Abigale Morris

Professor Robert Leston

English 1710 – Introduction to Language and Technology

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Reflective Paper

Dear Professor Leston,

 This has been a trying semester for me. I really pushed myself beyond my limits, and even impressed myself in the process. Although I have always been a lover of English and writing, I didn’t see it as a potential career before enrolling in the Professional and Technical Writing program. That all changed when I realized that with determination, motivation, and self-assurance, I could do the impossible, or at least what I thought was impossible. I discovered parts of me that I didn’t know existed, like the part of me that underestimates the quality of work I am able to produce. I have always tried to remain humble even when I was doing exceptionally well. I also try to apply this mindset to my personal life. Deep down, I knew that I was capable of creating great work, but it took an objective perspective to confirm what I always believed was true. The workload for this class was heavy, strenuous, and downright intimidating at times, but I am thankful for it. It pulled me out of my comfort zone and forced me to utilize every skill that I had. This course required a lot of skills. It required patience, energy, time and time management, concentration, and understanding. It really took a lot out of me, but as Nelson Mandela once said, “It always seems impossible, until it’s done.”

 ***A blast from the past.*** It was February 1st, 2016 when I walked into this class for the first time. I was nervous and excited because the last time I attended City Tech prior to this was in the spring of 2014. Back then I received my Associate’s Degree in Liberal Arts & Sciences but I wanted to do more with my life. This is when I received a letter at my home informing me about the new Professional and Technical Writing program. I signed up immediately. When I walked into the classroom and met you, I thought you were very stern and slightly intimidating. We were made to purchase the textbook for the next class meeting, and that only fueled my anxiety. As a side note, I want to say how much I appreciated the fact that the textbook was very cost-effective. We also signed up for Open Lab that day. I found Open Lab to be a very, very useful tool. The idea of posting my work in a public forum and having my peers read and comment on it made me extremely insecure about my work. This insecurity caused me to be extra cautious about what kind of work I would produce, and because of that caution, I made sure to pay close attention to each assignment. After a while, I began loving the idea of Open Lab. It was a great platform to view how other people think, how they viewed my thoughts, and how they may perceive something differently than I would.

 ***It pays to discover.*** When we began looking at some of the pieces from our packet, I found myself confused, frustrated, and even annoyed by some of the essays and articles we were assigned to read. Many were not pieces that I would have read on my own. I enjoyed most of the Neil Postman pieces, however, the language, or the terminology, rather, was difficult and at times. I felt that he jumped around a lot in his pieces, meaning that he sometimes jumped from topic to topic without any cohesion. It would sometimes leave me in a state of utter confusion. I do admire his work for pointing out the impact that technology has had on society. However, it is thought to be an extremely helpful innovation—or at least that was its intent; Postman made it his duty to discuss all of the residual side effects of a society obsessed and dependent on technology. Even though I found Postman’s essays interesting, my favorite piece of all was, *Do Artifacts Have Politics?* by Langdon Winner. I was extremely pleased with his essay, and I read it a few times on my own. The way he described the ideology behind the way Robert Moses deliberately designed roads to keep Black people and poor people out of Jones Beach was an amazing revelation for me. He also delved into artifacts being used to push certain agendas, and even the possibility of some artifacts being innately discriminatory despite its origins or intentions. It was very interesting read, and I wish we had read more from Langdon Winner.

 ***Blog post, anyone?*** Though I enjoyed some of the stories from our packet, I developed a love/hate relationship with the twice-weekly blog posts. I hated them because they were usually accompanied by long and tedious reading assignments, but I loved them because they provided helpful ways to enhance my understanding of literature. An aspect of the blog post assignments that I especially enjoyed is when we had to discuss pieces literally, intellectually, emotionally, and relationally. These categories helped me focus on pertinent information in texts, and express any impact the reading had on me. On many of those blog posts, I surprised myself. Things that I never thought of before had come afloat. My perspective on various theories and notions were heightened and changed because I was forced to think about the correlation between the written pieces and my thought processing. For example, many of the articles we read were integrated in some form or fashion, and I often wonder if this was a strategic move by Professor Leston, or if he discovered these connections along the way as we all have.

 ***Peer review.*** Another aspect of the blog post assignments that I found beneficial was the ability to review our classmates’ work and in return have them review ours. This allowed me to see where I needed improvement in relation to the way I conveyed my ideas. To be frank, speaking is not one of my strong skills. I get nervous and I end up stumbling over my words, but when given a paper and pencil, or a computer, I can belt out elaborate thoughts for hours on end. While writing is a skilled I have tried to sharpen, when I commented on my classmates’ work I usually learned new things on the way. I have always felt that helping others was a good way to discover along the way. Though everyone had their unique way of writing, I enjoyed many of the blog posts by fellow classmate, Kimberly Jones. She shared a lot of the same ideas I had, and I was happy to know that someone thought like me. I usually looked forward to reading her posts. Miss Jones usually left pleasant comments on my posts and it was both inspiring and motivating. Briana Roldan and Joshua Vega were usually the ones who explored many things I may have passed over, initially. I admired their eye for intricate details, and I always looked forward to their interpretation of specific pieces.

 ***The projects.*** The projects were complicated in terms of the workload (the papers, specifically), but as for the content, I enjoyed writing every single paper I was assigned. Two of the projects really stuck with me in many ways. The issue paper was my favorite paper to write. Why? Well, because it taught me a lot about the issues going on in Chicago, Illinois. It was difficult to write the paper because the information I discovered during the process broke my heart. The statistical data of the crime rate, the murders of innocent victims, and the extreme trafficking of guns into concentrated areas were all hard to take in. It stuck with me emotionally. It wasn’t just a paper, it was a shocking manifestation, and I will never forget it. The detournement project was a challenge for me because I never thought of myself as “artistically creative.” This project tested my artistic abilities and my eye for conveying messages via illustrations. The hardest part about the detournement project was hearing feedback because I although I knew that I wasn’t an artist, I tried my best and it is sometimes hard to hear that your best wasn’t enough. When it is all said and done, I would like to thank you for assigning the heavier workloads in the beginning and middle of the semester. This allowed my classmates and me to focus on our other courses. It also prevented us from becoming burned out towards the end of the semester.

 ***The films.*** First, I would like to thank you, Professor Leston, for understanding the plight of African-American/Black people. It was very noble of you to show the class *The* *Black Panthers: Vanguard of the Revolution* film. In a world where Black people are constantly oppressed, I was happy to see you put us on a pedestal, if only for a little while. I felt proud watching the film. It was filled with so much information that I had never been able to access. Before watching the documentary, I had no idea who Fred Hampton was. I’ve heard his name in passing, but I really didn’t understand how powerful he was. I was impacted by learning about him. He was so young when he was murdered. By the time he was 21, he had already held a high position in the party, and was revered by people all over the country. The entire documentary was very insightful, and I enjoyed it so much that I sat my entire family down to watch it. They were also impacted and they thanked me for bringing the knowledge to their attention. I, in turn, thank you immensely for that.

 ***Let us discuss.*** Another one of the things I will miss from this course is the stimulating conversations we had in class. I looked forward to them. As stated earlier, speaking, especially publically, is not one of my best talents. My classmates raised amazing points, and you really challenged our intellectual capacity. Sometimes the discussions were so intense that we ran over time, but the information we walked away with is timeless. This has taught to how to listen for understanding instead of listening for the sake of responding.

 ***It’s a wrap.*** I sincerely apologize for my letter being so long, but I wanted to ensure that I hit on all the significant things I have learned from this course. I feel like I am a better person because of this class, and I am no longer afraid to push myself to do more. There is nothing wrong with wanting more for yourself, and discovering new things about yourself, regardless of your age. I thank you, Professor Leston for always letting me know when I was doing a great job or when I could do better. I am grateful for your hospitality. I plan to carry the knowledge received in this class with me in my day-to-day life, and I will apply it well. I am saddened to leave this class because I feel like there is so much more it can give me, but fortunately, what I learned here will always stick with me.

Sincerely,

Abigale Morris