

Reflections

Introduction to Writing

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Over the course of the semester, this class emphasized a series of concepts that illustrate the value and power of language. One in particular held my focus:

“Writing is a form of action. Through writing we respond to problems and can create change in the world.”

As the class progressed, this concept of writing-as-action was displayed repeatedly. When I was analyzing works from my own past, I was able to see how I had responded to problems in the past, through my writing. Through this, I not only got a reminder of the past, but that past writing also helped to clarify how I approach similar problems today.

When I wrote a rhetorical analysis of Joshua Tauberer’s article, “So You Want To Reform Democracy”, I was able to see how writing could be used to directly affect the world. From the structure of the content, to the choice of examples, Tauberer deftly wielded language to clearly communicate with his readers on a variety of levels. By analyzing Tauberer’s article, I was able to discover techniques for addressing a wide audience regarding a specific point.

When the class began to select topics for our final research papers, many of us chose topics that were of personal importance to us. I, for example, chose to dig into some of the thorny issues surrounding general artificial intelligence. My interest stems from a genuine concern that I have about the subject. I wanted to dig deeper into it, in order to see if the things that concern me hold up under scrutiny. Through

my writing, I responded to specific concerns that I had, and learned more about the subject than I had previously managed to.

While I have found many expressions of this concept of “writing as action” in the classroom, it has numerous applications beyond the classroom as well. Communicating with management at work, for example, requires being able to effectively communicate with an unfamiliar audience. Being able to do so effectively will enable me to introduce improvements to the organization in which I work, and thereby making the organization more effective in achieving its own ends. Developing software, which is both my choice of career and my hobby, can also be seen as “writing as action.” Much of software development exists in the form of communicating with other developers, management, and customers, in order to ensure that the work being done excels in its purpose. Through being able to clearly structure my writing, I will be able to document my code for others to understand it clearly. I will be able to clearly illustrate flaws in approaches, or gaps in requirements that may cause problems if not addressed. These are things that I would not be prepared to do effectively without the skills I have learned in this class.