

**B.1 Midterm Summary:** Summary interpretation of observations and evidence in terms of the four major strands of work and the five dimensions of learning (listed below). Be sure to connect your interpretations with specific examples included in the observations and samples of work.

I am going to address the dimensions of learning, incorporating the major strands of work as evidence of my learning. The “use of prior and emerging experience,” and “reflectiveness” dimensions are not addressed independently because they are inherent in the discussions of “confidence and independence,” knowledge and understanding,” and skills and strategies.” The following are my interpretations and observations of my learning within the first half of this class.

Confidence and independence:

I think I have been pretty confident in my written and verbal discussions thus far. I do however distinguish confidence from being right. I tend to be confident because I think I am right. However, I usually learn soon after that there is more than one way to think about the problem, situation, etc. I believe the discussions on-line and in class provided the medium to realize this, in particular, the discussions concerning Germany’s role as the War initiator and those concerning the ethics of the current situation stemming from Sept. 11th. Although I usually kept the same point of view, I took other peoples’ opinions into consideration, which helped me further articulate my opinions (see Response to discussion). I have learned that there is not always one right answer, and that the best answer is subject to change (see observation on 9/13). For most of the semester, I have had significantly more confidence discussing issues rather than writing essays. Just recently, I have felt better about my writing, now knowing that there is an outline to follow. I have always felt like I rambled in my papers, probably because I felt the papers lacked direction (see observation on 10/15). Thus, I don’t necessarily feel more confident about my ideas, but more confident in the ability for others to understand them. Concerning technology, this class has been a giant leap for me. I generally shy away from computer stuff for the same reason I shy away from writing- it overwhelms me. However, since I had no choice, I learned, for example, to use word commenting, navigate better through the internet, and most importantly to me, because it actually turned out to be quicker, I learned to write papers completely on the computer (i.e. without using a pen). I have doubted in the past that this method would actually work for me, not to mention, be quicker. Also, I can now write short, quick opinion papers without over-thinking the situation (see A2). I guess this would be because the task is less daunting and thus I can narrow my ideas. I believe the task is less daunting because I have completed it several times within class with more positive feedback than negative. Specifically, I have learned that it is virtually impossible to write something that perfectly summarizes what I’m thinking because thoughts and ideas constantly change- so I just have to pick something and go with it.

Knowledge and understanding:

I have increased my knowledge and understanding of war philosophies, WWII, the Kosovo Crisis, and essay structure. When I discussed my war philosophy on the discussion forum, I chose the just war philosophy because I thought it was the “right” choice- it best matched my morals and values. However, after reading about the Kosovo Crisis, as well as discussing the current wartime situation, I have a better understanding about how I feel. Consequently, I have refined my war philosophy to incorporate what is happening at this time. Also, I am grateful that I have this class this particular semester, as it has given me somewhat of a foundation for further discussions outside of class. I also have learned how to structure an essay using a frame/case outline. This can be seen by comparing the peer editing of essays #1 and #2, or by comparing the rough draft of essay #2 with the final draft of essay #2. Upon entering this class, I did not think structure was that important, but as I began writing, I realized that this was where I could use improvement (see A2 and observations). I have also learned how to use quotations, how not to propose questions within essays, how not to end a paragraph with a quote, and how not to use such transitional words such as first, second, and finally. Furthermore, I believe I have slightly improved my ability to connect thoughts and ideas together. Also, another important concept I now understand is the difference between a thesis and an objective. As noted in the last observation, I thought that the thesis was the objective, but now I understand the difference (see essay #2). I have also included the commented final draft of essay #1, to show what I did not know, and have sense learned.

Skills and strategies:

Due to the tremendous amount of writing I have had to do in the class, compared to any other class I have taken, I have been forced to develop my own kind of strategy for writing essays for the sake of time-management. I have decided on the following system: complete the rough draft by just sitting down and writing as if writing a friend, going back and writing the introduction according to what my rough draft concluded, trying to categorize my thoughts into paragraphs, writing topic and transitional sentences, and then filling in the gaps by primarily cutting and pasting. This seems to help organize the task. However, I’d like to revise this as I see ways to improve. Also, the recording of observations turned out to be a valuable skill. Having to write the observations enabled me to realize where my weaknesses were and are. Without having realized it, I tried to improve upon what I had previously acknowledged was a problem. In that case, this learning record really does foster learning on an individual level.

### **C.1 Midterm evaluation**

- Estimated evaluation in terms of grade
- Suggestions for your own further development during remainder of semester
- Suggestions for class activities or for the professor to better support learning

Throughout the first half of this class I feel like I have accomplished the following: improvement in my writing skills; an increased comfort level with computers, the Internet, and Microsoft word; and an increased confidence in the productivity of group discussion. I believe my work quality is good. This is based primarily on how much time I have put into this class, and according to the observations and interpretations of my learning. I hope to have more of a standard to compare myself to for the remainder of the class, as well as feedback from the

instructor. I have completed all assigned work. However, not all of it has been on time. I would like to learn, during the remainder of this course, how to effectively use the Internet and library for research, be more concise in my writing, and improve the speed with which I write.

**Student Grade Estimate: B**

**Midterm Grade: A-**