

Backgrounds for Reflection

As I explain in the syllabus, writing is not a product (a paper) but a technique (art) that takes many years, even a lifetime to hone. This English class was meant to give you the rudiments of one subset of writing: academic writing. Its goals are as follows

Content: There can be no writing without something to write about. This class aimed to help you understand the origins, evolution, and underlying values of the Internet/WWW so that you could generate viewpoints with respect to the consequences of such values to your society and to your self.

Writing: This class reinforces the notion of writing as a process: reading and researching and discussion become ideas that are then composed into formal pieces which are then revisited and modified to express the complexity of the topic. It aims to have you compose in multiple environments, from pen and paper to Google Drive.

Reading and Prewriting: This class reinforces the notion of reading as interactive: texts are annotated and transcribed into journals that document their context and content as well as your initial reaction to them. The reading (or watching) impression is then further examined through analytical discussion and brainstorming during class meetings.

Researching: This class explores a variety of sources, from academic to technical to journalistic to encyclopedic to creative writing (*Nineteen Eighty-Four*) to expert talks, both written and on video. It encourages you to find, evaluate, and utilize the peer-reviewed texts available through our library to provide substantial evidence for your papers--and to consult librarians (Go Ann!).

Drafting: This class covers the basics of proper essay drafting: from rough drafts to increasingly more complex drafts based on peer (classmates), expert (the teacher, writing tutors), and self evaluations. It introduces the concepts of

- Essay formatting and title creation,
- Contextual/Backgrounds Introduction and Engaging Introduction,
- Thesis-based writing,
- Basic paragraph construction (topic sentence+ evidence+ commentary/explanation) and paragraph types,
- Selection, introduction, use, integration, citation, and documentation of sources.

Revising and Editing: This class aims to help you understand the difference between revising and editing and when each of them is the proper next step in the writing process.

Habits of mind: As explained at the beginning of the semester, the class follows an andragogical model of learning so that you may practice the habits of mind essential for success in college¹:

- Curiosity – the desire to know more about the world.
- Openness – the willingness to consider new ways of being and thinking in the world.
- Engagement – a sense of investment and involvement in learning.
- Creativity – the ability to use novel approaches for generating, investigating, and representing ideas.
- Persistence – the ability to sustain interest in and attention to short- and long-term projects.
- Responsibility – the ability to take ownership of one's actions and understand the consequences of those actions for oneself and others.
- Flexibility – the ability to adapt to situations, expectations, or demands.
- Metacognition – the ability to reflect on one's own thinking as well as on the individual and cultural processes used to structure knowledge.

Accordingly, you designed your own deadlines for submitting papers, shaped the analytical discussions, made decisions on what aspect of a topic to write on and what to include, conducted your own research, and determined how much feedback each paper required before it became a "last draft." Now, the only step left is to reflect on what you have learned from the class.

Questions:

1. After reading what our objectives were in terms of content, writing, and habits of mind,
 - What aspects of the class have you mastered? (please refer use two-three examples of moments or assignments that prove your claim)
 - What aspects do you need to practice more as you continue writing? (please refer use two-three examples of moments or assignments that prove your claim)
2. What was the impact of having a librarian present during the class meetings?
3. Is there anything you wish we had done more of, or differently?
4. What advice would you give to someone coming into this class?

¹ Definitions from the Executive Summary of the *Framework for Success in Postsecondary Writing* by the Council of Writing Program Administrators, the National Council of Teachers of English, and the National Writing Project. January 2011. <http://wpacouncil.org/files/framework-for-success-postsecondary-writing.pdf>