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Professor Reardon

ENGCMP 0400 10:00 AM

15 November 2020

Course Reflection

The biggest thing I learned in this course is the mindset I need to be effective in professional writing. At the beginning of the semester, I had the impression that professional writing was fairly dry and unexciting. The co-op that I worked this past spring and summer was with a small, young company with a culture similar to a startup, so I didn’t gain serious experience with professional communication outside of a casual setting. As a result, I approached my early assignments with an unnecessary degree of formality, and it caused my writing to be subpar. A few weeks into the semester, I started writing in a way that felt more natural to me, by mixing in my personal interests and sense of humor to have more fun with the assignments. I felt much more comfortable when working on assignments, and I think they ended up being of a higher quality than the earlier ones. This taught me that, even in professional writing, I have some room to express myself; I can be professional without being bland.

As for writing challenges, I think that the switch to virtual learning made everything about this semester tougher. The most frustrating aspect of the semester, by far, was the chaos that some of the professors seemed to welcome. By contrast, this class was very well-adapted to the virtual model. The assignment schedule was well-organized using Canvas, and if I had any questions, I was easily able to ask them by using GroupMe. It was also extremely useful to not have course meetings some days of the week. I mean that in the nicest way possible, because it showed that you were considerate of our time and stress levels. This semester is the first where I have really struggled to wake myself up for a 10:00 AM class, so getting to sleep in some days was nice.

My other professors seemed to think that they did not have to alter their approach to teaching in the slightest, which is preposterous to me. For example, the professors in my Senior Design course fully expected in-person instruction to start on the first Monday of the semester, as was originally implied by Pitt. They ended up having no contingency plan for instruction remaining virtual, and the students had to deal with the chaos resulting from their poor planning. This is a course where students are expected to design a physical prototype to solve a given problem, which presents obvious issues when we cannot meet in person. These professors tried to pretend that everything was normal the entire semester, and it resulted in nothing but unnecessary stress for the students. Even though the assignments for ENGCMP 0400 were tough, working on them actually felt like a welcome respite from the lack of structure rampant throughout the rest of the university.