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Self-Assessment Essay

Over this semester I have learned a few things about my writing, the process of writing, and the research needed to the writing. During this semester I took my first steps towards working on technical documents. Coming into this semester I had never done any sort of technical writing or research, but over this semester I had multiple opportunities to approach this beginning with the technical description. This class gave me many chances to involve the course learning outcomes especially because of the group work. This essay is going to show how the course learning outcomes were used or not really used throughout the semester.

The first course outcome was “acknowledge your and others range of linguistic difference and draw on those resources to develop rhetorical sensibility” and this was probably the most influential of all the course outcomes. What this meant to me was that although not everyone has the same hold of the English language, do not view this detrimentally and rather figure out how to use this as an advantage. We were given countless opportunities to fulfill this outcome, which I think I did. One aspect of this came from the peer editing that we did during the semester, which not only gave us the chance to look at other peoples writing and help with people who did not necessarily have the same grasp of English as some of us. But additionally, gave me the opportunity to get insight from people that I probably never would have considered asking. The final research project gave me a longer-term need for this, as we were put into a random group of people who all had different writing and speaking abilities but were forced to write a paper and make a presentation as a group rather than as individuals. Throughout this we were able to see that certain individuals might have a large advantage in regard to writing the paper, while another individual not necessarily even from our group might be able to speak out an idea that we were missing.

The second course learning outcome was “enhance strategies for reading, drafting, revising, editing, and self-assessment”. What this outcome meant to me was improving all the work involved in the process leading up to writing a paper. The most important thing I learned about drafting from this class is that the most important thing is to just get your thoughts on to paper. In the past it would take me forever to start my paper but in this class I would just get a start on paper, and based off that I would use editing and revising to turn it into a decent paper. One specific example of this was the lab report analysis, where I just wrote whatever came to my mind and finished off my first draft pretty quickly, only then did I focus on all the minor aspects which had held me back in the past. This turned my dislike from writing multiple drafts into a realization, that multiple drafts was really less overall work and resulted in better work. Another important thing I learned and accomplished about editing in this class was that it is very good to have a different pair of eyes to look over your work and give you feedback.

The third course outcome was “negotiate your own writing goals and audience expectations regarding conventions of genre, medium, and rhetorical situation”. I think this outcome was supposed to make me try to find where the line between what I was trying to write and what the person reading my writing was trying to read. This outcome is not one which I really focused on during the semester, however when it came to prepare for the final presentation, I did apply this. I realized that I could not just spew facts to the audience but rather, help them understand the benefits and misconceptions of electric cars.

The following course learning outcome was “develop and engage in the collaborative and social aspects of writing processes”. What this meant to me was to take part as a group in terms of writing and take advantage of that group setting. This was a course outcome that although forced on me, did not feel like a burden. It was enjoyable to do research with other people and pool our ideas together with the purpose of writing a good paper. Having other people with the same goal around while writing aided in the development of our ideas, and made a research paper which I would not have liked into a fun experience. Additionally our added opportunities during class time gave us an opportunity to work with different people who all cared.

The next course learning outcome was “engage in genre analysis and multimodal composing to explore effective writing across disciplinary contexts and beyond”. What I think was the goal of this outcome was to show us the different styles of writing we were going to be using. Although this was a technical writing classes, each of our assignments were still pretty different and not written in the same manner. In our technical description we were giving a boring but direct explanation of a process. In our lab report analysis, we were writing in a much more objective manner comparing and contrasting how we thought the authors had done. Finally in the research report we were coming in with our own preconceived notion about an idea and then looking at the data about our topic. We were then using that data to prove our ideas and show where the doubts had risen.

The following course outcome was “formulate and articulate a stance through and in your writing”. This outcome I think is fairly straight forward and meant that we should know what we are trying to do in our writing and make it known to our readers as well. I think the technical paper was the first example of doing this, as we had to figure out what we wanted to describe and then show our reader how our process takes place. The final paper as well involved this as we had to come up with a thesis that we wanted to discuss, and try to convince our audience about the topic as well.

The next outcome was to “practice using various library resources, online databases and the Internet to locate sources appropriate to your writing projects”. What this outcome meant to me was that I should use the different sources available to me to find the right information needed for what I was working on. This is an objective that I did not really work on for most of the semester, as the labs were already given to us and the technical document was on something that I had prior knowledge about. This was used for the final paper though, as it came in handy to have the college’s database to sort out some research from reliable sources. This helped us avoid sifting through large amounts of arbitrary opinionated articles out there and rather focus on some facts and research that we knew could be trusted.

Lastly, was “strengthen your source use practices”, which meant to me a combination of a few things. One was that I should keep to finding sources that would be able to be understood by the readers. More importantly though was that this objective meant getting a better handle on what circumstances call for citing information and when to summarize. What this is including is the proper methods of summarizing and citing, I learnt how to integrate the information I had into my paper. This was especially important for my final paper where I had to sort through my research and figure out what to summarize, and paraphrase and how to do that.

To conclude, through the different assignments given in this class I had the chance to approach all the learning objectives. Some objectives I had more of a focus on than others, but in all I had the chance to grow as a writer in many areas, or at least see that I needed growth in other areas. Being in this class not only gave me my first entry into the area of technical writing but also gave me the opportunity to work with a teacher that had a goal of working with us to improve ourselves in all the facets of writing.