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Delany-Ullman

Writing 37

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First Draft Midterm Portfolio

Writing 37 has definitely been one of the most difficult classes I have ever taken. Prior to taking this class, I have always believed my writing abilities would be sufficient enough to get me through any essay-based class. However, this was not the case. A few weeks into the quarter I had made the realization that the demands for a writing class in college were much greater than what was demanded of me in high school. I made this realization soon after receiving feedback from the professor on the first few homework assignments regarding rhetorical analyses. While I always managed to turn the assignments in on time, my work was not done correctly most of the time. For example, in the assignment which dealt with rhetorically analyzing Siobhan Fallon’s short story, “Remission,” we were asked to find quotes that demonstrated each of the rhetorical appeals: ethos, pathos, and logos. For my example of logos, the quote I selected claimed that the main character would, “sit awkwardly, staring into her lap” (Mejia). After claiming that that quote demonstrated logos, I failed to acknowledge how it demonstrated it. Thus, I received negative feedback from the professor. Similar situations had arisen for just about each homework assignment I completed.

Because I constantly did not correctly accomplish what was asked of me in each assignment, I was always afraid to share my answers in the class discussions. Consequently, I rarely participated in classroom discussions. However, a few more weeks into the quarter, the class was put into groups to work on a project. My group was small, consisting of only three other students. I believe this benefitted me because it allowed me to gain confidence in sharing my answers without the fear of being judged for my incorrect answers. Soon after, this helped me realize that other students were finding difficulty in certain topics just like I was. The small group setting allowed us to work together and discuss our questions or concerns in order to come to a conclusion on the answers.

It wasn’t long before each group was put to the task of rhetorically analyzing a specific short story from Fallon’s collection. For this project, my fellow group members and I considered each of our strengths in order to determine how we would divvy up the tasks. For example, since Ben was a very outspoken person, we came to a conclusion that he would be the best person to give the presentation. We trusted him to thoroughly and accurately lead the class discussion as well as explain our major arguments we made in the project. Although there was a slight mix up in the presentation because he switched the content for our logos and ethos slide, his presentation received good feedback from our peers as well as the instructor. Thus, this project revealed to me the importance of teamwork and how members of the group depend on each other in order to receive the best score possible.

The most difficult task of the quarter so far was the Rhetorical Analysis essay. I struggled so much with this assignment. This was most likely due to my poor decision making during my completion of the assignment. The first aspect of the essay required us to submit the thesis in which our essay would focus on. After reading my thesis to the professor, she gave me very positive remarks on it. Because of the positivity I received, I believed this essay would be simple to complete. Thus, I began to write the working draft on midnight of the day it was due. As a writer, this was probably the worst decision I had ever made. I was exhausted through the writing process. While I had an excellent thesis, I could not formulate any reasoning to explain how my examples were meant to support my thesis. After reading the comments I received from the professor and my peers, I knew my essay would require a great amount of revisions if I wanted to receive the grade I desired in the class.

The main issue of my RA essay was the lack of rhetorical analyses for the quotes I had chosen. Throughout the essay, I was not analyzing quotes and demonstrating the thought process that led to my interpretation of the quote. For example, in my working draft I simply stated, “Fallon includes this description in order to show readers how difficult it is for a person to lose someone important” (Mejia). After reviewing the comments made by the professor, I knew I had to add more depth into my answer. To figure out just how to go about doing so, I reviewed the “playing with words” assignment in which we were instructed to analyze a passage and determine which words impacted the passage the most and why. I thought about this in relation to the quote I had chosen. After taking time to come up with a way to revise my analysis, I edited that sentence to, “because the words “fragile” and “cracked” are commonly used to describe glass, Fallon incorporates these adjectives into the description in order to create a visualization of the extreme delicate state of being Josie is in after losing her husband.” At this moment in time, I realized why Professor Delany-Ullman had us complete tasks that seemed tedious. The “tedious” tasks were meant to help us develop a thought process that can be used when writing rhetorical analyses. Going forward, I will take these assignments into more consideration because there is always a higher purpose as to why these particular assignments become assigned in the first place.

In addition to receiving feedback from the professor, my peers provided me with feedback as well on how to improve my essay. However, I did not find the comments that I received by my peers to be useful during the revision of my essay. One of the peers assigned to me essay, simply pointed out the aspects of my essay that she considered to be well done. For example, with regards to me thesis, she stated, “This Is really good. Props to you.” She did not help me point out what improvements I can make to further strengthen my paper. Therefore, I focused mainly on the feedback given to me by the professor because she offered plenty of constructive criticism. After revising the majority of my essay, I believe my paper demonstrated great improvements in the way I rhetorically analyze quotes taken from the text.

I believe our class text, *You Know When the Men are Gone,* by Siobhan Fallon was beneficial towards our learning and practicing rhetorical analyses. Each short story utilized a variety of story telling elements, such as symbolism and imagery, and relevant examples of the rhetorical appeals. Fallon appeals to all three of the rhetorical appeals: ethos, pathos, and logos. Because of the wide range of options presented to us in the prompts in regards to Fallon’s incorporation of these aspects into her collection of short stories, we were given a great amount of freedom with how we could go about writing the RA essay.

As made evident from this introduction, I believe I deserve a B- in the class. I had tied everything the professor had determined to teach us thus far in the quarter into my RA essay, which I feel is the strongest piece of writing I had done all quarter. For the categories in the midterm portfolio I believe I earned a “good” for a majority of them. For example, in the category of message and purpose, I had utilized what I learned in the class in order to construct a clear message and purpose for the RA essay. The message in “Gold Star” being that, “that mourning the death of a loved one is an unpleasant yet inevitable task.” From that, I was able to come to a conclusion that Fallon’s purpose in the short story is to, “to bring about change in the way her audience perceives widows.” Having a clear message and purpose is important for readers. Readers need to know HOW and WHY the rhetor, Fallon, created this piece.

With regards to the category of being able to identify and write analysis geared towards a specific audience, I believe I deserve a “good” there as well. During the revision process, the professor suggested that I narrow down the audience to a more specific group. To do this, I identified which values the intended audience may share. In this case, Fallon’s audience for the short story, “Gold Star” may all possess strong familial values. In addition to that, I made a lot of edits in order to address how my claims relate to the audience. As the professor pointed out, I completely did not make connections to my audience, nor did I state what response Fallon was attempting to produce in the readers. Thus, I geared my analysis towards a specific group of individuals, “Americans who possess strong familial values and to those who may or may not have direct experience with dealing with military women who have recently become widowed.” I analyzed how certain quotes would affect them and why Fallon had chosen to do so.

Works Cited

Mejia, Christina. “Rhetorical Appeals.” 2015. *Microsoft Word* file.

Mejia, Christina. “RA FINAL.” 2015. *Microsoft Word* file.