

Demonstrating Students' understanding of the RWS-1301 Student Learning Outcomes

Student Sample -3

REFLECTION BLOG #7

Introduction

Rhetoric and Writing Studies 1301 is a course which is centered around the learning and improvement of one's own writing and rhetorical skills. It aims at improving our skills as writers through a better understanding of various rhetorical utilities that, upon employing into one's writing and critical thinking skills, will greatly professionalize and improve students' writing in general. Throughout my semester enrolled in this course, we took part in various forms of writing activities that greatly improved my skills as a writer. Some of the assignments included a discourse community ethnography, which required us to choose a certain type of community which we are a part of and determine whether or not John Swales' principles of a discourse community applied to that community or not, as well as a community problem report which had us choose a certain controversial and relevant topic in our current society and provide a strong argument either supporting or rejecting that certain issue or topic by applying the rhetorical skills that the course had taught us so far. These assignments, along with various others, helped to achieve the courses learning outcomes by requiring us to better understand certain analytical tools that would consequentially enforce our skills as writers in preparation for much harder and rigorous courses in the future. By propagating a mindset of intercommunication between us students as writers, we were able to cooperate together to better our skills as writers by constructively criticizing each other's works and providing feedback on such works. In addition to this, there were many other methods of learning used here that further strengthened our rhetorical skills, while also achieving the student learning outcomes which the course seeks to achieve.

Understanding the Concept of a Discourse Community

One of the most significant and major assignments this semester, a discourse community is essentially a concept brought to life by academic writer John Swales which attempts to determine how a community of people intercommunicates with each other through the usage of certain writing tools that aids in further improvement of such intercommunication. According to Swales, there are six characteristics that determine whether or not a community falls under the concept of a discourse community, these being Lexis, Genre, Expertise, Goals, Intercommunication, and Feedback. Upon understanding such concept, we were required to choose a certain community and apply these six characteristics to essentially test whether or not such community can be considered

a discourse community. It is evident that this assignment has indeed achieved its end-goal here, as prior to this course, I had no previous knowledge of what a discourse community was. I was able to fully comprehend Swales' principles, and was able to effectively demonstrate how the community I chose (this being the aquatic life within Finding Nemo) did indeed apply to Swales' six characteristics. RWS undoubtedly achieved its learning outcome here, and should any other future courses require of me to employ Swales' theory, I do not see myself encountering any problems with applying this concept to other courses.

Expanding Our Knowledge Based on Current Knowledge Bases

Another major assignment which greatly improved my skills as a writer was the community problem report, which had us do extensive amounts of research on a certain topic or issue within a community and take a stance on such issue. I found this assignment in particular to be the most challenging one out of all of them, due to the sheer amount of work that was needed in order to write an effective and persuasive argument on the issue we chose. The Community Problem Report (from now on abbreviated as CPR) required us to choose a relevant and controversial topic or issue currently affecting a certain community, and then had us take a stance on whatever issue this may be (mine being prescription drug abuse) in order to provide a solution to the topic. With this assignment, I had to conduct much more research than I have ever been used to conducting, and truly pushed my skills as a writer to the limit. In order to provide a strong and concise argument on our topic, we had to apply all of the strategies we had learned thus so far, the most prominent example being the usage of ethos, pathos, and logos in order to appeal to a certain audience and construct a persuasive argument either for or against our topic. This is why this assignment achieved the goal of expanding our own knowledge based off of current knowledge, since we were required to do research on our topic and gather as much current information as we could in order to provide a solution to the topic, hence this being the "new" form of acquired knowledge. This was rather challenging, as I found it fairly difficult to truly provide a coherent argument which effectively utilized all previous and current knowledge in order to create a new form of knowledge which can be expanded on. Nonetheless, I do feel as if this greatly improved my skills, not only as a writer, but as a researcher as well. With this assignment, I further strengthened my ability to utilize resources effectively within a research paper, as well as employing the tools of ethos, logos, and pathos to construct a persuasive paper.

Engaging as a Community of Writers Who Intercommunicate

Though I feel as if this certain learning outcome does not apply to one assignment in particular, it instead encompasses the ideal of the course in general. With almost each assignment,

we were required to do peer review sessions in which we would exchange rough-drafts of any assignments, and then provide feedback on such tasks. This allowed us to gain a bit more perspective on our assignments, and greatly aided us in improving any flaws or inconsistencies within our first drafts of whatever assignment we were currently working on. Going back to the CPR, this assignment in particular required the most amount of peer reviewing than any other assignment, as there were many parts and sections to fully completing the assignment. Each of these steps were accompanied by a peer review in which students shared feedback between each other, and helped to make the quality of our works overall much better and professional. For me, specifically, it helped me in realizing how much I am dependent on comma usage. After gaining much feedback on my writing, I have been able to improve it, both rhetorically and constructively. I feel that my grammar has definitely improved, as well as my persuasive skills and overall organization of ideas on paper. Once again, RWS has undoubtedly achieved this learning outcome, as it is evident within my current writing skills.

Conclusion

Overall, this course has taught me many useful things that I am sure will be of utmost importance in any future courses I take. I learned about discourse communities and how they function. I learned about rhetorical skills such as ethos, logos, and pathos and how to effectively use them to provide a strong argument. I learned about proper grammar usage and correct citation of outside sources in order to prevent any plagiarism within my work. I learned about intercommunication between myself and my peers, and that working in conjunction with other students will often times lead to amazing results. This course has taught me many things, that much is unquestionable. And I can also confidently say that these skills I have acquired will stick with me for many, many years to come. Thank you for the wonderful experience Mrs. Maier. You were an amazing professor, and thanks to you, I have learned a great deal about literature and writing!