

French 111_Inquiry

20 April 2017

Humanistic Inquiry Through the Study of Language

Before taking a language course here at Lafayette, my only prior knowledge of France and its culture was from my high school French classes. While they did a great job with teaching us grammar points and vocab, they failed to create an understanding and appreciation to that different culture. Now, having almost completed the semester, I feel like I have a better understanding of the different parts of French culture such as their political system and climate, food, and educational system from the thought provoking lectures and projects.

From day one of this semester, our professor stressed that language is a gateway into another culture, and she has worked very hard to show us how true that is. Every week, we are asked to do a writing assignment on something she chooses. It allows using the grammatical concepts, but in many cases also allows us to learn about an aspect of the culture that we may not have thought to write about on our own. In addition to these writing assignments, we also read an article or news piece of our choosing and then write a summary of the article and a reflection. This assignment in particular gave me the chance to explore various French news sites and helped to inform me of the different events occurring in France. Although I picked articles that pertained to my interests, I became more aware of the political system and climate during the election in France since I saw many headlines discussing the topic. I also enjoyed in my reflections having the opportunity to explain not only why I picked the article, but also to realize the many similarities

and difference between their culture and ours, which one of the main goals in a humanities course.

Our Professor also asked us to research and create an iBook about a French historical figure. This allowed me to learn so much about the French history and how it has shaped their current culture today. In my project in particular about the great revolutionary, Danton, I not only got a glimpse into his life, but of his families, his allies, and the time period as a whole. At first, my partner and I struggled to find information about the time period, mostly because our lack of knowledge of it prevented us from knowing what to research. Our professor helped us create a better understanding of the events during this time period, such as Bastille and the Reign of Terror. She also took the time to explain the importance of these events to us. This allowed me to appreciate the culture of that time period and how different it is to the culture of revolutions and wars now or even in the past for the United States. Each group was given the chance to present their project as well, which gave me another opportunity to appreciate and understand these cultural differences. After the presentations, we had a French inspired array of food. This to me was a very eye opening time because I did not know the cultural differences in the way that the French eat cheese for instance. They have a certain part of the cheese that you should not directly eat, where I would have done that before learning it.

Another part of class that has increased my culture awareness is the introduction to French media. Our professor has showed us several different songs by French singers. We have listened to their version of pop music, as well as other genres or older songs. I was surprised how the styles and meanings of the songs do

not differ nearly as much as I would have expected them compared to American music. These songs also served as a way to see our grammar points and vocab being used in real life. This made me realize that these grammar points are taught to us because people really do use them, not just as a way to write correctly.

In conclusion, this class has helped me become more aware of the French culture and its similarities and differences to the culture here in the United States through its history, food, songs and current events. Now that I better understand the culture, I am beginning to appreciate it more and more. Although there are still things that I question or do not fully understand, I believe that as I continue this semester my understanding and appreciation of French culture will continue to expand.