**Reflective Essay Sample**

Both the rhetorical analysis and the research paper and the whole process that went into that was different than the work I have been asked to do in previous writing classes both in high school and in college. For the rhetorical analysis we were instructed to choose 1 or 2 articles, I chose two, and write a paper in which we analyzed the rhetoric to make meaning of each of the articles. The particular demands of this assignment included putting the articles in conversation with each other, which could only be done effectively if we fully understood the rhetoric present in each of the articles, recognizing the audience each article was intended for, pinpointing the genre in each and other aspects of rhetoric.

By doing this we could compare the two articles and highlight how and why these aspects are important. For the research project, the demands were to do research on a topic, find relevant and credible sources, create our own way of conducting the research, make a multi-modal presentation presenting our findings from our research, then extending our research and situating it in a bigger social context. We had to be knowledgeable on using databases, finding and recognizing what sources are credible, and also understanding what a lens is and using that lens to analyze the various texts we chose to extend and relate to our research.

Over the course of this class I have begun to understand genre as the way something is communicated based on context. The genre is informed by both the audience and the purpose of the piece. My understanding of rhetoric is the use of language in a piece. With that being said, it is what makes the text work well or not work well. The rhetorical situation is made up of the audience, purpose, exigence (why the text exists), and context. Within that ethos, pathos, logos, and kairos can be used to contribute to this. In my writing I made sure to write in a way that was accessible to a variety of audiences. In addition, I showed my understanding of rhetoric and genre in my research paper.

 When conducting research, reporting data and findings and reviewing other sources, you need to keep in mind how you report it to your audience. This starts with choosing credible sources that you use as references. I made sure when referencing sources I introduced the source and made it clear where in came from. An example of this is instead of saying I got this information from the NCBI, I made sure to be clear on what those letters stood for (National Center for Biotechnology Information).

 This gives the reader context for what I am reporting and gives credibility to the claim. That is imperative in research/ academic writing which is the genre that was enacted in my writing. In addition, I used ethos throughout my writing to add to the credibility of my work. I did this by using peer reviewed papers as sources, putting trust in the audience about the research. I used pathos, appealing to emotions by mentioning the idea more than once that our main concern is the well being of students and making sure they are supported in the school environment.

 Using this type of language will appeal to the emotion and most likely connect to personal experiences of both parents, teachers, and anyone in connection to an adolescent in their lives. Using particular language and emphasizing specific points shows my understanding of genre and rhetoric keeping in mind what context this would be read in, what type of people would be reading this work and what the point of this work was.

As I mentioned in the introduction of my research paper, I am studying to be an educator. With that being said, I would lying if I said that had no affect on my writing and the ideas that shaped my understanding and opinions on the research that I did about school start times, impacts of insufficient sleep of adolescents and the general stress and pressure students feel, during my research process.

This brings up the idea of paradigm and how writing is socially situated. I cannot help how I think about education, the importance of giving students every opportunity possible to be their best, and about learning environments. Because of how I feel and understand these concepts, that unconsciously shapes how I read all the research I came across and even the data from my surveys. I do not believe a piece of writing can be completely unbiased. Every single written word in my opinion, is in some way socially situated. Whoever is writing it has their own set of values, shaped by society and their experiences that whether consciously or unconsciously shapes their thinking and their viewpoint on any subject. The mere fact that I took on “side” on my research topic shows that in some way my writing was socially situated, filtering everything I was reading and learning through my set of values relating to this topic.

Looking at the beginning stages of my research project and at the final product, I do find myself surprised by where my work ended up and the discussion that I entered into. I did not expect my research to even go beyond looking at school start times in general. I truly did extend my research, taking aspects that go into this topic and going into more detail about them and how it relates back.

For example, I looked much more closely at insufficient sleep and the other possible factors that go into that as well as the possible outcomes. I looked being just start times as a factor into students being tired during the day and wanted to look at the bigger picture. It even turned into a sort of “what can we do” type of ending which is something that is important to be, being a future educator, making sure that there is a point and something to learn and take away from this research.

 After taking this course I definitely have aspects of rhetorical situation in my mind when reading texts. I now think about how no matter what, all writing is in someway socially situated, shaped from some underlying belief system. This mean no work is really completely unbiased, so it is important in writing to look at multiple points of views to give readers an opportunity to form their own opinions and to look at whatever the content is with an open mind.