

ENGL 211 C

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Final Course Reflection

Looking back at the work I completed throughout this English course, I can see a noticeable difference between how I approached research at the beginning of the semester and how I approach it now. Before this class, I mostly thought of a research paper as finding enough reliable information about a topic and using it to support an argument. Throughout the course, I learned that research involves much more planning, evaluation, organization, and critical reading. From developing my research proposal to completing my final paper, each assignment introduced another part of the research process.

One of the first important steps was developing the research proposal. The proposal forced me to move from having a general topic to developing a specific research question that could actually be investigated. I learned that a topic can be interesting but still be too broad for a research paper. Developing the proposal required me to consider what I wanted to know, why the question was important, and what types of evidence I would need. I also learned that a research question can change as new information is discovered.

The annotation process was one of the most useful techniques I developed. Previously, I tended to read sources to find information that directly supported my argument. Annotation required me to slow down and interact more closely with the material. I began identifying the author's main argument, key concepts, methods, evidence, conclusions, and limitations. I also considered how each source could contribute to my research. By the time I started drafting my final paper, my annotations provided a map of the research I had already completed and made it easier to organize information.

Another important lesson involved source credibility. I learned that finding a source related to my topic does not automatically make it appropriate for academic research. I became more careful about considering who wrote the information, where it was published, when it was published, and what evidence supported its claims. Peer-reviewed articles, government publications, and reputable professional organizations generally provided stronger evidence. This process also taught me to distinguish between a source being credible and a source actually being relevant to my research question.

Learning about rhetorical appeals, especially ethos, logos, and pathos, changed how I viewed academic writing. Ethos can be established through credible sources and responsible use of evidence. Logos appears through facts, research findings, statistics, and logical reasoning. Pathos can demonstrate why a topic matters to people, although it should not replace evidence. Understanding these appeals helped me become more deliberate about how I present information and build an argument.

My reading strategies also improved. Instead of immediately reading every academic article from beginning to end, I learned to first examine the abstract, introduction, headings, research questions, results, and conclusion. This gave me a general understanding of the source before reading more closely. I also started taking notes and asking questions such as: What is the author's argument? What evidence is being used? How was the research conducted? How does this information relate to my own research question? These strategies made complicated academic sources easier to understand.

Learning the IMRD structure, which stands for Introduction, Methods, Results, and Discussion, also helped me understand how research is organized. The introduction establishes the research problem, the methods explain how the study was conducted, the results present what was discovered, and the discussion explains what those findings mean. Understanding this structure made research articles easier to navigate and helped me recognize the difference between presenting evidence and interpreting it.

By the time I reached my final paper, I could see how everything connected. The proposal established my direction, source evaluation helped me choose reliable evidence, annotation helped organize that evidence, reading strategies made academic research more manageable, and rhetorical appeals helped me communicate my ideas effectively. Overall, the biggest improvement was learning to view writing as a process rather than a single assignment. I now have a better understanding of how to develop a question, evaluate sources, analyze evidence, organize information, and revise my ideas. These are skills that I can continue using in future courses and other types of academic research.