
Using English 175 to Evaluate the Classroom Setting

When we all think of English 175 we think of a class filled with students willing to go the extra mile, but, although that is part of the class, there are parts that we don't know. Hidden behind our misguided thoughts there is a class with English students just like the rest of us. Students who academically, are exactly like all of us. They procrastinate, do sports, get sidetracked, and turns things in late. The English 175 class, though filled with smart kids, is in most ways, just like every other English class.

Academically these students are held to a higher standard. Not only by the school but by the teacher of the class Mrs. Gonzales. They are expected to turn things in on time, get good grades, and do the assignments correctly. They are not only expected but required to go the extra mile in English 175. When asked if students felt they procrastinated in writing their senior research paper, most said they felt they could have gotten it done sooner if they had followed the deadlines. A few claimed that they turned everything in on time due to the fact that this class was hard and it gave them anxiety. Most also stated that academically their favorite part of the class was anything but reading *The Plague*. And a good number of students claimed that *The Plague* and the research paper were their least favorite part of the class.

Physically a lot of students do sports outside of this class. Cheer, Soccer, Cross Country, Choir, Volleyball, and Basketball are only a few. These students have a lot on their plates plus

the class. They have to go to tournaments that sometimes last all day. This can lead to students having to stay up to who knows what hours of the morning to try and finish their homework for every class and sometimes they still don't get it done. High School students in this class have to have a lot of dedication. Not only do kids do sports but along with that several of them have jobs. They work after school which also gives them little time to work on school work. And for English 175 students, some of the requirements are to work on one of two major things, a research paper or reading anywhere from 40-70 pages a night. All of the homework for this class however, has to be done by the next day. There are no exceptions. Even for seniors there is no excuse for not turning in homework that ample time was given to finish.

When observed Megan Anderson and I noticed a common theme in this class. Seniors in the class tended to goof off a little bit more. They didn't seem to do as much work in class. Jimmy Kerner and Amanda Courtois, both seniors, were seen in class and reading a personal book by the first 20 minute mark. When working on their research papers in the computer lab several seniors such as Kade Channel, Kyson Channel, and Amanda Courtois were seen playing games or looking at other things on the internet instead of working on the paper. However, they seemed to only be distracting themselves which goes to show that the class as a whole knows how to stay at least somewhat focused. I think the lack of dedication to work on the research paper by the seniors was due to the feeling of senioritis that seniors sometimes get as they approach the end of the year and graduation. They slack off thinking that there will be no affect to their grades. They easily lose focus and forget that they have to successfully pass one more year before they can graduate. The same goes for some of the juniors in the class as well. As a

whole sometimes the students of this class can forget that they actually have to do a reasonable

amount of work to pass the class.

When students were supposed to be focused on working in class several of them could be found with headphones in their ears listening to music. When all the students in the class were asked about this, almost all of them said that they found it easier to work when they were listening to music. Some stated that background noise made it easier to think, or that the silence made it hard to focus, but only two said they didn't like to listen to music when working. They gave no reason for why they didn't like listening to music when working. I suppose this is because most of the students in the class are most comfortable working with the noise. They either really like music and it doesn't distract them when their thinking, or the music is a way to help them focus on the task at hand. Either way the majority of these particular students seem to prefer listening to music while working.

Every student who took the survey said that they felt they had enough time to work on and write the research paper. Some even said that they felt they had received too much time to write it. These students obviously like the challenge that this class gives them if a good majority stated that it could have been done in less time. Several people actually said they took this class because they thought it provided more of a challenge for them than a regular English class. In the English 175 class, about three fourths of the class are taking additional college-level classes. Out of that three fourths at least half are taking two or more college course classes. This adds not only to the stress level of the class, but also to the amount of homework that these students have to do. When I really thought about, it shows that the students work hard to get good grades and do well in the class. It also shows that these particular students like a challenge. They like to be

challenged in class with the amount of homework and by the amount of learning that they have to do. I personally think that every student in the English 175 class chose it because of the amount of academic skills that they would get out of it. The regular English classes are just that, regular. They hold little challenge to the students who already know what's being taught. Therefore, the students have to have a harder class where the skill level is raised so that they can have a mentally rigorous class where the students can continue to learn.

Work from other classes also plays into how well they do on big projects in this class or in the class in general. At least half the students said in a survey that during the giant research paper they had big projects or assignments due in other classes as well. It varied anywhere from test preparation to writing a paper for a health class. However, when looking at the surveys most of the students turned their research paper in on time. Several of the students claimed that they finished it a few days before and just waited to turn it in while the rest of the class said they didn't finish it until the middle or end of the class period on the day it was due.

Compared to other classes the skill level needed for this class is a little higher. If taking this class a student must be prepared to work hard to turn things in on time because, except in rare occasions, everyone is expected to turn things in when they are due. Students also have to be prepared to work. The average day in this class is taking a test and writing a one page paper on a section of reading that should have been done the night before that could have been anywhere from 40 to 70 pages long. There are expectations to know what happened in the reading and to be able to successfully test on it. There is also a qualification for this class that a student must be ready for whatever the teacher has planned just like every other class but to a somewhat higher level. A level where the student must hold themselves to a higher standard.

They must be willing

to give any time needed plus spare time to finishing and doing whatever needs to be done for this class. It isn't just a class that's as simple as a walk in the park. It takes dedication and motivation just like other high level classes to do well in this class.

The English 175 class is an overall amazing class. It is filled to the brim with hard-working, smart, well-rounded students. Students who are not afraid to work for a good grade. They aren't afraid to ask the teacher for help. They have an overall well understanding of what is going on which is why they are in one of the more advanced classes. However, the students, although academically higher in some ways, are just like every other student in the school. They are prone to procrastinate, miss assignments, skip class, do poorly on a test, or just not do the homework. The seniors are just like all other seniors. They are waiting not so patiently for graduation to arrive and they cannot help but let the reins slack a little. Everyone in the class, though they are all amazing, turn out to be exactly like the rest of us. Hard-working students who are just working towards the end of another year.

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