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EN202-03

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Reflection

In the beginning of the course, our class was assigned to do a research project that would essentially be done within the entire 14-week period of the semester. A research project is quite long, both in length of essay and time, so the topic that is chosen must be interesting enough to keep the student researcher’s attention as well as workable enough to sustain itself through seven or more pages of writing. My topic was on whether or not the implementation of a sugar tax on Saipan could decrease consumption of sugar-sweetened beverages and improve health, a topic that I have regretted doing. Though my topic was sustainable, I found it rather difficult to work with and all results that I have obtained from my surveys may be inconclusive as surveys were done only on 87 people, which is not even 1 percent of the population on Saipan. For a topic such as this, at the very least 10 percent or more of the population would need to be surveyed. In this essay, I will reflect on what I have done for the research paper, things I would have done differently, and how this class has helped me improve my skills.

The essays due for this class were organized in a way so that each essay would be a piece of the student’s final research report. In all honesty, this method is really good and takes a huge burden off student’s backs. Some classes assign essays that have absolutely nothing to do a research paper and then assign a research paper within the last four weeks of class, which is not bad, but is definitely something I do not prefer. I like the way this class’s assignments were set up and that each essay was essentially a part of my final research paper. It took off hours of work I would have otherwise done if the research paper had to be done in four weeks as opposed to 14. When I was working on my research report, I literally just copied and pasted several paragraphs I worked on for previous assignments, modifying them just a bit so they would befit the research report.

One essay that was due included a literature review, comprised of the various literature the student found on their topic. It was suggested that literature sources be found as soon as possible, so that the student has more time to read and work on them. Other courses assign students to locate and read this type of assignment in the last four weeks of the course. Personally, I find that the earlier the instructor asks the students to find literature sources, the better, as it gives them a lot more time to search, read, and evaluate the usefulness of each source they find. All in all, I was really satisfied with the sources I found for my research report. They were mostly academic sources that highlighted the benefits of implementing sugar taxes, which is exactly what I needed. So far, the only problem I have faced with findings sources is finding local sources on the subject of a sugar tax. The only thing I could find were two articles talking about how nobody wanted the tax when it was first proposed in 2016, which did not exactly help the narrative of my paper. However, the most helpful types of sources would have to be the national and international academic literature I found. They gave endless analysis, results, and findings that show how sugar taxes can be beneficial. I feel like developing this skill will be essential for me in the future, especially since I want to pursue a career in the STEM field and would most likely need to be able to analyze literature I found.

English Composition II required a textbook for students to buy, however, I have barely used the textbook. For examples of academic writing, I also searched on the internet instead of looking in the textbook. I just found it a lot more convenient and easier to search for answers on a search engine as opposed to skimming through pages in order to find out what I wanted to know. When learning about APA format, I never even touched my textbook and would always search for answers online instead or read the various handouts provided by the course instructor. I feel that learning APA will benefit me greatly in the future as I currently want to pursue a career in the STEM field. That field requires a lot of research reports to be done, as well as knowing how to cite, how to write a research report, and how to conduct personal data investigations. This course has taught me a lot, and will no doubt help me in the future even if I decide I do not want to be in the STEM field. The skills learned in this class are necessary, especially for classes under the science, history, and philosophy umbrella.

Conducting primary research is the one thing that sets this class apart from English Composition I. Although you are required to conduct primary research in EN101, it is not to the extent of EN202. For this class, everyone was required to survey EN202 peers, send 10 or more letters to experts on and off island, and conduct at least one more form of primary data collecting for the project. Learning how to do primary research will help me, especially because now I know various methods of collecting primary data. My primary data collecting is the strongest as well as the weakest part of my research paper. Though I had a lot of helpful responses from 87 survey takers, I feel as though the results cannot be fully conclusive as I only surveyed such a small portion of the population on Saipan. Moreover, though it was easy to report the findings I received for my report, it was a lot harder to explain the significance of them in the discussion section for the essay. I really appreciate how the research essay was given to students since the beginning of the course, as it allows them to work on and plan ahead for their research paper. This was one of the biggest assets, however, I will say that I did procrastinate a bit, which is probably why I am not that proud of the end product of my research report.

All in all, I feel as though this course has really helped me improve my academic writing skills even further. I used to have a problem with run-on sentences and being too “wordy” in the past, and probably still face this issue a bit now, but I feel like this course has gotten me a step closer to being more concise. Additionally, the course has helped me learn how to properly evaluate literature sources, when before I used to just slap quotes from the sources, I found into my writing without actually reading the source. However, I will say that though the course has benefitted me, I feel like my research report is lackluster and this could possibly be because I got tired of my topic after writing essay after essay after essay about it. My research outcomes were good but could have been better; I should have surveyed at the very least 150 people. Despite this, the course was useful and will most likely be useful for me in the future.