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ENGL 11000

Theory Of Writing

My theory regarding writing is that it is the most effective tool in conveying the ideas and intellectual property that someone owns. For me, rhetorical terms such as tone and language don't hold much importance in my mind because I'm only interested in what the person has to say. I actually didn't think any of the rhetorical terms were important before entering college. I adopted the mindset that effective use of these terms can alter the meaning behind what the author is writing, but at the most this only gave the author's writing a tinge of creativity. I believe I adopted this utilitarian mindset towards writing due to the type of assignments I've been given throughout high school and college in the majority of English classes I've taken. Most of these classes require students to analyze other writing and another author's use of such rhetorical terms. Rarely they call for me to employ these rhetorical terms in my own writing. This focus on analysis and shift away from creativity is why I believe most students don't have any particular affection towards writing.

However, it should be noted that my view towards writing has changed since entering college. Although my overall attitude towards writing hasn't changed, I have found more importance within the rhetorical terms and their relevance towards writing. In my mind, the rhetorical elements of primary importance are rhetorical situation, purpose, and stance. The author's tone, language, genre, and medium seem to all follow suit as secondary from these three. Adopting this theory results in various strengths and weaknesses in regards to my writing. Writing that aims to prove a certain idea or general thesis is better suited for me. Assignments

involving general analysis regarding topics I don't really care about are ones where I struggle. This is because the main idea of my writing is extremely central to my process of writing. Heavy source analysis usually involves being very comfortable with tone, language, and other rhetorical terms which I feel are secondary. Such is the reason why I struggled in the first essay assigned in class.

The source based essay in my opinion served as a general baseline for students handle of the rhetorical terms prevalent through the class. It wasn't so much made to allow students pull away a certain idea, but more so for students to just show their ability to analyze different sources through the use of rhetorical terms. Following my theory of writing, this is why I struggled with this assignment. I initially went into the assignment aiming to pull away a central theme relating all the topics, but from the conference I realized that I wouldn't be fulfilling the prompt by doing this. Instead, a better way of going about this essay would be to treat each source as separate, and rhetorically analyze each of them through the given terms. I wrote a research paper that was similar to this assignment in high school, but the focus was more towards a main idea that was presented by each source. This assignment was a key factor in me thinking more deeply about rhetorical strategies. It taught me their use and how they can be used effectively. Although this is important for students in order to gain the ability to write more effective papers in the future, leaving the paper with no clear thesis left me with a weak rhetorical situation. With the research paper in high school I could at least have almost separate theses for each source, but such heavy focus on key terms for this essay made that difficult for me in the source based essay. Looking at the feedback given for this essay, this becomes even more clear. The majority of points lost came from the "Claim-Evidence Structure" category. Not

being able to build a sufficient thesis for myself left my paper a little confused, not sure as to what the focus of my claims would be towards. These problems were less prevalent in Essay #2.

I remember last semester I had to write a research paper for an intro to visual arts class, and one of my friends complimented me while I was helping him through his essay. “You know how to bullshit really well”. He said this because he was struggling to meet the word count, and I helped him include more background information to beef up his essay. Ironically though, I thought to myself that I wasn’t bullshitting. I think this is why I am better at writing these sorts of essays. The research question essay is the cookie cutter essay that is assigned to every high school student or college student at least once. English class always focuses heavily on analysis of other people’s works, and a research paper is the mother of all assignments involving analysis. Although very demanding due to the amount of work before writing I had to do, having lots of experience with similar previous assignments carried me through this essay.

With these assignments, the rhetorical elements tone, author, genre, medium, and language don’t matter too much to me. This is because these elements largely stay the same across most research essays for me. For example, the research paper I had to write for my art class involved the influence of the West on Japanese art. I used an academic voice and formal tone to dissect works of Japanese art. This was compiled into a typed essay that falls under the genre of visual analysis papers. A majority of these components were duplicated in the research essay for this class. The only slight difference came in the genre, and even the genres carry similarities of their own. However, the purpose, stance, and audience differ between these papers. The purpose of the research essay was to discuss the effects of vaping as compared to combustible cigarettes, and their overall effect on society at large. The audience targeted was older people who have had experience with smoking of some kind. The stance was that e-

cigarettes are undoubtedly less harmful than conventional cigarettes, but have had their reputation destroyed due to the epidemic of teens addicted to the product. These are usually the elements that give each analysis paper of mine its own uniqueness. This assignment had little to no effect on my overall theory of writing because it held many similarities to previous assignments that I've been given. However, it taught me a lot about the writing process and time management when writing an essay. The short assignments related to the paper forced me to start working on the essay and kept me disciplined without procrastinating until the last moment. This was probably the biggest stress I faced when completing this assignment, because one assignment gave me multiple deadlines to worry about. Nonetheless, it was for the better because I tend to underperform on my writing assignments when given the opportunity to procrastinate.

The composition in two genres was one of the most unique assignments I've been given across all of my English classes. I really appreciated this assignment, because I felt as though it focused on my own creativity instead of someone else's. I believe that for the best writer's, their theory of writing is not utilitarian like mine, but instead enjoys the blank canvas that allows them to paint images only found in their minds. I haven't adopted this theory because it isn't a very effective mindset when trying to fulfill parts of a prompt. Conversely however, the utilitarian theory of writing is effective in completing an assignment like Essay #3. This is because a prompt still is present for this assignment, so I can simply make sure that all parts of the prompt are fulfilled instead of relying on sheer creativity and imagination.

I was very happy with this assignment because it was one of the few times I used the secondary rhetorical terms in any meaningful way. Since the topic of discussion was the same as Essay #2, I didn't need to focus too much on purpose and stance because these were already well fleshed out during that assignment. Copying these rhetorical elements into Essay #3, I was now

able to focus more on my audience, tone, genre, and also their employment in making sure the message is well received based on all these choices. A children's comic book that contains the depth of information present in a research paper would be incredibly boring, and possibly scary as well frankly. I needed to be careful about how I talked about e-cigarettes, so as to not completely turn away children who are more sensitive to these types of topics. It was the first time I had to think about the content that I presented in terms of its suitability towards the audience I was targeting. To find the closest similarity this assignment had to my previous assignments, I would have to go back to eighth grade. My US history teacher wanted us to place ourselves in the shoes of World War II American soldiers, and act as though we were writing a letter recounting the horrors that we were facing. In this assignment, I wholly embraced this role as a war torn soldier, and I employed a pessimistic and despairing tone as death was imminent. Assignments like these didn't make me stop from thinking about writing from a utilitarian perspective. However, they definitely did make me think that I may have been robbed of a different, more imaginative view of writing because of the type of assignments I've been given throughout high school and college. I believe that if our education system gave more assignments of this type, then English can be viewed more as an art form rather than long winded papers that are incredibly tedious to write.

For me though, my theory has remained with a focus on conveying intellectual property. Although rhetorical terms can be used effectively, a majority of the rhetorical strategies that I will use as an engineer will hold many similarities between different types of writing. Before however, I had absolute disdain for rhetorical terms in English class. I thought they were largely just literary seasoning to the meal that is an English assignment. This heavy focus on my purpose of writing and my thesis came from the type of English assignments I've been given throughout

my career as a student. Such heavy focus on analysis takes creativity away from the author in exchange for proof that the student understands other people's works. I feel that English class isn't interested in me. Rather, it's more interested in whether I understand other, more creative minds. My theory of writing is tailored to best understand these works.