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English 150

Dr. Miskec

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Final Exam

This semester was my first semester at Longwood University and also my first semester taking a college level writing intensive class. Over the course of the semester I’ve written three different portfolios, each consisting of developed essays with other course work that was used to write them. Through reading my portfolios from the beginning of each portfolio to the end, as well as from portfolio one as a whole to portfolio 3 as a whole, it is very clear to see my developments as a writer. Through the writings and course work I’ve completed this semester, I’ve developed writing skills that assist me in producing more advanced researched academic writing.

One of the most prominent skills I advanced in over the course of the past semester is citing the sources I use in my research papers. In the first peer edit draft of my essay “Surfing as Its Own Religion” you can see that I was unsure of how to correctly use in-text citations, often allowing quotations to stand alone as their own sentences. This also appears in the first sentence of the second paragraph of the final draft of “Surfing as Its Own Religion.” Despite the quotation still standing as its own sentence, I became more confident in my knowledge of in-text citations and they were correct in the final draft. Although the issue I had with quotations standing alone wasn’t immediately resolved, it was fixed by the second portfolio’s final essay, “The Holidays in Minneapolis,” where all of the quotations became properly integrated into the essay. I continued to work on this skill in following papers, honing in on making quotations integrate into the paper more smoothly. In the final draft of my essay “Study Abroad in India,” which was my final essay of the semester, the quotations used are more evenly distributed throughout the paper. The quotations in my final essay provide better back up to my own ideas as opposed to standing on their own as they did in the first essay of the semester. This is a skill that I still need to work on in my future academic writing but it was definitely cultivated to where it is currently through the writings I did in English 150 over the past semester.

Another issue I had in my writing at the beginning of the semester also pertained to citations. I was not sure how to create a works cited page in the correct format and did not immediately focus on fixing this skill. The works cited page of every essay I wrote leading up to the very last draft of “Study Abroad in India” had the same format issues. The titles of the pages were incorrect, the citations were not in alphabetical order, the spacing was incorrect, and the necessary indentions either didn’t exist or I indented the wrong lines. It was one of the harder lessons for me to learn during the semester but it pays off by the very last draft of the essay “Study Abroad in India” where the works cited page is done correctly, with all of the previously mentioned issues properly fixed.

This is where English 150 helped me to develop my skills as a student as well. Throughout the course of the semester, I was so focused on developing some skills that I totally ignored others, such as works cited pages. I learned to become more flexible in the sense of being willing to admit that I need to work on a certain skill or change a paper to make it better suited to its specific purpose. I also learned that I need to properly allocate my time to developing all of my writing skills as opposed to only focusing on one because if one is extremely underdeveloped it causes the entire writing to look poorly done.

Another aspect of my writing that exemplifies my newfound willingness to edit is the differences found between the first and final drafts of each of my three papers. The first and final drafts of “Surfing as Its Own Religion” are almost identical. I felt that I had written the paper well enough and, besides fixing minor surface errors, I felt that there was no need to change the paper. By the second portfolio (The Holidays in Minneapolis), I grudgingly began to accept that I needed to edit my paper between the first and final drafts. It is apparent that I changed the arrangement of a few of the paragraphs but it doesn’t change much. It isn’t until the third portfolio that my work begins to show actual signs of deletion, addition, and rearrangement. Throughout the semester we peer edited one another’s work and I saw that it made a difference in the quality of essays to edit them. This led me to become more willing to edit my own, as you can see in the differences between the first and final essays of “Study Abroad in India.” There are sentences that are present in the final draft that weren’t in the first due to added research, some sentences are reworded or their position in the paper is changed, and other that were in the first draft are gone entirely from the final product. This is evidence that I developed the skill of willingness to edit my papers over the course of the semester.

Beyond changing the structure of my essays throughout their development, I also became more aware of changing them to fit their specific purpose. In the final draft of “Surfing as Its Own Religion” it’s apparent that I was taught to write formulaically and I was wary of venturing away from what I knew to work. The essay is impersonal and has no real concern for a specific audience. It uses broad, explanatory terms to blanket a large audience as opposed to focusing on a main one. I used a very formulaic model for the paper that was didn’t give the paper a real sense of purpose. Throughout the semester, a lot of class time was spent discussing different audience types, purposes, and ways to address both, either through tone, diction, or risk taking in writing. The second portfolio I wrote shows a great leap in my willingness to take risks in my writing. In my initial research for the paper I wrote about Minneapolis in the Spring, showing that my final essay would more than likely discuss the city in the Spring. However, the essay itself discusses the season of Winter. I took a leap of faith after doing some more research and decided to drastically change my essay. In addition, the essay was meant to target a specific person, persuading them specifically, as the ideal audience, to want to visit Minneapolis. This essay is where I began to get a feel for audience types. The essay targets someone that I know, giving me the opportunity to tailor the essay to them such as when I relate Minneapolis to Farmville or mention the honors pillars in the cover letter of the essay. These Things both relate to Jesse Znosko, the subject of my essay. Also, the tone of the essay, while still academic, is more playful and personalized to Jesse. This contrasts with the third portfolio, “Study Abroad in India,” which was written to a specific audience of the Longwood University Study Abroad Committee. The tone of “Study Abroad in India” is more formal and straight to the point as it is written as a formal proposal. After writing these two essays I felt that I grew in my audience awareness. I became more aware of the tone my essays took as well as the language used.

Throughout English 150, my writing skills grew from that of a formulaic, high school level writer to that of a college level writer. My essays developed into those that have the potential to hold an audience’s attention as well as target a specific audience. This class not only taught me functional skills as a writer but also skills as a general college student.