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Reflective Essay

 I have noticed a lot of growth as a writer through out my freshman year of college. While English 110 focused on evaluating myself as a reader and writer, English 120 focused on evaluating the power of language and action in different contexts. English 120 helped to strengthen many of the skills I acquired in English 110, and I have watched my writing progress with each essay I was assigned this semester. I have improved on skills such as drafting, using college level vocabulary, and thinking outside of the box. I have become better at brainstorming ideas and articulating them into the correct words I need to get my point across and on to paper. The essays that I wrote throughout the semester each sparked my curiosity and were enjoyable to write. They helped me gain a better understanding of myself and of the people in the world around me.

The first assignment we were asked to write was the Discourse Community essay. This essay asked me to evaluate my place in the communities I am a part of while also realizing how I use my language and actions differently in each. My thought process for this essay started with determining each of the communities I am apart of. I chose to focus on the communities I have created with my friends and with my family. I chose to compare the two because I act and speak very differently in each. I then broke the categories down even more, comparing the way I act around my Pace friends and my home friends, my parents and my siblings. I seemed to write the essay with ease and found it immensely helpful to have my first draft read by my peers during class time. Peer proofreading is a tool that I find extremely valuable because my classmates can catch the mistakes that I might have missed out on. It also gives me a look into their perspective, which helps my insight grow and aids my writing to develop further.

The second essay we tackled was the Ethnography, which was a dramatic change from any usual essay that I had ever written. The Ethnography was research based, and asked us to examine the language and behavior of people in a specific location, while also considering the context of the situation being observed. At first, this prompt was hard for me to comprehend. In addition, it required us to accumulate field research, which is a task that I had never done before. After re-reading the prompt and re-writing my first draft a hundred times, I finally understood how I wanted my essay to unfold. I started to observe the different ways in which teenagers use specific slang or curse words, depending on the situation, to articulate their feelings. I emphasized the power of language, and how our words can hurt people without us realizing it. The hardest part of this essay was acquiring online research that could fully support my field research. However, once I had all of the pieces, it wasn’t too hard for me to put the puzzle together. I enjoyed this essay because it challenged me to think more abstractly than I normally would and taught me skills that will benefit me in future assignments.

A requirement for the English 120 course was a do a Digital Remix of one of the essays we had written throughout the semester. This was similar to my English 110 course because we were required to do the same thing. The Digital Remix assignment was an exciting way to put a spin on the research I conducted in my essay. I had a pleasant experience with using a website called Storify during the first semester and decided to use the tool again to create a digital remix out of my Ethnography essay. Storify possess a search engine that allows you to scan all of social media and the Internet by searching key words to support your essay topic. I simply dragged relatable tweets, YouTube videos, and online news articles and dropped them under text from my Ethnography to reinforce and support what was stated in my essay. In addition to creating a digital remix, we were also required to present them in front of the class. I feel like this is a requirement to help enhance our public speaking and presentation skills, which is important because it is favorable to handle yourself eloquently in front of an audience. I was chosen to present first, due to the unfortunate reality that my last name starts with an A. Although I was nervous to some extent, I tried to remain calm and captivating while my classmates gave me their undivided attention. When I finished my presentation, I enjoyed watching the presentations of my peers and educating myself on their topics. It was an easy and fun way to unwind from the semester.

Along with the essays we discussed and worked on in class, we spent some class time discussing the readings we were assigned. I found these discussions genuinely entertaining and thought provoking. Although I am quite introverted, I found it enlightening to listen to my classmates voice their opinions on societal issues that we would debate about in class. Being able to feel comfortable enough to speak openly and honestly with peers in a classroom setting is important because not everyone has the same beliefs, morals, and opinions. Sharing these different ideas and thoughts in a classroom can give a student a new perspective on something they might not have necessarily thought about if it was not discussed in class. It is also important to create a classroom where difference of opinion can be celebrated and encouraged. I feel as if my English 120 class did just that.

Before concluding, I would like to reflect and elaborate upon how much I enjoyed taking English classes throughout my life as a student. English has always been my favorite subject since middle school because I have always been given such efficient and knowledgeable teachers. My middle school English teacher instilled in me a solid memorization of grammar rules and a love for vocabulary, which has guided me throughout high school and into college. I am emphasizing this point to reiterate my progression as an English student from when I was a young girl, to the present day as a young woman in college. I appreciate theses skills because they have allowed me to be able to write coherent essays that express my thoughts and opinions in a comprehensible way. These skills grant me the power to be able to participate in English 120, along with my other courses, with confidence in my writing and speaking.

As my freshman year of college comes to a shockingly abrupt end, I find myself reflecting upon not only my growth a writer, but also as a student. At the beginning of the semester, I did not take my courses as seriously as I should have. I was rudely awakened and quickly learned how imperative it is for me to want to do well in school. Over the course of the second semester, I tried to engulf myself in the information each teacher passed on to me. I realized how each and every subject goes hand-in-hand, and how all the knowledge that our teachers present us with is relevant and worth listening to. For example, Overall, I thoroughly enjoyed taking English 120. It is interesting for me to see my progression from English 110 and throughout the rest of the second semester. I plan to use the skills I learned in English 120 throughout the rest of my college career.