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Final Reflection

When I first started this class, I was very excited because I've always enjoyed writing. It gave me a chance to put my thoughts and feelings on a physical medium. This process, though tedious, allowed me to revisit experiences and memories, and also allowed me to reflect on things that I thought were important. I never thought that I was a good writer, but I felt that I had developed a lot since English 1101 and now English 1121. The development process has been a journey.

When I first started writing, I really fell in love with the idea of imagery and visceral details that might help readers feel like they are walking in your shoes. I believe this class has really enabled me to do so. I recall writing the first assignment and feeling very strongly about my military background. I remember writing about the collapse of the World Trade Center. This tragic event happened more than two decades ago, and yet I could still recollect the imagery that was burned into my very being. I remember brainstorming words that I could use to describe what I had seen. In the end, I could visually see the progress that I've made. I could visually see that my vocabulary had increased, and that I had developed a liking to a diverse number of words. I was also motivated by those who would read my work and reflect deeply on it. Maybe I had said something profound and meaningful, something that they could closely relate to.

Despite my writing development bringing me joy, I always hated a certain aspect of writing. That aspect was that the grading or critiquing of my work was purely subjective. Unlike math, which always has a correct answer, writing was a beauty in the eye of the beholder type answer. I remember asking my friend who was a published poet and writing graduate to proofread my essay and she immediately told me about all the atrocious cardinal sins I had broken. I remember feeling immediately discouraged to write anymore, and I hated that there were rules to something meant to be so free. To be honest, I commit these sins pretty regularly and freely as a sign of rebellion. I've been told it's bad practice to start a paragraph or piece with a question. I've been told it's cliché. I've been told it's a sin. Honestly, fuck it. This is my work, and my signature. During this course, I've learned that this is *me*. I am unapologetically *me*.

You might be wondering, what was the hardest part of the course? Well, I loved the first and third assignments because it offered us a chance to be creative and write or design something that we truly cared about. It wasn't dull and time consuming. The most challenging assignment to me was the second assignment. Annotated bibliographies and I do not get along. Although I think it is absolutely necessary to learn and research, I find it absolutely tedious and overwhelming at times. I will say this though. Compared to the other annotated bibliographies I have written, I liked Professor Penner's format the best.

Moving forward, the best advice that I can give to future students that will attend Professor Penner's English 1121 course, is to not be afraid of making mistakes. I truly felt that this course allowed students to really discover their strengths and weaknesses. This course allowed me to really figure out what I enjoyed about writing without having to worry about my grade. The peer reviews and structure of the class really helped me worry about things that would set me up for future success instead of catering my writing towards earning a good grade.

I would also ask that students actually commit to the course and show up. I feel that a lot of students gave up mid-semester and it really slowed them down or held them back. Overall, I feel that this course was one of the best decisions I could've made for my education. I feel that other students would feel the same way, but they would definitely need to commit the time to succeed.

Most of the classes we had started with a quote, and with that, I leave the future class a quote of my own. "I think that we have to realize that times of stress are also times that are signals for growth, and if we use adversity properly, we can grow through adversity" by Rabbi Abraham Twerski. Rabbi Twerski describes that a lobster is a soft mushy animal that lives in a rigid shell. When the lobster grows too big, its shell becomes uncomfortable and stressful to live in. The lobster hides under a rock formation, sheds its shell, and produces a new comfortable shell. To the future students of Professor Penner's English 1121 course, times of stress and uncomfortability are signs of growth. You have to overcome adversities, not just in class, but in life in order to grow. Don;t forget that stress is natural, but what we do in times of stress is what really matters and defines us. Thank you all.