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Reflecting on my Progress

During my time in English 1010 I have better developed rhetorical strategies and now better appreciate the revision process. From the beginning the course required me to think more precisely about the message or intended purpose of my writing, this would allow me to better connect to my audience.

By focusing my efforts and writing towards a goal I hope to be better understood by my reader. My rhetorical choices, from dialogue to timeline were all crafted with the purpose of relaying a theme or conveying some message. More important however is first finding an audience, before I began writing I explored and considered who my audience would be and how best to appeal to them. Rhetorical situations require an examination of four crucial aspects, writer, subject, audience and purpose, and only once all are brought together can a text shine (Rebecca Blommer, *Rhetoric as a Method*). In my synthesis essay "Why is Marriage Falling Apart in the West and what Can We Do to Stop it?", after identifying my audience as scholarly I employed more academic language which although less common could better explain the studies in my analysis and my results. Hannah Brencher explains this intention and how it is best represented in writing letters. In her TED talk, "Love Letters to Strangers" she describes the differences in the rapid and often character limited conversations we have through Facebook or text message, and how sitting down to write one person is a perfect environment to focus our attention and intention. Once intent and rhetorical choices are made the piece must be revised.

"Shitty First Drafts" as coined by Anne Lamott are a necessary step in every writer's process. These drafts are meant to be imperfect; it's more than common to spend less time on your draft than on your revisions. In order to find what is truly valuable Lamott argues we must first "Just get it all down on paper," (4). The purpose of writing a first draft is to find ideas and details you absolutely want to hang on to, and reworking the rest to better fit those motifs or passages. I often went through the revision process, and gained particular help through peer reviews which allowed me access to the audience's perspective. Lisa Bickmore reminds us that our draft is ultimately OURS, whatever critiques the reader may have, the direction of our writing is ours to determine. Bickmore also stresses that feedback shouldn't be approached antagonistically though, it should better be seen as a fresh look. A revision should improve the structure and flow of your writing, whereas edits involve polishing the piece for particular grammatical or syntax issues.

The lessons and ideas this class has taught me will be incredibly useful in my personal life and in my career going forward. I've long been interested in debate and politics and often compete online or in

regional and state tournaments. These events require me to write speeches for different legislation and I've found that rhetoric is seldom more crucial than in a political event. While writing "A Tasty Dilemma" I focused my energy on getting my audience to understand an issue, creating a drama that was otherwise not there. By creating this context I could better sway them by leading the piece through a line of questioning, this strategy and use of rhetoric is incredibly useful in debate. The first and often most crucial step is to make an audience care about an issue, this class has conditioned me to think more about appealing to that same audience. Writing truly is all about making choices and as Charlotte Howe argues in "Writers Make Strategic Choices" our purpose in writing should always cause us to, "enact decisions that go beyond simply deciding what we want to say." (Howe 2). These questions are often the most crucial part in writing convincingly. Once I had identified a rhetorical situation I could approach it in a variety of ways, for instance, in "The Green Effect of Immigration" I utilize visual media and audio to make a more convincing case. This medium, different from yet dependent on writing, allowed me to better convince my audience, and accordingly, will help my job pursuits going forward. These different mediums help me communicate more efficiently and more convincingly, It requires me to assess what is most important and create a far shorter piece which includes as much convincing material as possible. Inspiration for views or perspectives often come through visual representation and ultimately should communicate or allow the reader to interpret, "What is 'going on' around a particular speech or writing" (Writing as Contingent, 3). Showing the reader a table may be more convincing than just repeating its data points, showing pollution in effect may sway someone more than describing it, or both can be done at the same time.

The project I found most reflective of my learning throughout this class was my synthesis essay, "Why is Marriage Falling Apart in the West and what Can We Do to Stop it?" which required me to go through, shitty first drafts, the peer review process, analysis, and utilize rhetorical strategies to convince my audience of the validity of my conclusion. My use of language within the essay was more academic to fit my scholarly audience, I made great use of scholarly sources using five independent sources and compared them to evaluate reliability or to establish a consensus. I found this project to be the best representation of my growth as a writer as well as my new knowledge of rhetorical strategies and writing conventions.

Works Cited

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