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ENGRD 230W

Professional Writing Reflection Essay

I. Introduction

As a Rhetoric, Writing and Information Design minor, I have taken many English courses at Emory. However, most of those courses have been focused on analyzing books and writing research papers. Although those skills have been important for my education, I was hoping to take a writing class that would be focused on something different. I signed up for Professional Writing because I thought it would be beneficial for me to take a class designed to help me develop my professional life and career aspirations. In past writing classes, I would write for the deadlines. I would complete an assignment and turn it in, never to think about it again. This class, however, has taught me that to achieve your best work you must continually be revising and workshopping your writing. I am confident that the materials and assignments I completed in this course will be immensely helpful to me when I am applying for jobs and participating in the interview process.

II. Course Goal #1: Understand what it means to be a professional

The class assignment that stands out to me the most in terms of helping me better understand what it means to be professional is the Job Report piece. For this assignment, we were asked to interview someone in our career field and analyze a piece of writing they have completed in their role. I decided to interview Emily Kastenberg, a staff assistant and legislative correspondent on Capitol Hill. During our interview, Emily gave me a lot of insight into her position and what working in the political field is like. Additionally, she provided me with a

letter she wrote for her job about the war in Ukraine. In my job report I analyzed the audience, purpose, and genre of the piece and wrote,

The audience for this piece of writing is Congresswoman Scanlon's constituents, more specifically, those who have written to her about the war in Ukraine and have raised concerns about it. [...] Additionally, Emily has to write from the perspective of the Congresswoman, since the letter is being sent from her, not Emily. The purpose of this letter is to make sure Scanlon's constituents feel they are heard and acknowledged by the Congresswoman.

Through doing this analysis, I was able to learn more about the work that Emily does as a professional in the political world, as well as others in similar positions. In addition, Emily gave me advice for how to navigate the application process for jobs on Capitol Hill and other jobs in the field. She explained that getting a job on Capitol Hill is very competitive and it is helpful to have an internship there before applying for a full-time position. Emily also spoke to me about the importance of networking with anyone who could have an influence on whether or not your resume is looked at.

III. Course Goal #2: Consider a wide range of audiences and the consequences of writing and Course Goal #4: Engage actively in the process of revision

For every piece of writing that we did in this class, we had to think about the specific purpose and audience that our work was intended for. For example, we had to write our resume and cover letters for the audience of a hiring manager at the specific job that you were applying for with the purpose of convincing them that you are an ideal candidate for the position. This audience was different from the audience for our email draft to our interviewee for the job report with the purpose of asking to speak with them for the class assignment. This is the message that I sent to Emily for the assignment:

Hello Emily,

Hope you are doing well. I am a Senior at Emory studying political science. I saw you graduated from Emory and wanted to learn more about your experience working on the Hill. Additionally, I am hoping to use this interview for a class project that is due in October. Please let me know if you're willing to discuss your job and what your availability is. Thank you in advance for your time.

Best,

Layla

The tone of this email was a lot more casual than my cover letter due to the different audiences and purposes. Additionally, for the blog project my tone was very different, as it was catered to a different audience and purpose. Because my intended audience was voting-age students my tone was casual and the rhetoric I used was very simplistic and to-the-point. I wanted to make sure that the information I provided on my blog was purposeful and was not overwhelming for students while reading it. However, when I was workshopping the first draft of my first blog post with the class, I realized that it was a little too harsh for my audience. For example, I wrote “Not feeling educated about those running in your state is a very common excuse for not voting. However, this excuse is not valid.” I revised this section after receiving feedback during my class workshopping session and ended up changing this section to say “Not feeling educated about those running in your state is a very common excuse for not voting. However, you are in the right place!” This simple revision changed the tone of the section to be more friendly and encouraging for my audience. Additionally, because my audience was students, it was very helpful to engage with my classmates and hear their thoughts about my writing. My peers also provided me with great suggestions, such as including information on what to bring to the polls on election day, for my next blog entries based on information that they wanted to know.

IV. Course Goal #3: Communicate effectively through common workplace genres

In this class, we worked on a lot of documents that will definitely serve to be helpful in the job application process. We worked on cover letters, emails, resumes, personal bios, job

memos and blogs. Each of these pieces of writing was focused on my personal interests and career aspirations. Additionally, we also completed a multimedia final project that could be about anything that we wanted on any multimedia platform. For that assignment I decided to do something similar to my blog and create an infographic about the 2022 Senate election in Georgia because of its relevance to Emory students.

V. Course Goal #5: Write with awareness of textual conventions

As I have explained, every assignment that we completed in this class went through multiple rounds of edits with careful attention to grammar, style, clarity, concision, organization, and effective sentence and paragraph structure. We learned that every sentence, and even every word, must have a purpose. One example of this is the resume assignment. Since a resume has to be very concise and purposeful, it was important to select our words carefully to ensure that we were getting our message across in the limited space. For instance, I revised the skills section of my resume to include skills, such as AP style and Microsoft Office, that were specifically mentioned on the job description that I was focusing on. Finally, I ensured that every piece of writing that I turned in was carefully edited to have correct grammar, punctuation and sentence structure.

VI. Conclusion

This class has served to be one of the most useful courses I have taken at Emory. This was not only because I created documents that I will be able to use when applying for jobs, but also because I learned about the importance of the revision and workshopping process.