Erick Rivera December 4, 2019

Freshman Composition Mr. Duran

**A Portfolio and Theory of Writing**

Waking up early every Tuesday and Thursday morning at 6AM just to catch the timely D train to get to my morning Freshman English Composition class wasn’t a fun thing to do. The awkwardness of the students coming in one by one and sitting around in silence, it wasn’t until our teacher Mr. Duran finally got us to introduce ourselves, I got to make some incredible friends and got to be able to share my straggles with. Coming into class, I didn’t think much of writing and English as I found those classes back in high school to be easy to get by and pass the class without much effort. Especially in my senior year where I had the newspaper club to fill in for a required English class and I was able to write about whatever interested me, but it had to be newsworthy and capture my audience’s interest. However, this college class was different as we gone more in depth on the way we write and we went over some word constantly that I’ve never heard of till the first day of class, rhetoric.

It took me a while to fully understand what rhetoric meant and I saw other peers fully get the grasp of it, but during my first essay which was the source-based essay, I had struggled trying to understand these elements and what was really a rhetorical situation. After some research from my own and a reading by Lloyd Bitzer, from my understanding a rhetorical situation was a problem or an exigence that needed solving and can sway the audience and influence them. It seemed simple and so I thought of an issue that could really interested my audience, the people who read and I want them to feel a sense of urgency, which was the practice of capital punishment. I found this topic very intriguing after watching the animated series, Death Note, where the execution and killing of criminals was a highly debated topic and as controversial as it is in real life. Finding the multiple sources from different genres and mediums it was also simple as there were various sources such as a news article, magazine article, website, and a scholarly article that were available on the topic of the death penalty. A personal setback was finding the differences between tone and language as they both were very similar to each other and overlapped a bunch of times when describing them in each source. The tone was the attitude the author reflects toward the subject he is writing about and the language is more about the terminology and words you use depending on the audience that is reading. After this small hardship, everything else flew by with the rest if the rhetorical element being straightforward and easy to pinpoint.

The inquiry based essay was more or less the same as my first essay using the same topic with only now I had to use find more factual research from both sides of the death penalty debate without choosing a stance myself but explain the stances in each source. This was again very different from the typical high school 5 paragraph choosing a side with a counter argument persuasive essay that I was used to writing loads of times. The most difficult part of this assignment for me personally was finding good pro death penalty articles as most were very philosophical based than fact based with the anti-death penalty articles. I was able to incorporate the article although some had a bias with their ideologies, I was able to keep myself as the author as neutral as possible and explaining each argument. This was the essay I say I struggled the most with due to finding my sources and providing good arguments and evidence for both sides of my writing.

In the last assignment for class, the composition in two genres, had us make two different compositions with different genres. I capitalized on what I was already very informed about the death penalty debate and made a political type cartoon with a Venn diagram between two very radically opinionated characters like Batman and Death Note protagonist Light Yagami and a fact sheet using all the research I had already found in my previous inquiry based essay. There was little to no difficulty in this assignment and it went very smoothly explaining how each genre was meant to make my audience feel and the rhetorical elements behind them. I had the most fun with this assignment because of the freedom I had in the different genres I chose and wasn’t limited to specific formats or structures.

Writing in this class has helped shaped my writing a lot from using the rhetorical elements and remembering who my audience is and what is the stance and language I want to pinpoint. I can put more of a personality in my writing instead of giving a boring traditional 5 paragraph high school essay and I feel in college there aren’t as much restrictions to my writing when compared to high school. In another class, Introduction to World Music, I had to recently write an essay on a music culture and go to an actual performance and was given free rein to make my own thesis statement. I decided to do regional Mexican music and using what I learned from English Composition I was able to use the elements of rhetoric such as language and tone to give my essay a first-person interview type genre explaining my experience at the performance and how people reacted to the music being orchestrated. It another writing piece free of structure with the only goal being to hit 2000 words and through my personal interest of the subject like with the death penalty in English, I was able to accomplish it without struggle.

In conclusion, this is my experience with writing in my first semester at City College which was drastically different when compared to my writing in high school. I was given a lot freer rein and learned a lot about rhetoric which became useful for writing in my other college classes. Understanding what I want my audience to feel and how I want my writing to influence them has shaped my writing with how I express myself in tone and language and not be stuck to just one certain bland style of writing. In the end, this is how my writing has been shaped and changed through this semester through what I have learned in this class.