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ENGL 150

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Development of Writing Skills

English 150 is a class where you learn how to read different types of texts, analyze them, and write an essay based on your analysis. Through this course I also learned how to write different styles of essays. At the beginning of the semester, we focused on our opinions about our literacy and its development. We moved on from there to writing an analytical essay about a text and then writing an argumentative paper about the value of higher education. Throughout English 150, I have developed the skills of planning essays, including sources within my writing, and providing detail within the essay, while still needing to improve upon the revising process and MLA formatting.

Throughout this course, the outlines that I have created before writing my essays have greatly improved. In the past, my outline for an essay would consist of my thesis and a couple of general ideas for the paper. Now my outlines give details for each paragraph so that I have all of my main and minor ideas completely thought out before beginning to write my essay. This makes the writing process easier and allows me to be sure that I have all the components of the essay before writing it. The best example of how my outline helped my essay to be better is my “When Breath Becomes Air” Analysis. This paper has a defined introduction, three main body paragraphs (each with their own main idea), and a conclusion paragraph (“When Breath Becomes Air” Analysis, 1-4). If I had not done an outline before writing the paper I could have easily had a very different structure within my paper and my main points may not have been as developed. The skill of creating an outline was also beneficial in my other classes. I created an outline for a paper I wrote for my Political Science class and it also made the writing process for that paper much easier to do.

Including sources within my essays is another skill that I improved upon throughout this course. Before writing each essay for this course we read multiple texts. For the first and third essays those texts could be used within our papers and for the second essay we picked one of the texts to analyze. In my first essay, I only incorporated two quotes into my entire essay. For the second essay, I used more quotes to aid in analyzing the text. One example of this is when I was describing an anecdote from the text and I explained what the author was thinking by saying “he wonders if he ‘had made more moral slides than strides’ at this point in his career (84)” (“When Breath Becomes Air” Analysis, 2). The third essay that I wrote had many different sources referenced throughout it in order to help back up my argument. An example of this was when I referenced Louis Menand’s “theory in his article in *The New Yorker*” to help explain why a liberal arts higher education is valuable (Value of Higher Education, 1). With each essay, my incorporation of quotes and references to texts became more frequent and apparent within my papers. The final skill that I have developed and improved on throughout this course is providing detail within my essays. In my first essay, I did not provide much detail in my anecdotes about my literacy. It improved in the second essay because I went in to much more depth when describing the anecdote told in the text I was analyzing.

The two main things that I still need to improve upon are the revising process and MLA formatting. For the revision process, I am very good at correcting my grammatical errors and punctuation, but I struggle with adding ideas or changing main points. If you compared the drafts for my essays and my final essays side by side you would not see very many differences. In order to improve upon this I need to be more willing to add to my paper instead of being satisfied with the first version that I complete. MLA formatting is the other main skill I still need to improve on from this course. In each of my essays, I did my in-text citations correctly. However, I did not use the proper formatting for my works cited page. According to *The Little Seagull Handbook*, the works cited page for an MLA style paper should be double spaced, have a centered heading, begin “at the left margin; subsequent lines are indented”, and it should be “alphabetized by the authors’ last names” (Bullock et al, 156). For each essay that I did this semester I corrected one of the above things, but I never managed to do all of them.

Taking English 150 accomplishes your goal 2 requirement for Longwood students. According to the Undergraduate Catalog, the outcomes of goal 2 are that you will develop “the ability to write and speak logically, clearly, precisely, and the ability, through accurate reading and listening, to acquire, organize, present, and document information and ideas” (102). These outcomes all lead to the overall goal of becoming a better writer and becoming more capable of writing different style of papers. This outcome is beneficial to my major, Liberal Studies: Elementary Education, because I am now better prepared to write papers for my education classes and better prepared to teach others how to write.

Works Cited

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