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College Writing: Perceptions & Past Experiences

Introduction

College writing is something most students will struggle with, myself included. I am used to writing a good bit weekly via \LaTeX , usually Mathematics, but writing in general is a hard task for most people regardless of platform without the foundational talent for it.¹ In a paper by Hoppe, it is noted that students are specifically struggling with college writing and the processes that go along with it [2, p4]. She notes that this is due to the fact that college writing requires one “to see farther, wider, and deeper, and ultimately to develop one’s own lenses through which to see the world” [2, p4]. In simple terms: it is far more demanding technically and requires a larger introspective journey on the subject matter compared to High School writing. However, does that apply to just the general public or am I excluded from this?

Initial Perceptions & Past Experiences

When I first went to college at California State University, Long Beach (CSULB) my first class, at 8AM, was English Composition I. The class was and still is to this day the hardest class I’ve taken at a college. I passed with a 71% using last minute extra credit assignments. It didn’t have many assignments, they were just fairly large endeavors to complete and I was not prepared given my current job-student relationship. For clarity, note I had six classes that semester and worked between 30 and 40 hours a week between two jobs fairly regularly. As for the assignments, they were 10+ page essays on political topics like Edward Snowden and we were given a month for each essay to be drafted, peer reviewed, revised, and finally submitted. If any portion of that wasn’t shown to our professor the essay was immediately graded as a zero. This happened to many students on usually one essay. As for me, it occurred in relation to the second to last essay we submitted and it completely destroyed my 88% grade in the class.

I stayed at CSULB for seven semesters and have obviously honed my writing skills over time, especially via platforms like \LaTeX . I took classes that relied heavily upon written works like Technical Communication, Analytical Thinking, Applied Ethics, Bioethics, and more during my remaining semesters at CSULB.² I even took English Composition II, but for some reason Thomas Edison State University (TESU) put it as a non-transferable class, so here I am again ... in English Composition II. However, I don’t mind it as my future career paths I have established are writing intensive, thus retaking this class is actually beneficial in a way. Therefore, my perceptions coming into English Composition II again, is much like that of my view venturing into the Technical Communication CSULB course. It followed a very similar course structure as well: an assignment a week that was usually a business letter/memo or a short paper like this. We should note however what goes into these work’s production: hours of research and revision.

The Role of Research

When I took English Composition II one of the required textbooks was *The Oxford Guide to Library Research* (4th Edition) by Thomas Mann.³ It exposed me to just how crazily important research can be for any project. As well, what a database from some institutions can offer you and how to navigate it for your project(s). Given I am currently writing a book on Analytic Philosophy focusing on Hermeneutic Pragmatism⁴, this knowledge has greatly helped me in my writing endeavors. I expect it will carry over into this class handily as well. Perhaps even in my Critical Information Literacy (SOS-110-OL009)⁵ course as well, which focuses on evaluating and strengthening a student’s skills in “critical thinking, writing, and information literacy” [3, p1]. Overall, research, in my opinion, is a fundamental component to any rigorous project.

Conclusion

To summarize, writing at a college level, statistically speaking, is troublesome to most students. As well, the prerequisites, like research, are often overlooked by those not trained or supplemented in writing tactics/techniques and students suffer for it. Thus, reinforcing the first statement of the conclusion. My own history with college writing has its ups and downs, but most of the downs were due to extraneous influences negatively impacting my school-related work ethic. I have greatly improved my writing skills due to consistently using \LaTeX to help people with Mathematics, like BlackPenRedPen (BPRP) on YouTube (YT).⁶ With that in mind, I do not view college writing as anything too hard technically speaking, just that it requires a considerable amount of focus and discipline to do what it theoretically requires. Obviously some projects/topics are more intensive than others, but I stand by my previous statements.

Notes

¹See [1] for an example of a typical Mathematics paper I create weekly.

²See courses ID'd as PHIL160, PHIL170, and so on in the CSULB Class Catalogue for more information.

³You can find the one I bought here:

<https://www.amazon.com/Oxford-Guide-Library-Research/dp/0199931062>.

⁴You can research Legal Hermeneutics via <https://iep.utm.edu/leg-herm/#H5> and Legal Pragmatism via <https://iep.utm.edu/leglprag> if you are interested in studying the foundations of my book.

⁵See <https://www2.tesu.edu/course.php?CourseCode=SOS-110> for a course overview by TESU.

⁶See https://youtu.be/1P0U_9I2oKg for a YT video in which I work with BPRP on his former work. Also, BPRP's channel can be found via <https://www.youtube.com/user/blackpenredpen/videos>.

References

- [1] **C. D. Chester**. "YouTube Integrals: Ep. 1-5." *C. D. Publications*, 30 March 2020, <https://bit.ly/3mUnl5F>. Accessed 2 December 2020.
- [2] **Kerri E. Hoppe**. "Postsecondary Writing: First-Year Students' Perceptions of College Writing Preparedness." *Merrimack College*, Spring 2014, <https://bit.ly/3g9ZsV6>. Accessed 2 December 2020.
- [3] "Syllabus for SOS-110." *Thomas Edison State University*, 18 April 2020, <https://bit.ly/2VwvS2A>. Accessed 2 December 2020.