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Writing for the Humanities

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### Self-Assessment Essay

After taking this course, I feel that my writing has definitely improved and changed from the ways I was accustomed to writing. The assignments that were assigned allowed me to explore different genres of writing and encouraged me to get creative with my writing. Through achieving the course assignments, my perceptions on what writing is and does have evolved this semester.

First and foremost, my range of linguistics differs throughout the assigned writing pieces. I found that with the Op-Ed assignment, I was able to use my voice the way I would in a setting with people of my age. The rhetorical situation of my op-ed was that over-policing has become a widespread issue in New York City and minorities are the group that took the biggest hit from the policy. I chose to pitch this op-ed to BuzzFeed News. Therefore, specific audiences I intended to write to were minorities from New York and the younger generation. Since I am part of that audience, I was able to write in a way that appeals to myself. For that reason, I was able to include this line in my op-ed, “Whether it was an injustice related to food stands, yeah, food stands, or refusing to pay the train fare...”. I used the word, “yeah” to make it seem as though I was having a conversation and telling a story to my audience, the way many BuzzFeed op-eds have done. Moreover, my writing differed for the third assignment, the critical analysis essay. Because I had to be analytical, I found it more difficult to use the same style of writing and tone as my op-ed. For this essay, my tone was much more assertive and informative because there were other sources

and opinions that I had to take into account whereas for the op-ed, the only opinion I had to express and support was my own. I wrote my critical analysis essay to analyze a video of New York's mayor, Andrew Cuomo. In the video, Andrew Cuomo addresses a question regarding financial compensation to undocumented immigrants during the Covid-19 pandemic by saying, "We're looking into it but we have real financial problems." I was able to voice my opinions, but I had to do it in a much more formal manner. A clear example of this is when I started, "It is unethical to allow a group of people to struggle to survive during a pandemic simply because of their immigration status." The words, "struggle to survive" were included in this sentence to express the gravity of the situation and appeal to pathos. Instead of being sarcastic like in the previous example from my op-ed, I was more assertive and straightforward with my message. Altogether, my language did vary throughout the different writing pieces. I found that the op-ed gave me more room to explore a new style of writing since it was the first time I was able to incorporate sarcasm and an informal tone in my writing. This showed me that in writing, language must be altered depending on who the intended audience is.

Moreover, over the course of the semester, I was able to enhance strategies for reading, drafting, revising, editing, and self-assessment. Before taking this class, I struggled reading articles that were not interesting to me. However, after many rhetorical analysis assignments, I was able to understand and appreciate new genres. The rhetorical analysis assignments on Blackboard allowed me to get a better understanding of the purpose of an article, the issue being discussed, the author's opinion on the issue, and the exigence in an article. The blackboard discussion post assignment titled, "The Rhetorical Situation (Bitzer)" illustrates how I was able to analyze an op-ed I picked from BuzzFeed news. In my response, I explained how the genre of

the writing piece was an expository op-ed because the author “simply aims to get the reader from point A to B.” I then provide examples of how the author organized his claims in a way that provides the audience with background information on his claim, his actual claim, and finally reform for the issue. Furthermore, my drafting techniques have improved after taking this course. I, unfortunately, was a big procrastinator. However, there were many steps that I was required to take before handing in a final submission, which allowed me to work on my writing thoroughly before writing a final piece. The peer reviews also helped me make changes to my writing and encouraged me to analyze my own writing to see what could be improved. For instance, for the critical analysis essay, a peer comment that helped me improve my essay was, “Some suggestions I think would benefit your paper would be your conclusion, you can reiterate your author’s strategies and argument to wrap everything up nicely.” I took advantage of this comment and improved my conclusion. Instead of simply ending my essay with a closing statement, I repeated my claim and added a call to action. This way, it made my writing more meaningful because I showed the audience that I not only have an opinion on the topic, instead it showed that I put thought into the essay and I have suggestions for improvement.

Additionally, this course allowed me to negotiate my own writing goals and audience expectations regarding conventions of genre and rhetorical situation. My visual essay exemplifies how I had to come up with a clear goal for my message which had to be clearly represented in a photo rather than in writing. This was difficult for me at first because I never composed a visual essay before. I was worried that my message would not be clear enough in just a photo. However, through the meme I created, my message was clear to my intended audience. As stated in my visual essay, “The genre I chose was a meme because despite this

being a very serious topic, I wanted minorities, the target audience, to be able to laugh at and ridicule this insane system that rules over us.” Additionally, another targeted audience was young people because a meme is something that can be found on Instagram or Twitter, which are social media platforms most young people are a part of. The rhetorical situation of this piece was the same as my op-ed which is that over-policing has become a widespread issue in New York City and minorities have been the group that took the biggest hit from the policy. With this meme, my audience was very likely to understand the issue and relate to it more than they would if they were reading a scholarly article about over-policing. Additionally, forming a stance organized my writing much more. In reference to my op-ed, without a stance, it would have been unclear what my opinion on the rhetorical situation was. Creating a stance made it clear to the audience what I felt about the topic I was discussing. Prior to this course, I never really focused on the audience of my essays or the rhetorical situation of my essays. However, it is a new skill that I have acquired thanks to these assignments. This skill helped me understand that writing is intended to convey a message to a specific group of people. That way it organizes the essay much more than writing to a random audience.

Additionally, practicing using various online databases, library resources, and the internet to locate sources appropriate to my writing projects allowed me to enhance my perception on what writing really is. The critical analysis essay, for instance, encouraged me to take advantage of the school library’s online database in order to find a scholarly article. This took a lot of time because I had to be fully confident with the sources I was choosing in order to support my claim. Choosing appropriate sources was a very critical part to my writing experience. I found myself switching my sources multiple times before I chose relevant articles. I found that with the wrong

sources, I could not truly back up my thoughts and ideas because I wouldn't appear credible to my audience. Because this was a critical analysis essay, I was required to choose a source and analyze it with other sources to back up my analysis. This specific writing assignment showed me that writing is much more than just explaining my opinion. It is about understanding all sides to a topic enough to form an opinion and deliver that message to a targeted audience. All writing pieces have a purpose whether it is to inform, persuade, etc. Without prior analytical research and the appropriate sources to support the argument of the piece, the entire essay will be disorganized.

Ultimately, all of these skills have given writing a new meaning. Prior to taking this class I believed that writing was about simply getting your point across. As previously stated, it is about becoming knowledgeable and credible and forming a concrete opinion before you can deliver a message to a targeted audience, not just anyone. There are many steps that come with writing an essay and each step must be taken into account, otherwise, everything becomes disorganized. Furthermore, with assignments like the visual essay, I was able to view how one can use multiple aspects like humor, and pictures, in order to convey a message. Although the visual piece that I created used very few words, I followed the same steps if I would have written an essay. Writing is a powerful skill that I never truly appreciated until I was able to learn the true process behind it. Although I don't believe I am an expert, I have definitely improved my writing skills since the start of the semester. However, with all that I have learned, these are skills that I am confident will allow me to succeed in future essays and papers throughout my college experience.

