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Reflecting Essay

**Introduction**

 When I enrolled in this class, I knew that I did not know or remembered anything about how to write an essay. For the most part I thought I was able to recognize grammar errors or punctuation errors. Being that I am enrolled in the engineering technology course I was actually hoping I would not have to write any essays. For me it is easier to work with formulas like in math. But I was determined to do my best when going through this class. With this class and your help, I was able to recognize a few of my strengths and my weaknesses. I was able to build on those strengths and improve some of my weaknesses. For the weaknesses that I still have, I will have to make a plan to keep working on them.

**Body**

 One of my strengths when I started this class was that I was determined to give it my all and that failing or withdrawing was not an option. I felt that writing essays for this class was going to make me stumble; maybe it was because I had come in with a dislike for writing or more like I doubted myself to be able to write a good essay. But, this was not going to be the barrier that stops me from achieving my degree. Plus I could not let my family down, especially my oldest boy who at 8 years old is thinking about college because of my example; they were behind me all the way. So, I put my best effort forward, I would listen closely to everything in class, take as many notes as I could and read the assignments, but nothing would make sense to me. Anyway I ended up going to The Center for Academic Excellence, which helped but did not completely make me confident about writing.

 Another of my strengths is data and source evaluation. I have always liked to search for something and find different sources to evaluate how different they may be. When we had to write the evaluation essay, I felt that it would not be too difficult for me to find good sources and a little information about them. But, I still was not too sure about how to put all that together. By your response of “This is a great first draft, Al! My only feedback for revision would be to make sure that you emphasize in the introduction which of your four sources was most useful and why. Otherwise, looks very good!” I guess I did not do so badly.

At the beginning of this course you started talking about the rhetorical situation. This was first of all a new word for me, let alone a completely new concept. The thought of bringing my ideas together and putting them so that my audience would react the way I wanted was something I thought I did not understand. But, just as you said, this is not something new that we were doing, when we write a letter or an email we always consider who we are sending it to and what information they already know. This way of writing I think is just a little more elaborate. And even though I never thought I be good at any writing, I feel that coming up with a thesis statement is one that I have improved on. The thought process of considering a specific audience and how to refer to your audience on your thesis statement was something that I had never thought about. Now, it seems like I have a, I won’t say great but a fairly good understanding of this. And I get this from your comment throughout this course. From the first essay, not counting the diagnostics essay, which was the Rhetorical Analysis essay your comment on my thesis was “Strong working thesis” which I figured I just got lucky, to my last essay where you said “Excellent thesis!”

 The structure and organization of an essay was one of the things I was able to improve. It kept throwing me into loops. I did not get what you were asking for. Your comment on the diagnostics essay shows this when you said “*Primarily I noticed weaknesses in organization of paragraphs, paragraph/idea development, clarity, and a few grammatical errors.”* It was not until you went through the structure and wrote it on the board that it all clicked. I mean I knew that an essay had to have an introduction, body and a conclusion, but having it visually and not just in thought was good for me. It was then that I thought about the structure, body and organization of an essay as a formula, like in math, that I was able to improve in it. Since then every time I started an essay from then on I made sure that the first thing I would do is type in “introduction” and go a couple of lines down. Then, I would do the same with typing “body” and “conclusion”. That was the formula I had to follow, now all I had to do is plug in the number, I mean plug in the data. I even made a template for myself on word and saved it as “Blank Start” and I would use it every time I started an essay. This changed the way I looked at writing, it made it a little less intimidating for me.

 Now as far as my weaknesses go, one of them is procrastination. Heck it took me many years to finally come back to school. But like my wife even tells me, it takes me a long time to get started but once I do start I’m in it to finish. Again, because I was not too fond of writing I would always put it off until I could. I would always figure that I would get other things done first because I felt that I could get those accomplished faster and then I could get to writing, than doing it the other way around. I just felt that every time I would sit down to start an essay that it would take me all day to come up with just my introduction, but if that’s what it takes then that’s what I would do. And when I actually looked at the page number I was on, I would see the light and I was done sooner than I was expecting. So, for future courses I am planning to “just do it” the sooner I start the sooner I will finish. My goal is to put my due dates on a calendar my family keeps to show when thing are coming up, because I did noticed that when my family knew when my assignments were due, they would ask is I had started on them.

 My other weakness for me is time management. We all have busy schedules and I know that I cannot use the excuse of “I’m too busy” to make the time for everything. I don’t keep a personal schedule and that is something I should think about getting for my future course. I think that if I would actually keep a schedule, it would put a more visual structure in my life and I would spend less of my free time doing nothing.

**Conclusion**

 It had been many years since I had written an essay and so I knew that I did not remembered anything about how to write an essay. For me it was easier to be critical of someone else’s work. For the most part I thought I was able to recognize grammar errors or punctuation errors. Being enrolled in the engineering technology course I had hoped I would not have to write any essays, math is easier for me. But I was determined to do my best when going through this class and not fail. Through this course, I was able to recognize a few of my strengths and my weaknesses. I was able to build on those strengths and improve some of my weaknesses. For the weaknesses that I still have, I will have to make a plan to keep working on them. So, in conclusion I would like to thank you for your patients with me. Your help and encouragement made it possible for me to get through what I thought would be my worst subject. And even though I felt that this course was hard because of the essays, you definitely made it a fun experience. And even better, you helped me change the way I think about writing. Thank you.