

Focus Group Essay

Success is subjective. For many students, success in a college course means passing the class. Most people I know live by the mantra that “C’s get degrees.” I took this History 11 course during the first semester of my first year of college. At the time, I had heard so many horror stories about college that passing the class with a C would have been ideal. I had no idea that the class would change my outlook on so many things as a college student.

History 11 was initially just a GE I needed to pass for my major. I had taken AP History classes all throughout high school, so I thought I knew what to expect. The class was in a big lecture hall so I thought that a professor would talk at the class for 50 minutes 3 times a week. It turns out I was gravely mistaken. Dr. Jones did more than just talk *at* us. He talked *to* us. He engaged the class in discussions. We learned about more than just American history. Dr. Jones found ways to connect what we learned to what was happening in society. By comparing what we were learning in class to the injustices we were seeing all around us, Dr. Jones made us care about the material that was being presented to us.

Friday was our opportunity to dissect what we had learned throughout the week. We were separated into smaller classes that allowed every student to have a voice. These debates in our smaller classes allowed us to gain different perspectives. Instead of being bigoted, we were forced to be open-minded. We had to understand that there could have been extenuating circumstances that played a role in events throughout history. Ideas that I had always believed to be truths were not that straightforward. Our debates taught me that everything is not always so black and white.

This class taught me that success can be many things. Success is about more than just passing the class. Success is about being able to say you actually learned something. They say that college is where you go to learn to think for yourself and I believe that this class exemplified

that. Everything that we learned in this class taught me to appreciate and accept varying points of views. Something is not fact just because someone told me it was so. If it were not for this class, I believe my college experience would have gone very differently. For that reason, I am thankful to Dr. Jones for all that he taught us.