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My Journey through Writing (2019-2020)

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“My Journey through Writing” Nicholas DiLello (critical evaluation example)

Questions to Consider For Discussion and Reflection

In a critical evaluation assignment it is essential to get beyond surface-level observations about your writing, such as needing a stronger thesis argument or not having “flow.” DiLello accomplishes this by making very specific observations and reflections connected to examples from his own writing as evidence. There are even points in which he quotes from comments and feedback he received on his writing. As you read DiLello’s critical evaluation piece, consider:

- What specific examples does DiLello rely on from his own writing to help make his claims about his growth as a writer? What sorts of examples do you find most compelling? How might you rely on similar evidence from your own writing?
- This essay mentions several ways that assignments written throughout the course could have been more effective and/or how the writer could have approached situations differently. What sorts of struggles have you had as a writer? How have those struggles led you to grow?

My Journey through Writing by Nicholas DeLillo

Writing is an underappreciated academic skill which is necessary for success not only in the academic setting, but in real world applications. Almost any career one may hold will require writing of some form, whether it’s for a resume or application, or the job itself. Personally, writing has always been one of my strong suits, although not my favorite academic activity. Having said that, I am always growing and improving as a writer, mostly though working in writing intensive academic courses such as Composition 100. Over the course of the semester, I have grown exponentially, not only as a writer, but as an academic scholar in all aspects of my college career. I have personally improved as a writer over the semester due to help from handing in multiple drafts, my effort in the course both in and out of the classroom, as well as my utilization of what I’ve learned across the entire college curriculum.

In my experience, for me to improve as a writer, it takes repetition and advice from others in order to propel my writing to a higher level. I have always been able to construct a sound thesis and present strong ideas throughout my writing; however, the improvements come with different word choice and integration of source material. When I look back at both first drafts I have submitted so far, they are very bare bones and only present my thesis and main points, but lack in other areas. A common theme is a lack of evidence, and a poor choice of words among these drafts. Without handing in multiple drafts accompanied by peer review and conferences, my essays would most likely remain with a poor choice in words and underdeveloped points. One example of peer review and conferences in action is in my first draft of Revised Essay Two where I have stated, “Poverty among children in the US is surely an ongoing issue that is only going to get worse if no action is taken.” (2018a, p.1). While this sentence gets the point across, it lacks in diction. Through the comments I received from my peers and my professor, the final

sentence is as follows: “Poverty among children in the U.S is surely going to get worse if no action is taken” (2018a, p.2). By removing unnecessary words from this sentence, it creates a statement of higher academic quality and improves the flow of the essay.

Another example of the improvements I’ve made from one draft to another lies within My first and second drafts of Revised Essay One. In the first body paragraph of my first draft, I began talking about Matthew Desmond’s credentials, and wrote the following sentence: “Desmond’s article begins by addressing his Pulitzer prize winning book *Poverty and Profit in the American City*, which instantly depicting his popularity as an author, which adds to his credibility. (19)” (2018b, p.1) While this sentence remained unchanged in my second draft, there was no evidence or source material to support this claim or add more information to it. Because of a comment I received during peer review, I decided to add the following sentence: “The second page of his article details all of Desmond’s credentials, one of which being ‘Professor of Sociology Princeton University’”. (2018b, p.1). By adding in this quote, I both strengthened my argument and added to the flow of the paper. Without the comments I received from peer review, my essays would have been of poor quality and lacked in both diction and integration of source material.

While handing in multiple drafts as well as conferences and peer review are important aspects of my success, my effort in this course is also a clear indicator of my improvements and progress in my writing. To be completely honest, not all of my drafts have been given my 100 percent best effort; however, there is a clear difference in the quality of my writing when I try my best. In Revised Essay One for example, my first draft was mediocre at best; I had some major organizational issues, and in the words of my peers, I “didn't explain the solution to the problem” and “there was no mention of poverty or education in your conclusion” (2018b, pg.3).

In addition to these comments, I also neglected to cite any source material I had used to support my argument. While this could have been a genuine mistake, I feel this is clearly a mistake made due to a lack of effort, that was made up for in the final draft. The final draft of this essay was heavily edited. I remember spending a large chunk of time revising it, being sure to include a well-organized conclusion. Part of the conclusion of my first draft is as follows, “From his appeal to emotion through his use of pathos, to his attention to ethos through his past endeavors, degrees, and experiences, and finally his use of logos by constructing a logical article, it can be concluded that Matthew Desmond is worthy of the grant to continue his research.” (2018b, pg.3).

While this sentence does convey meaning, it is long and drawn out as well as lacking in flow. Through working hard to create a coherent conclusion, the same area of my final draft now says “In addition to those three appeals to his audience, Desmond’s general knowledge about poverty and eviction set him far above the rest which is why Matthew Desmond is more than worthy of the Grant to continue his research.” (2018b, pg.3). This sentence is clearly more developed and conveys the same ideas in a coherent and straightforward manner. My effort with my conclusion and my essay in general paid off as my only remaining issue according to my instructor was I needed to “thoroughly discuss in each paragraph” (2018b. Pg.4). Overall, my effort is a clear indicator of my success in this course.

While my effort in this course has helped to propel me towards success, I have also been able to utilize what I have learned in other courses this semester. While most of my graded writing is for writing studies, I have had two other courses which have required me to hand in writing of some form for a grade. One way I have utilized what I have learned is by creating multiple drafts.

While they may not be as well thought out, and only one draft is graded, this has helped me to further develop my thoughts and further discuss my main points. I have also been able to utilize peer review in my other classes in two ways. I have both utilized some of the comments I've received on my papers in other courses, as well as have fellow classmates read over my papers before I hand them in to get a second or even third opinion.

One comment from peer review which has been made multiple times is “no use of quotes in paragraphs,” or “Have no citations at all.” (2018a). While I have made good use of that advice in this class, I have utilized it in Human Communications as well. I had a research paper due which required research using in text citations and quotes. Upon my “first draft” of my paper, I completely neglected any in text citations or quotes. I was reading over my paper and was thinking about what I had learned in this course and realized I needed to add both of these things. In addition to utilizing comments from peer review, I have also had two of my peers read over my paper for Human Communication and give me feedback. While I have only done both of these things on one occasion I feel they have really been helpful in creating a high quality scholarly piece.

One major problem with my writing thus far in college has been time management, there have been multiple occasions where I have waited until the last minute to complete my essay. Also, sometimes events in life occur that I can't control, which causes more time management issues for the typical college student. Examples of this can be found within my second and final drafts of revised essay two. I was distracted by other areas of my life, and I became careless with my thought and attention to detail in an effort to finish the paper on time. In my Final draft of Revised Essay Two, I utilized the same quote on three different occasions “Eliminating early education investments now would increase a child’s chance of going to prison later in life by 36 percent.” (2018a, p.4) This is clearly a lack of effort and attention to detail. My Professor’s comment on my final draft in regard to the repeated quote states “Oh no this is totally repeated!” as well as a simple “OMG.” (2018a, p4,5).

I learned my lesson with my effort and time management as my final product was less than stellar and lacked in flow and clearly integration of source material. However, I was able to fix this mistake when I chose to revise this paper, and utilized three different quotes for three different arguments, instead of one quote for all three. This lesson of time management has proven to be very valuable not only in this course but across the curriculum.

Overall, this class has helped me grow into a better academic writer, not only for formal essays, but in general for other assignments in other classes. I have become a better writer with what I have learned though handing in multiple drafts, giving my best effort with my writing, as well as utilizing this courses lessons in other subject areas of my academic career. It is though CPN 100 that I have become a better academic writer and more helpful peer reviewer. I hope to continue my personal growth as an academic writer though all I have learned from taking this course.

References

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