



ENG101 – WORD CHOICE ASSIGNMENT: SUPERPREDATOR

(Mass Incarceration and the Humanities – NEH and LaGuardia Community College)

Prior to this assignment, none of these students knew the term “superpredator.”

During the Fall 2019 semester, College Now* students taking ENG101 at LaGuardia Community College took part in several writing assignments to consider the importance of word choice, particularly as it relates to mass incarceration in the United States. The assignment was developed during the June 2019 NEH Institute: Mass Incarceration and the Humanities.

FIRST ASSIGNMENT: READING COMPREHENSION

Objective: Within the time frame of one two-hour class session, students will consider readings relating to the term/concept of “superpredators” with the goal of a) honing their reading skills, b) recognizing unhelpful vs. helpful language and c) engaging in a follow up discussion coupled–with a reflective writing prompt–to introduce and demonstrate the importance of word choice in writing, and the impact of language in coverage of mass incarceration.

SECOND ASSIGNMENT: MID-TERM ESSAY

Objective: Within the time frame of one two-hour class session, students will write a timed argumentative essay as their mid-term on the subject of word choice. They are encouraged to consider all related materials previously discussed and shared during the semester. Their prompt was as follows: “Words are free, it is how you use them that can cost you.” (This quote is attributed to many, including KushandWizdom as well as Rev. J. Martin)

THIRD ASSIGNMENT: REVISION

Objective: Students will learn to revise their work through in-class exercises and from feedback on their mid-term essays. Students were allowed to resubmit revised essays for re-grading.

FOURTH ASSIGNMENT: EDITING AND FLASH NON-FICTION

Objective: Students will learn to edit the length of their essays to approximately half of the original word count (650 words) without losing meaning or structure. Through this exercise, students continued revising their essays and were asked to cut at least 300 words while maintaining a coherent piece of writing in the genre of “flash” (or very short) non-fiction.

*College Now is CUNY’s largest school-college partnership with the New York City DOE. The program offers NYC public high school students both transferable college credit courses which are aligned with first year study at CUNY, and pre-college courses and activities designed to increase academic readiness for college and promote knowledge and awareness of the college-going process. LaGuardia’s College Now program seeks to facilitate the high school-college transition by preparing high school students to meet CUNY benchmarks and to be academically successful and socially integrated in college.