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End of Semester Self-Assessment

While writing and english have never been subjects I struggled with, I know there is always room for improvement and I believe I have seen some during this semester. My biggest struggle in general has always been formatting my work appropriately, considering requirements change depending on who's teaching the class I am in. In high school, the format of my papers was not the same from year to year, nevermind the requirements for a college course. That said, by the end of the semester I feel I am better equipped to adapt to such changes.

Secondly, my ability to form a thesis has also improved. Where in an essay a thesis goes as well as how long it should be is information that has never been consistent with my past teachers, though I feel this semester has helped me to better understand how to gauge how to style my writing. I also feel that, through trial and error, I have gotten a better grasp on where to start when forming a thesis as well as how to incorporate it into my essays.

The coherency of my essays has also felt easier to navigate. I tend to ramble when I write, often running with a concept or connection I have made to the point that it no longer becomes relevant. Often I leave it in my writing and find it difficult to connect back to my thesis or original intent with the subject, so one of my biggest improvements is my ability to cut things out and maintain relevance in my paper.

This all said, I do think there are still many things I need to work on in my writing. I continue to struggle with coherency at times, especially when connecting ideas to sources. For example, I will often find a source quote that I feel would be useful in my writing when proving a point, but I tend to have a hard time making the quote blend with what I am trying to say. I will make my point and reference the quote I have found, but there is still a disconnect between

the quote and what I am trying to say. I need to do a better job breaking down quotes and sources in order to develop better connections.

Speaking of breaking things down, I also need to look deeper into what I am reading when thinking critically and analyzing meaning and symbolism. This is imperative in making connections between the text and other sources or my own analysis. Our discussions regarding rhetorical situations in the beginning of the semester helped a lot when it came to knowing what to look for in what I was reading, as well as how to develop my own writing. My understanding of it and how it has shifted the way I write is apparent.

For example, my S&R Essay was one of the first essays written during this course, and there is a clear difference between that and the Critical Research Analysis Essay. My writing was less constructed and underdeveloped. My understanding of how to connect ideas and analyze rhetoric is in clear need of improvement. In contrast, my most recent essay (the CRAE) has a much stronger structure. The planning that went into the writing for that essay was vastly different than that of the S&R Essay. It was planned and calculated, and involved a deeper level of critical thinking when writing and planning it. The experience of writing that essay was arguably easier given the structure. Making clear and coherent connections made it a little bit easier for me to construct the body of my essay and ultimately made the whole process go much smoother. This also allowed me to be more specific with the points and claims I bring up in my essays.

Writing this much has also made me more aware of grammar and punctuation. It has forced me to pay attention to every detail of my writing and double check that everything is coherent and makes sense grammatically. This has not only improved my writing, but has also given me the tools to give constructive feedback when peer reviewing the works of others.

Most importantly, I learned above anything else no NEVER start a conclusion with “In conclusion...”. Obviously this is unprofessional writing either way, but the mention of this throughout this course truly stressed the importance of not using a phrase that lessens the integrity of my writing. My overall vocabulary has improved as well as a result of the mindfulness I have adapted to over the semester. I definitely did not (effectively) learn as much as I should have during this semester, but that is only at the fault of online learning. As a student I personally find it extremely difficult to function remotely, so the fact that there is any improvement in my writing at all is something to source inspiration from if and when I feel unmotivated again next semester.