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CONTROL, MODIFICATION, AND THE VALUE OF SELF-AWARENESS IN  
DYSTOPIAN LITERATURE: AN ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS COURSE

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## ABSTRACT

The study of literature is unique in many ways. Unlike any other area of study, even within the liberal arts, literature provides us with a window through which to view ourselves and the world in which we live. Fiction gives us a sense of security and distance from personal experiences, and it is within that sense of comfort that beginning readers can analyze the actions and consequences, along with larger themes, that dictate the circumstances of their own lives. A good author will create characters so real that their actions cannot be categorized in one shade of morality; rather, those on the page become human for us, and we can therefore learn from the decisions they make. However, I believe that the higher calling of reading is not to find ourselves in text, but rather to gain a greater understanding of the world. The textual evidence we have access to, the wealth of fiction at our fingertips, can be a gateway into understanding the mind of another person, experience, culture, or time. How can we apply these purely human situations to larger sociocultural contexts without losing the complex individualism we value in fiction? Also, assuming this is attainable, how can we, as educators, encourage our students to strive for such a lofty goal? These questions are the basis on which I am writing this thesis. Incorporating differentiated lessons, standardized objectives, and set curricula into an original and empowering course proves challenging to even the most experienced teacher; alas, that is not me. Notwithstanding, I aim to encourage my students to analyze the past, present, and future world around them through this intense, four-unit course designed for advanced high school English Language Arts students.

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## Chapter 1 - WHY TEACH LITERATURE?

I decided I wanted to be a teacher when I was six years old. My first grade teacher Ms. Sleboda was the nicest, prettiest teacher I had ever seen, and I knew I wanted to be just like her when I grew up. As I got older, the age I wanted to teach got greater and greater until I reached ninth grade, and I met the man who ingrained in me a passion for literature. I had been devouring books since I was a little kid – everything from *Magic Tree House* by Mary Pope Osborne to *The Chronicles of Narnia* by C.S. Lewis to *A Series of Unfortunate Events* by Lemony Snicket – and I picked up my first classic novel in the sixth grade. *Emma* by Jane Austen introduced me to a whole new world of fiction with romance and chivalry; I was in love with this nineteenth century fairy tale. However, in the ninth grade, Mr. Litchfield showed me that literature could do more than transport you to another world. Reading gave me the power to understand the values, beliefs, thoughts, and ideas of people different from me, an understanding that surpassed judgment. Through this realization, I could also begin to know my own beliefs, thoughts, and ideas to see how I came to value what I do, which provided me an opportunity to challenge things like faith, religion, politics, and morals in ways I had never previously considered. Because of Mr. Litchfield, I now feel comfortable confronting my values in order for them to become stronger.

This was the real reason why I wanted to teach, especially English Language Arts. I grew confident in testing my own beliefs in order to defend them more fully, rationally, and intelligently. In short, Mr. Litchfield taught me how to think. I came to Penn State prepared for

a continuation of this same method of teaching; not only was I correct in this assumption, I felt my worldview expanding through the literature and education classes I was taking. Educational Theory and Policy 416, the ‘Sociology of Education,’ further changed my thinking about education. I still wanted to use literature to teach students how to think, but I had not been aware of the educational inequity present throughout the United States. This class taught me that factors like race, gender, ethnicity, and socioeconomic status have a massive effect on future educational attainment. How had I been so privileged to experience teachers that changed my life while other students just as motivated as me were being discriminated against based on factors out of their control?

Shortly after I discovered this interest in educational sociology, I took my first class with Dr. Lisa Sternlieb of the English Department within the College of the Liberal Arts. My English classes had been great in my first two years of college; I was still interested in the material and took my courses seriously. But, from the first day of Lisa’s ‘What Is Literature?’ Humanities seminar, I was completely blown away by how a teacher could use the words of an author from two hundred years ago to shed light on any current issues while completely captivating an entire classroom. I distinctly walking out of the classroom next to my best friend, both of us with mouths agape because we (even as the education majors in the class) had no idea you could make English this powerful. How could we do this? What was it in particular about her teaching that affected us on such a deep level? It has taken two years, three courses, and an independent research project with Lisa to verbalize what makes her teaching so impactful.

Lisa combines what I loved about my high school English teacher with the relevance of the conflicts I learned about in my educational sociology class. But, more importantly, she teaches the text. That’s it; that’s the key. There is no spewing of doctrine (most of the time) or

force-feeding of ideas down the throats of her students because she trusts them to use the text to inform their arguments. Throughout my time in her classes, we have discussed hardcore controversial topics like racism, sexism, rape, pedophilia, anti-Semitism, fascism, polygamy, and so many more. But, our discussions only address those topics insofar as the text allows us to; we use the writing in front of us to inform our arguments. Similarly, no argument is stronger than the text we can find to support it within the fiction we study. This approach to literature has greatly informed my teaching philosophy. It creates space to discuss the educationally sociological topics, but provides a measure to use so statements and opinions can be intellectually supported.

My thesis was originally going to be a study performed to see if upper-level literature classes in low-income schools had a positive impact on their educational attainment and/or career goals. I really wanted to see if books could change the lives of other students like they had changed mine. But, I felt like this kind of a study would be too passive for me, and I wanted to be more active in my research. My honors advisor guided me towards creating a secondary English curriculum, and I eagerly grasped this idea. I wanted to use twentieth century literature to explore the topic of the “American Dream” and its relationship with Americans of different gender, race, and socioeconomic status. This is something I still find incredibly intriguing, but it is such a large theme that it could encompass an entire year of reading and writing. How could I point out these inequities using some facet of literature without signing myself up for the colossal task of creating a year of curricula?

Dystopian fiction. Stories of societies constructed to be perfect, like the United States, but with large, gaping holes causing pain and frustration to the oppressed. My goal in this thesis is to create a curriculum that will use dystopian fiction (novels, poems, plays, etc.) to examine

the flaws present in American society. If I couple this theme with the methods of teaching I acquired from Mr. Litchfield and Lisa, I believe I will be able to teach students how to understand their own values and then fight for them to create a better, more equitable future. The problem I see, the one that I want to address most specifically, is that students are not being challenged to discover original concepts and thoughts, which then perpetuates issues such as discrimination and violence. If we refuse to challenge these issues, how can we create a more equitable society?

I spent all of my spring semester working with Dr. Michael Bérubé on an independent study. Dr. Bérubé is a disability studies and science fiction professor within the English Department of the College of the Liberal Arts; I contacted him when I first thought of pursuing dystopian fiction because of his extensive background in science fiction. Over the course of those fifteen weeks, I did more involved and intense literary research than I had ever considered possible as an undergraduate student. I read eight literary works, published from the first decades of the twentieth century to 2013 and with authors ranging from young adult fiction writers to members of the literary canon elite. Once my reading was complete, I wrote and wrote and wrote until I felt like I discovered new concepts and themes within dystopian fiction. It is this research, presented in this thesis, with which I want to engage my students.



## Chapter 2 - WHY DYSTOPIAN FICTION?

Dystopian fiction, first arising as a literary genre with the 1924 novel *We* by Yevgeny Zamyatin and bringing us acclaimed works like *Brave New World* by Aldous Huxley and *1984* by George Orwell, has maintained its popularity over the past ninety years due to political, cultural, economic, and social climates. Sometimes described as “the fusion of two radically opposed literary genres, naturalism and utopia” (Clayton), dystopian fiction attempts to portray current major social and political issues through the lens of a future society, normally with at least one factor being modified or controlled by a larger, more powerful body, be that a government or genetics corporation. Novels tend to cluster around different modified themes with the four most prominent being social, corporate, genetic, and environmental. Though most works of dystopian fiction have the characteristics to fit into more than one of these modified factors, there is always one that prevails as the foremost cause of the specific dystopian world. I argue that the authors of prolific dystopian fiction use their works as a space in which to discuss contemporary norms or problems needing to be addressed; can I challenge my students to identify the problematic norms within their own society?

## Social Control

The unit I want to open my course with is on social control, mostly due to the fact that Orwell's *1984* is the quintessential dystopian novel, and it creates a solid base on which to build the rest of the course. When one aspect of a society has been modified to create a dystopia, readers are asked to envision social control of politics, medicine, travel, and sometimes even thought. In other words, they envision the dystopian novels published in between or directly after the World Wars when ultimate social control seemed on the brink of happening in countries all over the world due to an international interest in fascism, brought on by the Germans, or communism, brought on by the Soviet Union. Although it is still debated whether George Orwell was arguing against communism and fascism in their entirety or just against totalitarian control in his 1949 novel *1984*, it can definitely be assumed that Orwell is cautioning his readers to fear leaders striving for world domination; *1984*'s world is set in the aftermath of a nuclear war that has divided the world into three major powers (Aronovitch). Going further, Orwell is warning that social control will ultimately lead to thought control because there is no better way to keep a large group of people oppressed than by refusing them their ability to think independently.

Doublethink is described as "the power of holding two contradictory beliefs in one's mind simultaneously, and accepting both of them" (2.9.58), and it is the main weapon used against the people of Oceania. The mantra of Oceania is "War is peace. Freedom is slavery. Ignorance is strength" (1.1.8). These contradictions seem too apparent to instill trusting belief, and yet the majority of Oceania follows this mantra in their daily lives. Constant foreign war allows a nation to have a common fear or enemy, creating a peaceful domestic society. Freedom causes us to be slaves to our own impressionable minds. And, lastly, for a social power, ignorance gives total control and acceptance caused by restricted freedom. O'Brien,

Orwell's antagonist, claims that "power is in tearing human minds to pieces and putting them together again in new shapes of your own choosing" (3.3.35) because he understands that uneducated masses are malleable to the beliefs of those in power. He uses O'Brien to comment that this kind of mass power can be combatted by acknowledging those principles we believe to be true: "freedom is the freedom to say that two plus two make four. If that is granted, all else follows" (1.7.29). But, then comes the question, how do we know what we accept to believe is true? And, where within the social hierarchy of knowledge does legitimate truth lie? If O'Brien, one of *1984*'s antagonists, can acknowledge factual truth while spewing revisionist history, then readers know that people in power have nothing stopping them from modifying truth to obtain greater power even if they themselves are above the lies.

Throughout the rest of *1984*, Orwell continues this thread of argument by introducing the concept of a malleable past made possible by doublethink. Winston Smith, the protagonist, wonders, "for, after all, how do we know that two and two make four? Or that the force of gravity works? Or that the past is unchangeable? If both the past and the external world exist only in the mind, and if the mind itself is controllable – what then?" (1.7.24). All of these principles that we accept to be true based on an inherent trust placed in those more educated or skilled than ourselves could account for historical falsity, according to Orwell, for "who controls the past controls the future. Who controls the present controls the past" (1.3.16). The past – more precisely, the interpretation of the past – dictates the events of the future, and those brought into power by actions in the past can control what we believe to be our historical past. Even if people have knowledge of the past, the concept of Doublethink will allow them to hold both beliefs at the same time until the beliefs of the party in power become too strong for other beliefs to be present. Winston explains to his love interest Julia that:

Every record has been destroyed or falsified, every book rewritten, every picture has been repainted, every statue and street building has been renamed, every date has been altered. And the process is continuing day by day and minute by minute. History has stopped. Nothing exists except an endless present in which the Party is always right. (2.5.14)

The past, and the misdeeds of those in power, have not only been erased; they have been significantly altered to present an opposing truth. For what aim, though? Why exert so much effort into changing the events of the past if you already control the present?

The answer to this question is unearthed throughout the novel. During a historical exposition within the novel, readers understand that “the masses never revolt of their own accord, and they never revolt merely because they are oppressed. Indeed, so long as they are not permitted to have standards of comparison, they never even become aware that they are oppressed” (2.9.48). Changing the past allows Oceania to replace notions of democratic civilizations with stories of totalitarianism. If the subjects of Oceania have no knowledge of anything different than what they are currently experiencing, then at least the masses will not look, or want to look, beyond that which they know. They can follow a kind of orthodoxy not unlike that presented before and during World War II by the Nazis, an orthodoxy which leads to “not thinking--not needing to think. Orthodoxy is unconsciousness” (1.5.35). Doublethink is the first step towards accepting an altered past, and refusing to think critically about the motives of those in power can only result in unconscious submission to their will. Hope can only sprout through education and rebellion: “until they become conscious they will never rebel, and until after they have rebelled they cannot become conscious” (1.7.4). This paradox demonstrates how rebellion cannot occur because the people of Oceania will never be educated, at least not in how

to think critically. Orwell presents his readers with an incredibly powerful government which has the ability to accomplish all of this – Doublethink, alternative history, and mass oppression – through the lens of patriotism.

Surely, this system Orwell presents in *1984* has no relevance to the present state of the European west; we are technologically advanced, humanitarian-focused, and proud of allowing the voice of the masses to be heard. Right? Or, maybe, the concept of Doublethink has been acting upon us for decades by training us to believe in our own freedom while others are victims of systematic discrimination. *This* is precisely why this course must open with 1984; it presents students with (albeit exaggerated) real-life fears hidden behind a veil of patriotism. The Holocaust is a prime example of how easily an Orwellian future can be in our hands, which is perhaps, along with the start of the Cold War, an inspiration for Orwell's acclaimed novel. Millions of people who were previously welcomed in communities were slowly turned against because of propaganda changing the historical past, and eventually this led to their systemic discrimination and murder. All it took was a charismatic leader, a strong military presence, and the knowledge that the majority of non-Jewish Europeans would not fight through Nazi orthodoxy once it was established. Similarly, another example of Orwell's theory for dystopia is the systematic oppression of people of color in the United States since its inception; our country was partly founded upon the notion that "it was possible, no doubt, to imagine a society in which wealth, in the sense of personal possessions and luxuries, should be evenly distributed, while power remained in the hands of a small privileged caste" (2.9.17). The United States provided immigrants with an image of a grand future filled with opportunities for financial prosperity, along with a say in politics through a representative democracy, but this belief did not hold true for the majority of immigrants and people forced to move overseas.

Once slavery was abolished following the Civil War, it was still at least a century until people of color were finally able to fully exercise the rights provided to them through the Civil War Amendments; meanwhile, the white masses falsely believed that equality reigned because that is the information they were fed. In *1984*, Orwell uses his third person limited narrator to write that access to education cannot allow this system to persist, because:

If leisure and security were enjoyed by all alike, the great mass of human beings who are normally stupefied by poverty would become literate and would learn to think for themselves; and when once they had done this, they would sooner or later realize that the privileged minority had no function, and they would sweep it away. (2.9.48)

Even though oppression and discrimination have continued to impact people of color following the exercise of their legal rights, their communities have not existed in a vacuum. Access to education, to literature and science, have allowed them more freedom to move outside of the system in which they previously resided. In Orwellian terms, people of color have fought oppression and the long-held beliefs of an alternative past in order to exercise their rights, and by taking advantage of these opportunities they have begun a fight on the U.S. social system that now extends to countless minority communities. The narrator continues, saying, “in the long run, a hierarchical society was only possible on a basis of poverty and ignorance” (2.9.48). However, what about those leaders in the position of Orwell’s O’Brien? O’Brien was neither poor nor ignorant, and yet he worked within a system based on perpetuating hierarchy. Orwell teaches us that those in power will do anything to retain said power unless acted upon by an educated, radical character or group. The social dystopia he created through *1984* shed light on the fears of his contemporary readers, and we can see how those fears still hold power today. History, as long as it avoids modification, is constantly showing us how to fight totalitarian power in a way

that allows freedom for independent thought. Is this not the lesson I would like my students to gain from my course as a whole?

### **Corporate Control**

Once we have moved on from Orwell's cautionary tale warning readers against the threat of ultimate social control, the next logical category for dystopian fiction is corporate control because it is based on many of the same principles used for social control – power, mass conditioning, and an educated few wielding all of the corporation's power. But, not only is this next unit a natural progression into dystopian literature; it brings the ideas we saw in *1984* into a more current lens. The major differences separating social and corporate control are, firstly, that corporate control is used for reaching some greater good instead of simply for power; the second difference is that power lies within a corporation and not a nation's government. The corporations themselves are vehicles for supplying the needs of the masses and anticipating future trends, like smartphones. In Dave Eggers' 2013 novel *The Circle*, an organization is founded on the idea of connecting the entire world over the internet and creating a global community that preaches acceptance and community, along with freedom of thought – sound familiar? In fact, one of the long-term goals of the company is to stop alternative pasts from being created by power-hungry men trying to rule the world; this is the greater good Eggers' protagonist Mae wants to achieve – fighting to destroy the core dystopian element of Orwell's *1984*. Eamon Bailey, one of the most powerful people in the Circle and our antagonist, believes that:

I mean, this is a tangent, but my problem with paper is that all communication dies with it. It holds no possibility of continuity. You look at your paper brochure, and that's where it ends. It ends with *you*. Like you're the only one who matters. But think if you'd been *documenting*. (1.28.153)

Here, Eggers is arguing through his character that technological advancement can help stop the alterations of past because it provides unbiased documentation from multiple sources, therefore providing the most accurate information possible. Writing with something that is perishable is selfish, but the internet is a space for humanity to grow and share. Bailey can see the end to tyranny and violence through his corporation, with the statement that “there needs to be accountability. Tyrants can no longer hide. There needs to be, and will be, documentation and accountability, and we need to bear witness. And to this end, I insist that all that happens should be known” (1.8.65-67). But, if everything is known, can anything be private? This kind of logic reaches back to some of the ideas we see in *1984*.

What soma is for Huxley, information is for the world of *The Circle*. Bailey emphatically claims, "I truly believe that if we have no path but the right path, the best path, then that would present a kind of ultimate and all-encompassing relief" (1.44.161). If evil and temptation do not exist, then is there any capacity for wrong behavior? This premise is grounded in the belief in “the perfectibility of human beings. I think we can be better. I think we can be perfect or near to it. And when we become our best selves, the possibilities are endless” (1.44.161). Perfection is attainable, and *The Circle* will help us achieve it. However, in order for this to successfully occur, the people within the corporation and those who subscribe to its product will need to be conditioned in a particular way of thinking, which further reminds us of



the social control we see in Huxley's and Orwell's novels. This conditioning is veiled with the corporation's greater good:

chief among [our core beliefs] is that just as important as the work we do here—and that work is very important—we want to make sure that you can be a human being here, too. We want this to be a workplace, sure, but it should also be a *humanplace*. And that means the fostering of community. In fact, it *must* be a community. (1.6.90)

What is involved in becoming a member of the Circle community? Well, for one thing, it is focused on humanity and communication, along with welcoming new members and acceptance. This corporation wants its members to be happy, healthy, and supported, which is a change of pace from the environments of Orwell's and Huxley's novels. Bailey questions us, asking “how do you think other Circlers feel, knowing that you're so close to them physically, that you're ostensibly part of a community here, but you don't want them to know your hobbies and interests. How do you think they feel?” (1.28.69-71). Joining this corporate community means becoming a part of something greater than yourself, and it causes you to open your worldview and become less solipsistic. But, it also requires entire submission of privacy because it is believed that connection can only occur if privacy is lost.

With loss of privacy, and connection with your community, comes a reinvention of Orwell's idea of Doublethink. In fact, Eggers references Orwell's infamous line “War is peace. Freedom is slavery. Ignorance is strength” (1.1.8) by writing the Circle's moral decree: “Secrets are lies. Sharing is caring. Privacy is theft” (1.45.125). Eggers' lines are less apparently dichotomous, but the contradictions exist nonetheless. While Huxley argues that pleasurable distraction keeps the masses from rioting and Orwell believes that altering the past can eventually suppress individual thought, Eggers is creating a future in which refusing to share

your individual thought is a despicable crime against your community. The surveillance is not forced upon any undeserving individual, which makes it more humane than O'Brien's surveillance on Winston, but you are charged with stealing from the community by attempting to remain a private individual. Having access to all of this information also allows the corporation to use it for its own advantage, which is shown through possible manipulation of text or footage in order to condemn rebels against the Circle: "there was a wonderful thing that tended to happen, something that felt like poetic justice: every time someone started shouting about the supposed monopoly of the Circle [...] soon enough it was revealed that that person was a criminal or deviant of the highest order" (1.33.6). Maybe these individuals were, in fact, deviant. But, perhaps our knowledge of dystopian fiction shows us how facts can be altered by those in positions of power, even if the corporation itself strives to fight against that same misrepresentation.

Like Orwell's characters in his novel, not all of the characters go along with the ideas put forth by Eggers' corporation; they can see the harm the Circle has afflicted on the technologically advanced world. Mercer, Mae's cast-off lover, questions the Circle's meaning of 'social,' saying, "It's not that I'm not social. I'm social enough. But the tools you guys create actually *manufacture* unnaturally extreme social needs. No one needs the level of contact you're purveying" (1.19.63). This idea rings true in the modern-day United States with our dependence on technology, the internet, and social media. Large corporations like Google, Eggers' inspiration for The Circle, have access to our files, emails, pictures, social media, and online shopping sites, to say the least. This information is tracked and sorted to advertise products based on your preferences and to streamline trends based on mass approval. Eggers included a quotation from John Steinbeck's *East of Eden* (1952) as the introduction to his novel: "There

wasn't any limit, no boundary at all, to the future. And it would be so a man wouldn't have room to store his happiness" (i). The limitless future Eggers presents forces readers to question whether an electronically global community will lead to true contentment and happiness, and his corporation veils its true mission of global control through the 'greater good' of the world.

In Eggers' novel, the Circle causes a dystopian future by creating a constant need for information. However, the world surrounding the Circle complex is still mundane and safe, much like how we picture most of the United States due to the Doublethink-esque lies we have been fed. It is important to note that other corporate dystopias are formed because the outside world is not safe, and the corporation will protect its members only so long as they live and work within a physical and theoretical bubble. Either way, corporations in a dystopian world can easily be corrupted in order to obtain the same goals Orwell spelled out in *1984*. I believe that this unit can encourage my students to critically analyze the consumerist world in which they have been raised; are there any positive correlations we see in the community of the Circle? How can we, as informed readers, be more critical of the entities to which we provide our information?

### **Genetic Modification**

The next unit wildly changes the tone of the class – for the better, in my opinion. It provides students with a respite from heavy texts filled with symbolism of destruction, along with allowing them to see that dystopian fiction can also overlap with Young Adult literature. The third category for dystopian fiction is genetic modification or control, and this is caused by any effort to tamper with the human genome in order to perfect our species. Similar to corporate

control seen in *The Circle*, genetic modification is ostensibly for the betterment of mankind and is not selfish or self-serving. Social and corporate control are both successful methods of creating dystopias because they rely on consistent behavioral training, as readers can see in the mantras of Orwell's Oceania and Eggers' the Circle. Genetic modification is more direct in that it allows the geneticist to control all aspects of human behavior and instinct.

Kazuo Ishiguro's 2005 novel *Never Let Me Go* depicts a normalized genetically-modified dystopia in which people do not realize the underpinnings of the world in which we live, and it harkens back to the enthusiastic employees within the Circle. Society functions the way it has for decades and social structures that would appear abnormal become lost in routine; the genetically mainstream population cannot see the destruction they create in order to better their own health. In Ishiguro's novel, advancements in genetic technology have allowed cloned humans to act as vessels for necessary organ transplants, giving them all of the qualities Crake dislikes, such as emotion and thought. Ishiguro presents a new idea to the class, the weighing of Machiavelli's ends and means: if genetic modification is meant to create a better and more humane future, does it matter if the means used are unjust?

The protagonist Kathy grew up attending a small, private preparatory school in England with her friends Tommy and Ruth; they were all raised in a very comforting and sheltered environment in order to make their future burden easier to carry. Miss Emily, the school's headmaster, tells the students that "we at least saw to it that all of you in our care, you grew up in wonderful surroundings. And we saw to it too, after you left us, you were kept away from the worst of [. . .] horrors. We were able to do that much for you at least" (22.24). Their future being predetermined, at least their living environment was beautifully furnished and maintained. Miss Emily also states that, "Very well, sometimes [. . .] we kept things from you, lied to you. Yes, in

many ways we *fooled* you. I suppose you could even call it that. But we sheltered you during those years, and we gave you your childhoods” (22.51). The donors were brought up with some vague knowledge that they were going to end their lives helping to make a better world, and Kathy comments, “it feels like I *always* knew about donations in some vague way, even as early as six or seven. And it's curious, when we were older and the guardians were giving us those talks, nothing came as a complete surprise. It *was* like we'd heard everything somewhere before” (7.27). The idea of donating their lives for others is something they feel bred to do: “I was like you, Tommy. I was pretty much ready when I became a donor. It felt right. After all, it's what we're *supposed* to be doing, isn't it?” (19.61). We see an utter acceptance for what life offers the donors; while Huxley's characters were content with their stations in life, the donors accept their responsibility – without needing nocturnal brainwashing. These individuals were created so other, more valuable humans could continue their lives, and the donors are doing nothing more than fulfilling their purpose.

The only problem with the donors and their accepted duty is that they are, in fact, human. They feel, they think, and they can dream of a life outside of their predestined future. Throughout the novel, Ishiguro shows readers how human the donors actually are. They experience jealousy and pride, along with happiness and desire and love. Kathy explains that, “if you think about it, being dependent on each other to produce the stuff that might become your private treasures—that's bound to do things to your relationships” (2.19). The schools build their own barter system to help students realize the worth of their work; miniature societies based in ancient human practices develop within the schools. Also, the donors wonder about who they really are and from where their genes come: “we all of us, to varying degrees, believed that when you saw the person you were copied from, you'd get *some* insight into who you were deep down,

and maybe too, you'd see something of what your life held in store" (12.12). Ruth, Kathy's problematic childhood friend, outwardly wonders if their identities can only be found by discovering their genetic matches, while also acknowledging that this disregards all the other human experiences they have, the experiences they believe make them human. Ruth believes that their models must be prostitutes and drug addicts – why else would they go through the process of cloning themselves if not for the money to survive? But, as Kathy thinks, their models are only “an irrelevance, a technical necessity for bringing us into the world, nothing more than that. It was up to each of us to make of our lives what we could” (12.13). Readers can especially see the humanity within the donors when Ruth is close to death. Kathy remarks, “just for a few seconds, no more, she looked straight at me and she knew exactly who I was. It was one of those little islands of lucidity donors sometimes get to in the midst of their ghastly battles. [. . .] I knew what her look meant” (19.142). Ruth goes through the most human experience possible – death. Here, readers can see the real pain and suffering the donors undergo in order to fulfill their duty. Even while experiencing knowledge of their predetermined death, the donors can see another path of life:

I half-closed my eyes and imagined this was the spot where everything I'd ever lost since my childhood had washed up, and I was now standing here in front of it, and if I waited long enough, a tiny figure would appear on the horizon across the field, and gradually get larger until I'd see it was Tommy, and he'd wave, maybe even call. The fantasy never got beyond that—I didn't let it. (23.49)

Kathy can see a future in which her life with Tommy does not have to come to an end. If experiencing pain and happiness, joy and doubt, do not make the donors human, then what is the inherent flaw or flaws Crake strives to find and remove in humanity?

These donors see themselves as humans with a duty to provide for the human race. In the world we inhabit, organ donation is seen as something noble and worthy of respect because it allows the dead to provide for the lives of the injured or diseased. But, in Ishiguro's world, this perception is taken to a more extreme level; the living have been modified to help more valuable humans, and some donors cannot allow themselves to see beyond their purpose. Even in their childhood, one of their teachers warns them that, "if you're to have decent lives, you have to know who you are and what lies ahead of you, every one of you" (7.20). The world views them as wildly strange biogenetic creatures – "large spiders [. . .] set to crawl towards [humanity]" (21.12). Along with questioning the essence of humanity, Ishiguro also confronts readers with what it means to live a 'decent' life. The emotional parts of the donors also allow them to see hate and distrust in the faces of those around them. Kathy tries to explain this feeling, stating, "you're waiting, even if you don't quite know it, waiting for the moment when you realize that you really are different to them; that there are people out there, like Madame, who don't hate you or wish you any harm, but who nevertheless shudder at the very thought of you" (3.73). No matter how badly the donors wish to be accepted by the 'real' humans surrounding them, they subconsciously understand what this will never happen. Kathy continues, saying "The first time you glimpse yourself through the eyes of a person like that, it's a cold moment. It's like walking past a mirror you've walked past every day of your life, and suddenly it shows you something else, something troubling and strange" (3.73). What is it that makes us human? And, more importantly, who are we if we are stripped of these human qualities for the betterment of a more powerful people? Ishiguro tries to confront these weighty questions through his novel, but readers are left without concrete answers. Combined with the ideas discussed in the previous two units, students can identify past or present moments in which whole populations of people

have been coerced and controlled under the guise that their humanity was lesser than those of their oppressors.

All of these dystopian units, with works ranging from Orwell's *1984* to Ishiguro's *Never Let Me Go*, have been formed based on a known factor being modified or controlled; the ensuing unit focuses on how power over those factors can easily be abused and will ultimately lead to devastation, whether the havoc is wreaked on an entire population or on a smaller subset of less privileged people. Social dystopias explore how exploitation of political and cultural power can lead to societies with an ignorant, pack mentality lacking the freedom necessary to explore truth. Similarly, corporate dystopias illustrate how easily destruction can be masked by a greater good, along with how protection from danger can become protection from humanity and all of its flaws. Genetic dystopias force readers to determine what the 'greater good' actually is, and how to attain it without inflicting pain and suffering on humanity.

### **Environmental Modification**

We began the course with the most concrete form of dystopia, so it makes sense to end with the most abstract. The last popular form of dystopian fiction I will explore in my unit is more elusive because the creation of the dystopia is unknown to readers. All we are presented with is the aftermath of some kind of environmental, political, or social disaster, ending with the creation of a new world similar to Orwell's, Eggers,' or Ishiguro's in which religion or ritual is the only lens to view the past and the future. In her 1993 novel *Parable of the Sower*, Octavia Butler depicts a very near future in which an unknown combination of factors has left the United States in a frightened state of violent chaos. Lauren, Butler's protagonist, must move beyond the



Compound-like walls protecting her community from robbery and murder when marauders swarm her community and threaten her life and the lives of her friends.

Butler paints an intriguing picture of the U.S. future with her backdrop of gun violence and addiction, not to mention sexual abuse. Lauren's friend and fellow traveler Zahra parallels Atwood's Oryx, growing up as a sexual slave: her owner and husband "gave her enough to eat and didn't beat her, and even when her co-wives were hateful to her, it was a thousand times better than living outside with her mother and starving. Now she was outside again. In six years, she had gone from nothing to nothing" (5.12). Zahra is resigned to the life she previously led because she knows it was her only guaranteed way to survive, and through her past, readers first get a sense of the terrible atrocities occurring outside the community walls. But, even within those walls, whatever catastrophic event led to this dystopian present did not leave the communities unaffected, and Lauren herself struggles with the remnants of her mother's past. She has a mental disorder known as "hyperempathy" (2.27), or an "organic delusional syndrome" (2.27). She goes on to say that, "thanks to Paracetco, the small pill, the Einstein powder, the particular drug my mother chose to abuse before my birth killed her, I'm crazy. I get a lot of grief that doesn't belong to me, and that isn't real. But it hurts" (2.27). Her mother's addiction left her sensitive to the real or perceived pain (and pleasure) of others; this puts her at a serious disadvantage outside of her community because she can easily be manipulated to avoid pain, just like Huxley's characters do through soma. Lauren must confront her hyperempathy, her humanity, in order to survive, and killing allows her to move beyond suffering: "I had felt it die, and yet I had not died. I had felt its pain as though it were a human being. I had felt its life flare and go out, and I was still alive" (4.115). This moment, in which she has killed a vicious dog trying to attack her, gives Lauren an opportunity to see past the pain and what can be

accomplished through taking control of another life. Empathy, a quality that connotes virtue and kindness in our reality, becomes something evil and debilitating here. To Harry, Lauren's childhood friend, her ability to kill in spite of her hyperempathy is disconcerting and takes away from her humanity, but she argues that "[Harry] didn't understand that to me pain was the evil. Death was an end to pain. No Bible verses were going to change that as far as I was concerned. He didn't understand sharing. Why should he? Most people knew little or nothing about it" (17.22). Sharing here, though different from destroying privacy in Eggers' *The Circle*, appears to be just as disturbing. Religion is the only lens that allows people to find hope, solace, and guidance, but Butler challenges this concept through Lauren.

Ishiguro goes to great lengths to question our preconceived notions of humanity, and Butler joins him in this discussion through *Parable of the Sower*. Lauren writes in her diary that "God says he made everything and he knows everything so no one has any right to question what he does with any of it," and that "toy children, like Job's children, are interchangeable" (2.49) because life is only valued as long as it works towards the greater good that religion exposes to people. Lauren does not believe that this theory of religion is the ultimate truth, though she argues that a greater being exists to control the world in which she lives. She states, "Some say God is a spirit, a force, an ultimate reality. Ask seven people what all of that means and you'll get seven different answers. So what is God? Just another name for whatever makes you feel special and protected?" (2.44). Her family's ideas of a Protector do not resonate with her due to the pain hyperempathy has caused. While trying to explain her own religious ideas, she says:

I've never felt that I was making any of this up—not the name, Earthseed, not any of it. I mean, I've never felt that it was anything other than real: discovery rather than invention, exploration rather than creation. I wish I could believe it was all supernatural and that I'm

getting messages from God. But then, I don't believe in that kind of God. All I do is observe and take notes, trying to put things down in ways that are as powerful, as simple, and as direct as I feel them. (7.6)

The beliefs she sees in her peers are based too strongly on an all-knowing larger entity who will provide safety and protection, but she also knows that this is their only way to feel comforted in a world which does not provide a haven from its own destruction. Bankhole, Lauren's older lover, understands why she has created her own system of belief, but he challenges her notions of a higher power, saying, "If you get people to accept it, they'll make it more complicated, more open to interpretation, more mystical, and more comforting" (21.25-31). He knows that humans are prone to modifying religious beliefs to fit their needs. He continues: "All religions change. Think about the big ones. What do you think Christ would be these days? A Baptist? A Methodist? A Catholic? [. . .] After all, if 'God is Change,' surely Earthseed can change, and if it lasts, it will" (21.25-31). Lauren truly believes that God is change; he is the unknowing force that affects everything in the world.

Lauren's religious beliefs come from the constant instability she experiences throughout Butler's narrative. Her first 'verse' in her newly discovered belief system is: "All that you touch You Change. All that you Change Changes you. The only lasting truth Is Change. God Is Change." (1.Verse.1-8). From her mother's death during childbirth to the brutal murder of her father, stepmother, and siblings, Lauren has been surrounded by loss for her entire life. The only truth her dystopian world allows her to see is that nothing is constant except for change; but then, as a friend asks her, why "personify change by calling it God? Since change is just an [important] idea, why not call it that?" (18.60-61). She responds stating, "Because after a while, it won't be important! [. . .] People forget ideas. They're more likely to remember God—

especially when they're scared or desperate” (18.60-61). Even though Lauren’s God is not the same kind and loving God of her former community, He is still a constant presence, paradoxically making her never-ending instability a kind of stable factor. Her constant uncertainty in life makes it hard for her to let go of that diffidence as a guiding principle.

What sense of the past can readers understand through Lauren’s beliefs? She claims that “change is ongoing. Everything changes in some way [. . .] Every living thing, every bit of matter, all the energy in the universe changes in some way. I don't claim that everything changes in every way, but everything changes in some way” (18.29-30). Eventually, Lauren’s fellow travelers begin to see her religious beliefs as an ultimate truth, also based on their uncertain and unstable pasts. Not only does Lauren promise them a future filled with exploration – she also wants to give them a loving and supporting presence. Bankhole questions her, asking, “What do people have to do to be good members of an Earthseed Community?” (21.21-24). She responds, saying:

The essentials [. . .] are to learn to shape God with forethought, care, and work; to educate and benefit their community, their families, and themselves; and to contribute to the fulfillment of the Destiny. [The Destiny provides them with a] unifying, purposeful life here on Earth, and the hope of heaven for themselves and their children. A real heaven, not mythology or philosophy. A heaven that will be theirs to shape. (21.21-24)

In the face of Butler’s unstable world, Lauren provides her followers with control over their own God, not to mention control over the future of their families. Earthseed as a religion states that God can be shaped and that the purpose of life is to explore the universe. These ideas Butler presents about the formation of religious beliefs force readers to question their own perceptions of faith, religion, spirituality, and God. One of the founding principles of Lauren’s Earthseed is:

“We are all Godseed, but no more or less so than any other aspect of the universe, Godseed is all there is—all that Changes. Earthseed is all that spreads Earthlife to new earths. The universe is Godseed. Only we are Earthseed. And the Destiny of Earthseed is to take root among the stars” (7.Verse1.Line1-8).

Butler gives readers the sense that they exist in communion with the world and universe around them, and that they are the earth are both separate and the same entities simultaneously. Butler challenges us to ask: what does it mean to exist in an imperfect world? How do we form our own beliefs? And, what relationship do our beliefs have with the world in which we live?

The course will conclude with Russel Hoban’s 1985 novel *Riddley Walker*, which is an exploration of the fundamental human truths and identity, along with the essential functions of society. Throughout the novel, Hoban asks his readers to see the value within a life even as primitive as Walker’s. Walker speaks with Lissener, a friend he meets, and says “Iyther you dont know nothing or you know too much it dont seam like theres any thing in betwean” (12.87). The knowledge he acquires about the world throughout the narrative proves to be either too insignificant or too powerful for him to handle. Walker states, “Seeds blow in the wind and what is earf but a deadness with life growing out of it?” (17.2). Even though Walker sees all of the devastation that has surrounded his people for thousands of years, he is able to admire the value of life. By creating a dystopian present that cannot meaningfully recall its past, Hoban gives readers a chance to explore a dystopia that cannot be entirely understood. Orwell, Eggers, and Ishiguro clearly depict the factors modified to create a less-than-perfect reality, but that takes away a reader’s ability to explore the content of a novel through the lens of a character like Walker, who similarly does not fully grasp the world in which he lives.

### **Chapter 3 - HOW DOES DYSTOPIAN FICTION APPLY TO HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS?**

These works, spanning decades and countless cultural and political events, continue to prove their worth and relevance. All of the authors presented here challenge the powers they create within their works using strong, flawed characters with intense motivational factors like safety, refuge, truth, and freedom. Donalyn Miller, a teacher and staff development leader, argues that “themes like freedom, love, and trust run throughout dystopian literature reminding readers of life's meaning in situations where outside forces seek to take our fundamental humanity from us.” It is this fact which causes many readers to pour themselves into these works of fiction. Dystopian novels like that of Orwell challenge their readers to be aware when their political and governmental leaders are using patriotism or instant gratification to distract those who would rebel and spark a movement. The world created by Eggers, controlled by corporations and based solely on profit, further explores the fears of earlier social dystopian authors through introducing a ‘greater good’ in order to create a more motivated population mass that will still be blinded to abuse of power. The idea of a perfected human race, shown in the work of Ishiguro, confronts readers with its preconceived notions of humanity and what it means to act in humane ways. When none of these factors are explicitly known by a dystopian world’s inhabitants, religion appears to be a guiding force. Butler illustrates that living in an imperfect world without fully comprehending its cause and creation affects how people view ideas of God and meaning.

The worlds created by these authors all artistically portray futures that might not be too distant. Even in the last eighty years, we have witnessed calamities which mimic those in dystopian novels. We are prompted to wonder if a more blinkered, less intelligent life like would be better for all of us. We create our own dystopias by valuing ourselves over the ‘greater good’ for the entire world, which is one of the reasons why corporate dystopias can be so appealing; we want to see happiness in others’ futures until their prosperity threatens our own. These authors teach us that, in order to find societal success, we must first allow freedom to dissent and rebel – freedom to become independent thinkers. The value of this success must outweigh any instant gratification brought to us by sex, substances, and entertainment, and the mission must be produced by the society itself. In order for humanity to remain intact, we must value every life as worthy of respect. Human beings, and the world itself, can never achieve perfection if some people are lowered so others can rise.

Is reality a dystopia? The contingencies listed above to create a more equitable society can all be abused. Too many rebellious voices lead to a disunited vision, and mass rule can easily ensue if independent thought is promoted among the ignorant. Freedom is the price to pay for pain and suffering and discrimination and death. But, then again, in what sense do we mean ‘freedom’? Can human beings ever live without pressure from culture, politics, corporations, religion, not to mention their own genetic makeup? These aspects of society remove human ability to view the world through an unbiased lens because they provide us with preconceived notions of how society should function. Maybe we are like many of our dystopian protagonists, simply existing in a world we do not understand. Our worlds are not our own; they are controlled by a miniscule population of people willing to harm others in their never-ending quest for power. But, these dystopian authors illustrate the importance of self-awareness in

avoiding our own future dystopias. Our hope for a better future lies in imagining both the proximity and cause of dystopia and then using that creative knowledge to influence our actions.

Dystopian literature has maintained its popularity among readers since it arose as a literary genre, but there are factors that make it especially relevant in a high school English Language Arts classroom. Sometimes, teens are described as apathetic, disengaged, and unmotivated when it comes to reading or current events, but Melissa Ames, the director of English Education at Eastern Illinois University, disagrees, writing:

Despite this common complaint—and contrary to ample research and poll data that indicates that this age group has traditionally been uninterested in current events, global politics, environmental concerns, and ethical debates involving scientific invention, human trafficking, and social equity—the reading preferences of this generation indicate that this label of "apolitical" may not be as fitting as some believe (2013).

Dystopian fiction is gaining ground in the world of young adult fiction, which means that many high school students are already familiar and interested in this topic. Ames continues to write, “The post-9/11 climate has contributed to the popularity of these YA dystopias as they present fictional fear-based scenarios that align with contemporary cultural concerns.” She argues that the rise of dystopian fiction parallels an increased sense of fear and dread surrounding our future. Teens devour stories like *The Hunger Games* by Suzanne Collins and *Divergent* by Victoria Roth in order to find a “safe space to wrestle with, and perhaps displace, the fears they play upon” (Ames, 2013). High school students can make unbiased sense of their own fears and beliefs through the pages of dystopia while they put distance between reality and the world they see on the page.



When students do not find purpose in the themes of the novels they read in school, then they detach from discussion and engagement (Wolk, 2009). It is the job of an educator to expose students to a world larger than themselves, and literature is the perfect area in which to accomplish this. And yet, how do we teach in a way that guarantees engagement? I believe the answer to this question is the saving grace for those wanting to share their passion for the written word. If we view English as a subjective, throwaway, romantic concept, no student using education as a tool for economic success will ever choose to study it. But Steven Wolk, teacher education coordinator at Northeastern Illinois University, argues that “a nation of workers requires a country that can read, [while] a democracy requires people that do read, read widely, and think and act in response to their reading.” We can use our classrooms as spaces to discover ideas of empathy, global community, injustice, and historical consciousness side by side with our students (Wolk, 2009). Therefore, it is the vocation of secondary and educators within English Language Arts to expose our students to the expansiveness that *is* the written word.

## Chapter 4 - PHILOSOPHIES OF TEACHING

Before I go into detail about how I will teach this course, I feel it is imperative that I elaborate on my philosophies of teaching. I believe that, firstly, students can be challenged to analyze their own beliefs in unbiased ways through studying literature, and, secondly, that secondary English Language Arts teachers must provide students with a supportive environment in which to grow as independent thinkers. If my students are not inspired to look at a controversial situation or opinion, like those presented to us within these dystopian works, from an unbiased point of view, then they will not be able to understand the strengths and weaknesses of each argument and its opposing views. Will Schwalbe, author of *Books for Living* (2016), writes:

Reading is the best way I know to learn how to examine your life. By comparing what you've done to what others have done, and your thoughts and theories and feelings to those of others, you learn about yourself and the world around you. Perhaps that is why reading is one of the few things you do alone that can make you feel less alone; it's a solitary activity that connects you with others.

I feel like Mr. Litchfield was able to help me uncover my biases and understand where they were rooted so I could have a clearer vision of the world; he expected us to hold our ground while debating him and to understand our positions entirely, and we lived up to that expectation. I want literature to be a vehicle through which students can learn to understand how to think. This challenging environment must be tempered by an encouraging atmosphere that helps students feel safe to speak and to present ideas. Students and their ideas will feel

appreciated and respected, not attacked – especially when they can find textual support for their opinions.

### **Instruction**

I consider myself a constructivist teacher; I want my students to participate in their own learning through inquiry and critical thinking. I will implement the following devices in order to provide “students with a range of tools to consider as opportunities prepare them to make their own choices about how they learn, when they learn, who they learn with, and what they learn (Cassell, 2015):

- Units guided by essential questions prompting the exploration of students’ preconceived notions;
- Literary choices that expose students to worlds they do not know so as to avoid reading to find ourselves because, in my classroom as in Lisa’s, we read to understand the world
- Discussion strategies (thought-question-epiphany, Socratic seminar, fishbowl, etc) that motivate students to thoroughly explain their own ideas and interpretations of literary works; and,
- Activities and assignments that allow for creative freedom and growth, along with room to explore methods of critical literary analysis.
  - Students are capable of producing more than just a five-paragraph essay, and I want them to explore their perspectives through writing in a variety of formats like poetry, persuasive and argumentative essays, short stories, etc.

These are the tools which will guide how I implement my teaching philosophy in the classroom.

### **Assessment**

The methods I will use to evaluate student growth allow me to focus more on a holistic vision of a student instead of on flaws in performance. My grading philosophy is as follows:

- Grading is transactional, not transmissive. I want my students to apply the skills they are learning through analytical questions or creative writing exercises instead of multiple choice exams.
- Grading can be differentiated. I feel that a one-size-fits-all method for assessment limits a student's ability to truly show growth because it does not allow for individuality. Goals for a unit or curriculum need to be consistent, but students can accomplish those goals in a variety of ways.

Assessment is necessary, but I feel as if methods and strategies for assessment can be adapted to challenge students in a manner that is both holistic and efficient. The National Council of Teachers of English Journal states that "high-stakes testing, such as high school exit exams, is not only narrowing the content of the literacy curriculum but also constraining instructional approaches to reading" (NCTE, 2004). My course will incorporate several methods of assessment, to be discussed in detail later; my assessments will ask students to further reflect and analyze, not regurgitate.

My vision is to use these strategies and assessment beliefs to guide students towards a deeper understanding of their own biases. On the topic of the literary canon, professor and scholar Erica Hateley writes, "Texts are not ends in themselves so much as they are invitations

and opportunities to understand more about the world and those who live in it.” Students will be asked to view literature as a door into a side of humanity they have yet to experience, a door that might shift in meaning depending on each student’s past experiences; each new character they meet will invite them to view their peers with a greater sense of understanding and empathy. Colorado State University’s professor on literacy pedagogy ,Cindy O’Donnell-Allen, has a quotation that encapsulates why I believe this philosophy of teaching is so impactful:

We can start to extend ourselves into situations we have never experienced, feel for people very different from ourselves, and begin to understand such people in ways we may never have thought possible. . . [literature] is capable of inducing one of the most profound aspects of empathy: the ability to sensitize us to the emotions of other people, transcending the limits of our own experiences and perspectives.

If I can use my role as an educator in English Language Arts to enhance my students’ perspective on the world around them in order to live thoughtfully and empathetically, then I will have succeeded in accomplishing my goals.

### **Environment**

I believe that students learn best when they are active participants in the discovery process. This can be accomplished in the classroom through purposeful activities encouraging collaboration and engagement with the text. However, research shows that high school students feel confined and isolated by the existing structure within most classrooms because of the link it creates between shame and performance. When students feel more invested in performance than understanding, they disengage and perform poorly, causing a sense of self-blame (Gorlewski,

2018). Most English Language Arts classes center around textual discussion; an effective way to encourage student ownership through discussion is to allow them space to create their own prompts or guided discussion questions based on their assigned dystopian readings. Similarly, having groups of students focus on different areas of text allows them to become knowledgeable ‘experts’ about particular areas of interest, further prompting them to become actively engaged in both learning and discussion. When engagement fails, employing devices like Think-Pair-Share and Thought-Question-Epiphany allows students time to process material at their own speed and form grounded opinions before speaking.

I understand that fear is a primary factor in student motivation to learn material, but I want my students to be inspired to look at the controversial situations or opinions with which we will be presented from an unbiased point of view through their experiences with issues in literature. I firmly believe my students can have an interest in learning for the sake of strengthening their understanding of the world. Steven Wolk writes:

I have freed myself from the treatment of literature as a body of knowledge to be conveyed, memorized, and repeated. Instead, I now conceive of it as a series of encounters with meaningful problems for which there are multiple solutions.... Thus, the definition of knowledge changes from something learners extract from a text to something they create in collaboration with each other.

In order to combat fear in learning, I will create a classroom environment focused on literary experiences and engagement with text and each other; although assessment is necessary to inform me of student understanding and comprehension, I want my classroom to be a space of creation, not explicit assessment. Fear will dissipate, and my students will be gently guided through literary works and will arrive closer to an understanding of the strengths and weaknesses

of different arguments and their opposing views, in both their own world and the ones found within the novels we read as a class.

### **Questioning**

When asking my students questions, my main goal is to pry into the inquisitive nature within each of my students. I believe that repetitive classes, lectures filled with mind-numbing information, and courses centered on transmissive learning teach students that learning itself cannot be engaging or interesting. The first step in my questioning philosophy is to help students through a process of unlearning; prior to my class, they have been trained to believe that the purpose of questioning is to realize a definitive answer. In my class, this will not be the case most of the time (with the exception of any comprehension questions). Rather, we will practice questioning for the sake of broadening our mental scope and becoming more analytical thinkers. On teaching Atwood's *Oryx and Crake*, critical theorist Sean Murray writes, "the issues [authors raise] can be framed as questions to research, critically examine, and reach tentative conclusions about" because "rigidly clinging to an either/or mentality risks denying the complex shades of gray that hover around so many pressing social issues." Once we, as a class, have created a respectful and welcoming space for questioning, we can practice sharpening our questioning and analytical skills so we can have intellectual and inquisitive discussions.

### **Differentiation**

Everyone learns differently, and my classroom will reflect the importance of engaging with each and every learner. Each lesson will incorporate verbal and visual cues, written guides, and

hands-on activities so each learner can have an opportunity to learn material in the area in which they feel strongest. A huge portion of my experiences in education have been through different special education programs; tailoring lessons and concepts to make them more easily accessible to students who learn differently is vital to the education of all students, but especially those found within special education programs. My goal is for every student to feel confident in their ability to succeed.

In this course, I will focus my differentiation on the task of writing, as that seems to be the largest struggle my current students face in an English classroom. I taught a nine-week Paragraph Writing course in the beginning of my student teaching most of my students were in desperate need of remedial writing instruction, and I saw that their focus was mainly on grammatical rules instead of the process of writing itself. Jane Alsup and Jonathan Bush, both secondary educators, write:

A teacher can create an instructional space in which students recognize that writing is a process during which they are expected to engage in inquiry and exploration and that this process does not always result in the most effective pieces of writing the first time around.

Writing assignments will be given with student choice in either content or form. With the large assignments, which are the final assessments, the writing process will be scaffolded to make room for outlining, drafting, peer revising, and editing. Concerning the revision process, Alsup and Bush believe that ownership means “a writer becoming aware of her process so that she can self-evaluate the effectiveness of a piece of writing and revise accordingly, perhaps with the help of outside readers.” Students can have time to work independently on their writing, along with time for conferences with each other and one-on-one with me.



Since I believe learning requires active student engagement in the learning process, I define my personality style in the classroom as democratic – especially in a course I have created. Students must feel a sense of ownership for their own learning, which cannot occur in an autocratic environment. Creating room for curiosity and independence will only encourage students to discover new concepts and topics that spark interest in them. It is inevitable that students will feel conflict among each other while discussing controversial social issues, but author and teacher Jim Burke writes that “We [as educators] must back up, seek first to understand why they feel this way, then take time to develop in [each of them] an academic identity that will sustain them through the inevitable struggle to learn what they do not know yet.” I hope to create an environment that encourages students to want to learn more about historical events, cultural issues, and their own personal beliefs. However, this aspiration cannot reach fruition if there is not a strong sense of mutual respect between the students, each other, and myself.

## **Chapter 5 - “EDUCATION CHANGES PEOPLE. PEOPLE CHANGE THE WORLD.”**

Paulo Freire, educator and philosopher, once said, “Education does not transform the world. Education changes people. People change the world.” I first heard this quotation last year, when I was a junior in college. During a ‘class’ at Webster’s coffee shop, my pre-service student teaching supervisor Michelle Knotts repeated this quotation to me in the hopes that I would find a strong sense of truth within Freire’s words. I was at the point with my education path where I began to feel frustrated, fed up, and helpless; I did not know if my future teaching would affect the world on the scale I had always hoped it would. But, these words resonated deep within me, both then and now. I, as a single person and educator, cannot change the entire world. However, I have the opportunity to make a difference in the life of every student I teach, and it is that difference that can inspire kindness, empathy, and lifelong learning.

The most impactful teachers in my life all have one thing in common: they believe in the intellectual capabilities of their students, and through this belief, they create a community of challenging, stimulating, and growing learners. This is my goal as an educator. I chose this field because I found an immense knowledge of humanity within every work of literature I read, and I want to share this door to the world with my students. Whether my students ‘like’ the books we will read in my class is important, but secondary; I will be challenging them to view literature as a lens that gives us an inside look into the unconditional worth in every single person. Dystopia is said to “remind us that civil society, human relationships, and freedom are dependent upon free flows of knowledge. These works teach the centrality of memory and history, the danger of autocratic control of information, and the moral imperative of critique” (Luke, 2012). The worst

way to prepare a forming learner for the harshness that is the outside world is by teaching him or her that black and white are separate, indistinguishable, nonmalleable truths; this preparation creates citizens blinded by uneducated opinions (Murray, 2014). Citizens who cannot see worth in their fellow men and women refuse to acknowledge perspective, which is a basic tenet of literature.

I believe that, by teaching dystopian fiction to secondary students, I will be able to engage my students through their own interests while also opening their eyes to the existence of ideas outside their own. Presenting the concept of literature to students is a grave responsibility, as English provides “the foundation on which learning in all disciplines is built” (Gorlewsky, 2018). My goal is to teach dangerous literature in a supportive environment so as to slowly enhance and challenge the minds of my students. By asking students to take risks in their own learning, they will be guided towards ownership of their present and future education. However, student ownership must be balanced with analytical thought and questioning. We have been given the most challenging task of all – we are asked to make a positive impact on the lives of impressionable learners. It is through our classes that they receive a small glimpse of a world beyond themselves. Through dystopian fiction, I hope to “emphasize the great strength and resilience of humans, especially adolescents, are capable of demonstrating in response to the challenges they face” (O’Donnell-Allen, 2011).

## **Appendix A**

### **CURRICULUM PLAN**

This curriculum is for twelfth-year students studying honors-level English Language Arts; it would be most fitting for this fifteen-week course to remain within an honors seminar or an AP literature course. My goal for this course is to challenge students' preconceived ideas of humanity, along with the consequences of technological advancement. I will assess student achievement of this goal through a comparative literary analysis, an original dystopian short story, and a research paper. In the research paper, students will choose one dystopian world created by the author of their choice and research the historical and cultural influences within the world. In the analysis, students will need to explore how different dystopias answer questions about humanity and whether the authors' methods of answering these questions are effective. Over the course of units 1-2, students will also be reading their own choice dystopian novel in order to complete the comparative literary analysis at the end of unit 3. In the short story, they will use their research and analyses to create their own dystopian world that further answers these questions.

This curriculum will be comprised of four units based on the most common dystopian characteristics being modified or controlled; these were thoroughly and thematically explored in Part 4. There will be a primary text selection with essential questions accompanying each unit written by one of the most prominent dystopian authors of the last century, and each of these texts will explore different types of dystopian control or modification, all exploring how valuable

self-awareness is in gaining autonomy. The course will conclude with excerpts from Russel Hoban's 1985 *Riddley Walker*, which is too challenging to finish in a semester while still maintaining student motivation as it is written in degraded Kent vernacular with phonetic spelling. This final literary exploration will allow students to imagine a world in which nothing exists except humanity in its most animalistic form; how can we go from Orwell's *1984* into Hoban's *Riddley Walker*? What does this say about the evolution of society?

### STAGE 1 – DESIRED RESULTS

**Course Title:** Dystopian Fiction: Control, Modification, and the Value of Self-Awareness

**Established Goals:**

CC.1.3.11–12.B

Cite strong and thorough textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly, as well as inferences and conclusions based on and related to an author's implicit and explicit assumptions and beliefs.

CC.1.3.11–12.D

Evaluate how an author's point of view or purpose shapes the content and style of a text.

CC.1.3.11–12.J

Acquire and use accurately general academic and domain-specific words and phrases, sufficient

for reading, writing, speaking, and listening at the college- and career-readiness level; demonstrate independence in gathering vocabulary knowledge when considering a word or phrase important to comprehension or expression.

CC.1.3.11–12.K

Read and comprehend literary fiction on grade level, reading independently and proficiently.

CC.1.4.11–12.C

Develop and analyze the topic thoroughly by selecting the most significant and relevant facts, extended definitions, concrete details, quotations, or other information and examples appropriate to the audience’s knowledge of the topic; include graphics and multimedia when useful to aiding comprehension.

CC.1.4.11–12.D

Organize complex ideas, concepts, and information so that each new element builds on that which precedes it to create a whole; use appropriate and varied transitions and syntax to link the major sections of the text; provide a concluding statement or section that supports the information presented; include formatting when useful to aiding comprehension.

CC.1.4.11–12.K

Write with an awareness of the stylistic aspects of composition.

Use precise language, domain- specific vocabulary, and techniques such as metaphor, simile,

and analogy to manage the complexity of the topic.

Establish and maintain a formal style and objective tone while attending to the norms of the discipline in which they are writing.

CC.1.4.11–12.N

Engage and orient the reader by setting out a problem, situation, or observation and its significance, establishing one or multiple points of view, and introducing a narrator and/or characters.

CC.1.4.11–12.P

Create a smooth progression of experiences or events using a variety of techniques to sequence events so that they build on one another to create a coherent whole and build toward a particular tone and outcome; provide a conclusion that follows from and reflects on what is experienced, observed, or resolved over the course of the narrative.

<p><b>Understandings:</b> <i>Students will understand that...</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. dystopian fiction exists in multiple artistic mediums.</li> <li>2. dystopian fiction is used to bring attention to current and past sociopolitical issues.</li> <li>3. strong development results in flawed and complicated characters.</li> </ol>	<p><b>Essential Questions:</b></p> <p>Overarching Questions:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. In these works, who is being dehumanized, and for whose benefit?</li> <li>2. What correlations do we see between dystopian fiction and contemporary events? Social</li> <li>3. How can lack of individual thought lead to social oppression?</li> <li>4. Can we fight totalitarianism by creating an educated mass? Corporate Control</li> </ol>
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	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>5. How does this dystopia compare and contrast with a social dystopia?</li> <li>6. Why do we value privacy?</li> <li>7. Does a lack of privacy constitute a lack of individualism or a communal need for the greater good? Genetic Modification</li> <li>8. What does it mean to be human? What makes us, specifically, human?</li> <li>9. How does genetic modification impact our understanding of humanity?</li> <li>10. Can the ends ever justify the means, especially when discussing the greater good? Environmental Control</li> <li>11. How are the other kinds of dystopias present here?</li> <li>12. In response to what is religious belief becoming a necessity in society?</li> <li>13. How do our experiences dictate our beliefs and values?</li> </ol>
<p><b>Students will know:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. examples of works within the literary genre.</li> <li>2. distinguishing components of dystopian fiction.</li> <li>3. SAT Prep vocabulary words in writing and speaking.</li> <li>4. how to use correct English grammar and mechanics.</li> </ol>	<p><b>Students will be able to:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. analyze text through textual, contextual, and interpersonal lenses in writing.</li> <li>2. Research historical and social contexts within one literary work.</li> <li>3. create original work in the literary genre.</li> <li>4. integrate personal style into original work.</li> <li>5. defend their opinions and ideas effectively through persuasive techniques.</li> <li>6. Exhibit educated decision-making skills in choosing their own novel to read alongside the course materials.</li> </ol>



## STAGE 2 – ASSESSMENT EVIDENCE

STAGE 2 – ASSESSMENT EVIDENCE	
<p><b>Performance Tasks:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Writer’s Workshop Dystopian Short Story               <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Students will receive time throughout the semester in which to create their own short story modeled after dystopian fiction.</li> <li>b. Students must choose 1 factor in their society to modify or control and create a narrative based on this modification’s effect on society.</li> </ol> </li> <li>2. Research Paper               <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. At the conclusion of unit 1, students will submit a 3-4 page expository essay informing readers of ONE of the events impacting Orwell’s writing of <i>1984</i>.</li> </ol> </li> <li>3. Comparative Literary Analysis               <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. See Key Criteria.</li> </ol> </li> </ol>	<p><b>Other Evidence:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Goodreads Posts               <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. For each reading assignment, students will post on Goodreads identifying one <u>T</u>hought, <u>Q</u>uestion, and <u>E</u>piphany that the reading made them consider.</li> </ol> </li> <li>2. Vocabulary Master Lists               <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Students will weekly submit at least 5 new vocabulary words they discovered through their reading. Each word will include part of speech, definition, and the context in which they found the word.</li> </ol> </li> <li>3. Writer’s Workshops               <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Students will receive one guided class hour weekly in which to practice creative writing skills.</li> <li>b. Beginning after unit 1, students will use these Writer’s Workshops to make progress on their Dystopian Short Stories. Progress will be monitored via Google Drive.</li> </ol> </li> <li>4. Literary Analysis Briefs               <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Students will complete two literary analysis briefs throughout each unit, preparing them for the larger Literary Comparison within unit 3. They can use the arguments within these briefs to assist in forming a larger claim.</li> </ol> </li> </ol>
<p><b>Key Criteria:</b></p> <p><u>Comparative Literary Analysis</u></p>	

In this essay, you will compare and contrast your dystopian choice novel with Ishiguro's *Never Let Me Go* in order to explore themes, character development, and perceived commentary on the contemporary world.

If you use the following steps to direct your writing, you will end up with a strong and direct argument!

1. While reading both novels, note important or remarkable quotations for future use; this will help you later in writing your essay.
2. Determine your thesis statement. What would you like to argue concerning both of these novels? How do you plan on sorting evidence based on effectiveness? Which novel is more effective in supporting your thesis? Why? In what areas does the other novel rival the first? How are they similar?
3. Create an outline. Using your thesis statement, sort through the quotations you noted while reading and others you found pertaining to your argument. Outlining how you want to move through an argument makes it more effective because it provides direction and continuity.
4. Turn this outline into a draft! You already have the bare bones laid out, so go ahead and fill in the rest using persuasive writing techniques.
5. Revise, revise, revise. Is every sentence crucial to the overall argument? If not, how can we revise it to make it more impactful?
6. Turn in your final draft to me at the end of unit!

Specifications for Full Credit:

- strong and clear thesis
- parenthetically-cited textual evidence
- logical paragraph transitions
- outline, rough draft, and final product (turn these papers into me within 1 document)
- 5-7 pages double spaced, 12 pt. Times New Roman

## STAGE 3 – LEARNING PLAN

### Summary of Learning Activities:

#### WEEK 1

- introduction to dystopian fiction
  - discussion on larger works. What has been modified? Who is in control?
- introduction to Unit 1: social control
- Orwell's *1984*
  - Who/what is Oceania?
  - What has occurred to create this world in which our characters are living?
- introduction to research project
- Writer's Workshop
  - Understanding plot arcs

#### WEEK 2

- Orwell's *1984*
  - Who is Big Brother? What is totalitarianism?
  - How does Big Brother use Doublethink to manipulate the people of Oceania?
- introduction to Goodreads posts
  - understanding the Thought, Question, Epiphany format for reflecting on literature
- introduction to vocabulary master lists
  - using new language to build comprehension
- Writer's Workshop
  - Developing characters

#### WEEK 3

- Orwell's *1984*
  - What is revisionist history?
  - How is it used by Big Brother to manipulate thought?
  - Goodreads posts
- vocabulary master lists
- introduction to student choice novel
  - YA, Classics, contemporary, etc. as long as it's a dystopian novel
- first literary analysis brief
  - choosing one tool Orwell uses to create a more absorbing dystopian world

- Writer's Workshop
  - Setting – how to use descriptive language

#### WEEK 4

- Orwell's *1984*
  - Do we have the ability to think independently of others?
  - Has revisionist history occurred in our world?
  - How do we see totalitarianism in our world?
  - Does Orwell provide necessary insight into our future?
  - Goodreads posts
- vocabulary master lists
- research paper submission
- Writer's Workshop
  - Conflict and its origins between characters

#### WEEK 5

- Unit 2: Corporate Control
- Eggers' *The Circle*
  - What is the goal of the Circle, and how does it contradict Big Brother's mission?
  - What is life like outside of the Circle?
  - Goodreads posts
- vocabulary masters list
- Writer's Workshop
  - First attempt at forming a solid narrative (memoir)

#### WEEK 6

- Eggers' *The Circle*
  - How does the Circle condition its members to become a unified community?
  - What does it mean to work in favor of the greater good?
  - Goodreads post
- Check-in on student choice novel
- Vocabulary masters list
- second literary analysis brief
  - student choice novel
  - choosing strong author tool used to comment on contemporary society
  - introduction to literary comparison
- Writer's Workshop
  - Brainstorming ideas for dystopias

WEEK 7

- Eggers' *The Circle*
  - Greater good revisited
  - How does giving up privacy impact society as a whole?
  - Why did Eggers choose this concept as the basis for his dystopia?
  - Goodreads posts
- Vocabulary masters list
- Introduction to a Literary Comparison
  - See Key Criteria
- Writer's Workshop
  - Creating protagonists and antagonists

WEEK 8

- Unit 3: Genetic Modification
- Ishiguro's *Never Let Me Go*
  - What does it mean to genetically modify something?
  - What world are we seeing through Ishiguro's opening chapters?
  - Goodreads posts
- Vocabulary masters list
- Writer's Workshop
  - Outlining a narrative using a plot arc

WEEK 9

- Ishiguro's *Never Let Me Go*
  - How does Ishiguro hierarchize the value of life?
  - How does he differentiate between humans and non-humans?
  - Goodreads posts
- Vocabulary masters list
- Writer's Workshop
  - drafting

WEEK 10

- Ishiguro's *Never Let Me Go*
  - What does it mean to be human?
  - How does the greater good impact or moral decision-making?
  - Goodreads post

- Vocabulary masters list
- Literary Analysis submission
- Writer's Workshop
  - drafting

### WEEK 11

- Unit 4: Environmental Control
- Butler's *Parable of the Sower*
  - How does this world differ from the others we know?
  - What variables are knowingly modified or controlled?
  - Goodreads post
- Vocabulary masters list
- Writer's Workshop
  - Peer revising

### WEEK 12

- Butler's *Parable of the Sower*
  - How do the characters value their lives and the lives of other humans?
  - How do the experiences of the characters dictate their outlook on life?
  - Goodreads post
- Vocabulary masters list
- Writer's Workshop
  - Peer revising

### WEEK 13

- Butler's *Parable of the Sower*
  - Is Lauren's vision a pipe dream? Why or why not?
  - How does religion impact the lives of people in this dystopia?
  - Goodreads post
- Vocabulary masters list
- Writer's Workshop
  - Final edits

### WEEK 14

- Butler's *Parable of the Sower*
  - How does hyperempathy interact with Lauren's view of humanity?
  - Why does Lauren use religion as a centering point for her community?

- Goodreads post
- Vocabulary masters list
- Writer's Workshop
  - Submission! ☺

### WEEK 15

- Hoban's *Riddley Walker* (1985) – misc. excerpts
  - What happens when society is left with nothing? When society no longer exists?
- Presentations of short stories
- Final discussion
  - Is reality a dystopia?
  - How can we become educated citizens in our communities to ward off the birth of a dystopia?

### **Resources and Materials**

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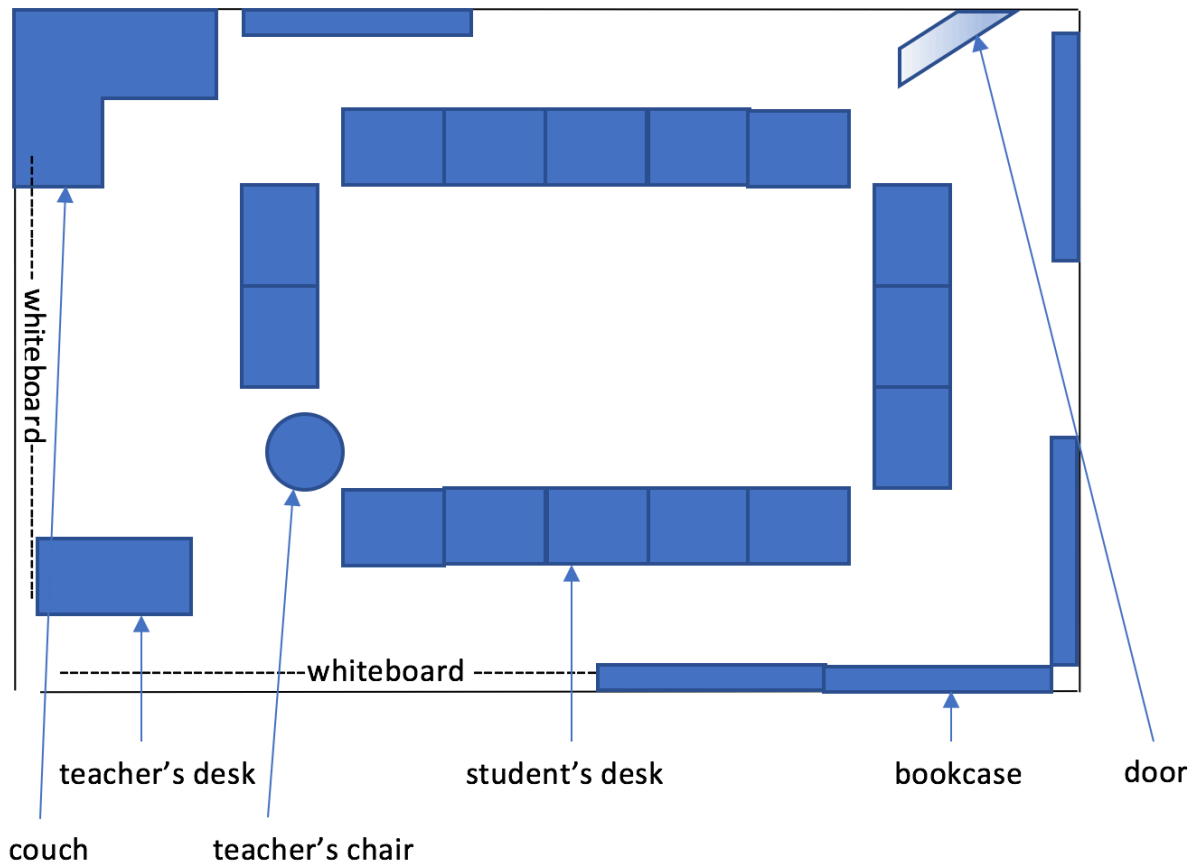
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## Appendix B

### CLASSROOM MANAGEMENT PLAN

#### Classroom Layout



This diagram depicts how I would set up my ideal classroom for this course. My desk would be in the far front corner of the room for two reasons: the first is that I would like to have quick access to any materials I might need without disrupting my students, and the second is that it puts within easy reach of any projector or sound device. The students would sit with their desks facing so that, “during exploratory talk, students [build] on each others’ ideas, actually creating thoughts that no one in the group had previously conceived, working on understanding” (Burke,



2013); I would leave a space in this circle so I could easily sit and engage with them directly. I believe that levels are important in classroom layout; when I am giving direct instruction, I want to be standing at the whiteboard so my students know that explicit learning will be occurring for a few moments. However, for the majority of my class time I want to be on the same level as my students, which is why I will be sitting along with them for guided textual and thematic discussion.

Bookcases will be around the room so students can have easy access to any and all books in which they have interest. I love how stacks of multicolored books add depth and joy to a classroom. Bulletin boards can display course content outside of my classroom, so the whole school can be aware of what we are reading in my classroom. My walls will be decorated with quotations by famous authors, wall hangings of works of art, and a few helpful posters detailing punctuation marks and grammatical rules. Students may use laptops for taking notes, but otherwise, all technological devices must be away unless specifically instructed to use technology.

### **Classroom Procedures**

This seating layout, with students facing each other, prompts them to engage directly with each other instead of looking to me when analyzing their peers' statements. My seating style creates a more involved discussion space, but it also means that students are more likely to become distracted by one another. If students are talking to each other or distracted by something, I will not use negative language to force good behavior. Instead, I will ask the distracted students what questions they have on the content; I might also ask them to answer a

question based on what they are missing. I will also use positive reinforcement and nonverbal cues (proximity control, eye contact, etc) as much as possible.

High school students should be treated with respect so they learn to become responsible community members; I do not expect my students to ask to use the restroom, printer, or water fountain. Similarly, they can decide who they sit next to and whether taking notes on a laptop will become a distraction. These decisions are privileges that can be taken away if students do not rise to the responsibility. With an excused absence, students can make up any missed assignments in as much time as they missed (ex: sick for 3 days means 3 more days to complete work); if the absence is unexcused, students cannot receive credit for any make-up work with the exception of writing assignments, which will receive half credit if turned in a day late. If more than a day late, writing assignments will not be accepted.

### **Base Classroom Rules**

Classroom Rules will be created and established by the class as a whole, but I have expectations that must be met. My expectations are:

- Arrive on time to class.
- Come to class prepared (i.e. homework completed, notebook out, documents printed, etc).
- Participate in discussion with a curious and analytical mind.
- Treat differing beliefs, values, and opinions with kindness and respect.

If students choose to disregard these expectations, they will be reminded of the guidelines we created as a class for the first and second infractions. If the disregard continues, students will

write a half-page paper arguing why the rule should be removed from classroom expectations (since the student must not value the expectation to continue disregarding it). Following this kind of consequence, if the behavior persists, students will lose points from their participation grade. Parents will become involved in this situation if students show negative or disrespectful behavior towards myself or their peers.

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## ACADEMIC VITA

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### EDUCATION

**The Pennsylvania State University**, University Park, Pennsylvania 8/2016 — present  
*Schreyer Honors College*  
*Colleges of Education and the Liberal Arts*, graduating Fall 2019  
B.S. Secondary Education With concentrations in Teaching English and Communication  
B.A. English

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### EMPLOYMENT

*Paraprofessional, Mission One* 5/2016 — present

- Works as a teacher's aide in the BLaST IU17 Extended School Year special education summer program
- Assists students in reading, writing, mathematics, and life skills
  - elementary Autistic Support (2016, 2019), secondary Learning Support (2017)

*Catering Staff, The Food Guy Catering Company* 4/2019 — present

- Prepares food and provides wait staff service for special events such as weddings, family reunions, and other social gatherings

*Server, Williamsport Country Club* 6/2017 — 5/2019

- Served WCC patrons for special events/banquets or in regular dining rooms

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### PROFESSIONAL EDUCATION EXPERIENCE

*Chief Development Officer, F.O.R.M. Consulting* (Future Opportunity Reached by Mentorship)  
8/2018 — present

- Manages external affairs for national nonprofit 501(c)(3)
- Maintains professional relationships with universities and stakeholders to grow F.O.R.M.
- Builds partnerships with F.O.R.M. chapters at universities and acts as communicative avenue for 501(c)(3)
- Works with colleagues in planning and implementing new strategies for growth

*President, Consultant, F.O.R.M. Consulting* 4/2018 — 3/2019

- Managed a high-profile organization as leader and head of the executive board
- Organized F.O.R.M. schedule including meetings, activities, and events
- Directed partnerships liaisons in maintaining professional relationships with school districts

*Mentor, SHO TIME* (Schreyer Honors Orientation) 2/2017 — 12/2018

- Assisted incoming first-year Schreyer scholars in adapting to the Penn State environment
- Aided in organization of different teambuilding activities to encourage new students to build relationships

*Teacher, Universidad de Cuenca* (PSU Teaching ESL with Ecuador Immersion Program)  
2/2018 — 8/2018

- Earned Pennsylvania ESL Program Specialist Certificate
- Taught Ecuadorian learners of English in a five-week immersion program

- Learned skills and techniques for best co-taught instruction
- Networked with mentors and participants to share best ESL teaching practices

*Partnerships Director, Consultant, F.O.R.M. Consulting* 9/2016 — 4/2018

- Helped provide consultations for underrepresented students applying to college
- Acted as liaison between high school administrators and the F.O.R.M. executive board
- Organized educational events at partner schools

## **VOLUNTEER EXPERIENCE**

*Dancer Relations Committee Member, THON* 9/2017 – 3/2019

- Supported THON 2018/2019 dancers emotionally and physically over THON weekend

*Mentor, PSU Lifelink* 11/2017 — 12/2018

- Mentored college-age students with disabilities
- Assisted with classroom assignments, social skills, and life skills

*Performer, Music Service Club* 9/2016 — 12/2018

- Sang and performed at nursing homes, hospitals, special events, etc.

*Choreographer, United Methodist Church Music Day Camp* 6/2013 — 7/2018

- Helped organize and plan a children's musical along with director
- Taught choreography and music for a culminating performance