how to construct an argument that acknowledges both sides of an issue and makes claims based on facts.