

Learning Essay

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Creativity

Throughout this class, I grew in my ability to express my creativity. In previous classes, learning was a rigid, binary system that left much to be desired. This class helped change my relationship with learning by giving me the freedom to connect what I am learning to my own life. With my past experience with web development, I am able to convey all of my knowledge in a manner that is unique to me. This is evident with my portfolio website. What makes this class truly stand out is not only allowing me to be creative in how I express myself, but also in what I want to learn. This class, more than anything, teaches me how to learn my own way. This is clear with what I selected for my tiny project. Due to my bands, I am often touring a lot throughout the north east and into Canada. Being able to learn about not only the history of the roads I have spent hours on, but also their intricate relationship with the communities that have been hurt by them. In discussions with my classmates, like on Thursday of week eight, I was able to discuss my project with my fellow classmates and take their interesting ideas and fold it into my own work. My transformation from a binary, traditional student to a more creative and imaginative one is seen with trends within my observation. In the beginning I tended to talk about that immediately around me because I believed that to fulfill the nature of the assignment. As the class goes on, it becomes clear that I moved to focus on what I as a person was paying attention to and what I really cared about.

Design Ethics, Equity and Justice

The first thing I learned about environmental studies was that I knew nothing about it. Throughout this course I learned about the intricacies of natural processes and how they relate to the human experience, especially how it relates to class struggle and suffering. This is evident in my notes for week four, where I talk about learning about weatherization and how different energy systems, such as hybrid or electrified systems, harm or benefit certain communities. (week four, tuesday) This change in scope caused me to become more invested in recognising such relationships and how nature and human society work with or against each other. This new angle helped me foster a new interest and motivation for the subject. In my observations, I try to take this perspective and apply it to mundane activities as noted in my observations, like lawncare and traffic tolls. (observation week 4, week3)

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This sense of understanding privilege only furthered as I researched in my topics of interest. While I do not have a car myself, I have easy access to them through friends and partners, and spend a significant time on the road. Seeing cities slowly meld into car-centric environments was originally in the back of my mind, but after gaining a better understanding of the lack of design ethics involved, I became more aware of the continued abuse of the working families that live around me. This realisation was not dissimilar to week nine's lesson about parallel planes, and how the rich live their lives socially isolated from the rest of the population. I do not mean to equate non-privileged communities as animals, but they are sure treated that way by the privileged. In seeing where roads and highways are built, I see that the privileged disregard underprivileged communities, especially the unhoused, when they build roads convenient to them but absolutely devastating for others.

Building Knowledge

If I was to sum up my learning experience for this class, I would say that this class is learning how people survive both with each other and the environment. I learned about the intricate relationships people had with food, infrastructure and wildlife. One method I developed my knowledge was how I moved from my observations regarding car infrastructure, into a detailed report regarding I-95 and how it affected the local communities. Another method I applied previous learning is during the week 9 class activity regarding parallel worlds. My group was tasked to find out how to make the city of Philadelphia have more hospitality for all animals it calls home. I recalled learning about how robust the water system is in Philadelphia and so we as a team believed that the city has the resources to create water based infrastructure for wildlife, like converting grey stormwater infrastructure into green habitats. This also ties into my tiny project, which is all about how highways separated neighborhoods from the important waterfront area. This knowledge regarding how Philadelphia operates and how it affects people extends far beyond this classroom. I brought this knowledge to my American politics class, where I used this to help contextualize how local government actually works and how we as citizens exercise our rights to change the issues that affect all of us.