

Not Just Another Semester of It

By Laura Stange

Perhaps to some, CORE is an average or useless class, but this class has been so much more to me. As CORE helped me to continue to grow with my writing, it has also matured me during the discussions. With topics such as Love, Work and Vocation, and Life and Death, I knew this semester would be personal. Many people have experienced at least some form of these topics, making for some interesting class conversations.

When thinking of love, often a common idea is love that involves romance. However, this class encouraged me to look beyond that. Though our paper for the Love unit prohibited the writing of stories of *eros* love, I am glad it did. I may have otherwise written a story about a meaningless teenage love that broke my heart. I included paper one in this portfolio because it was the most personal; no one experienced how I felt the day my soon-to-be stepfather, Dan, passed away. I had been keeping all of those feelings inside me since the day he died, and although I could not stop crying while the words were being written, it needed to be done. A weight lifted from my shoulders when I told my story. I wanted people to see the pain I went through. I hope my paper shows how I regret not letting him know that I care so maybe no one will have to make that same mistake again.

The second paper I have included in this portfolio was the worker profile paper. I enjoy writing short stories, and I saw this paper as a short story about my father. He was always a mystery to me; I did not know much about him, especially his job as the owner of an oil company. Before writing this paper about his life and career, I was able to interview him and receive some insight into his life. I realized that he not only runs his own company, but he makes

some of the oil deliveries himself. I believe my paper offered not only a short story about my father's life and career, but also included some interesting facts about his job. Although it was a bit tedious to ask questions about a topic he always kept private, I was able to get first hand information about starting my own business. My father and I were never close, and I cannot say that we're much closer now. However, after the interview and writing the paper, I have grown a great deal of respect towards him.

The topic of Death and Life really interested me, so I included paper 4 in this portfolio. While the class read *A Grief Observed* by C. S. Lewis, we compared his words to the five stages of grief. I found this to be insightful, and could compare it to any of the books we read that dealt with death. Comparing it to Tim O'Brien's *The Things They Carried* posed a bit of a challenge because of the many characters and deaths. However, I felt it was important to show that grief may occur in any situation, not just with the loss of a loved one.

Timid and shy, volunteering to speak my mind was never an option, even in CORE. I never quite knew what to say, and even after an entire semester of CORE-110, I was still quiet. "I'm still trying to break you out of your shell," Professor Heider said to me. It took me half the semester to gather my courage, but I have made an effort continuously to speak my mind. One comment each day may seem like a small effort, but it is a big step for me.

My next problem was to not only discuss a book, or answer questions that could be found within it, but to share my own feelings with the class openly. When the movie *Dead Man Walking* was discussed, the class focused on aspects of the death penalty, such as allowing families of victims to speak at the trials of the murderers. Alas, I could not search within a book for the answer to the question at hand and I needed to look within myself. Opportunity presented itself and I took it. It was liberating to share my opinion with the class. I was always reserved

because I feared being judged on my opinions. After I shared my views on something as controversial as the death penalty, no one shot me down. Finally, I felt completely comfortable speaking openly in this class, without fear of judgment.

I never really understood the reason for having groups teach the class until this semester. My peer review group was chosen to teach the book of Luke. I was frustrated with the thought of this. Not only did I have to read deep into the bible, past the surface of the words, I had to come up with answers to possible questions the rest of the class may have asked. We compared the book of Luke to the other gospels, seeing similarities and differences. Overall, being assigned Luke turned out to be more useful than any other text may have been. I understand this gospel better, as well as knowing background information about it. Being in Catholic schools since kindergarten, I have always been familiar with the stories included in the gospels. However, I did not notice the subtle differences in word usage between the four books until teaching the class.

To me, one semester of CORE was not quite enough. At times, I did not see the point of it and thought of the class as a waste of my time. However, looking back on it, I see my accomplishments over the past year. The first semester helped with my writing skills, but the second semester pushed me closer to perfection. The topics of our discussions were more personal, offering conversations that are more meaningful to everyone and allowing me to give better opinions.