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# Michalski MA Portfolio: Finding My Path

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FINAL MA PORTFOLIO

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A Final Portfolio

Submitted to the English Department of  
Bowling Green State University  
In partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts in the field of English  
With a specialization in  
English Teaching

16 April 2018

Dr. Sue Carter Wood, First Reader  
Dr. Bill Albertini, Second Reader

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Vicki Michalski

Personal Narrative

“Finding my path”

Choosing works for my portfolio gave me an opportunity to carefully think back over the last two years in the English program here at BGSU. I must admit I had no idea what to expect when I started, and that I carried so many myths and misconceptions about education and English Language Arts that my evolution process into an English teacher has been one of the hardest things I've ever done. My journey encompassed growth, questioning, changes, and sometimes fear, taking me in directions I'd never thought possible. When I applied to BGSU's English department, I was deep into the last semester of an MA program in history. I'd mostly finished my thesis and coursework and was naively convinced that I would get into the history Ph.D. program at the University of Maryland. However, just to hedge my bets, I applied to every community college history department in my area, hoping to teach general education requirement American history to first-year students. I had no teaching experience, no knowledge of teaching strategies whatsoever, but I had a lot of history classes behind me, having earned both my BA and MA (soon to be granted) in history. I was a flight attendant for many years and just knew that I'd be hired to teach online *somewhere* since I used to do some teaching for work and had degrees behind me. It was my plan, and since I'd never *not* been accepted to a program I'd applied to, I was overly confident! Needless to say, in this area of the country with Ph.D.'s working as secretaries and clerks while looking for adjunct positions just to put food on their tables, my MA in history with no teaching experience didn't exactly jump out to community college recruiters. And the University of Maryland decided that my specialization in American

medical and health history didn't really fit into their "History of Science and Technology" Ph.D. program, either.

It just wasn't in my plan to receive "no thank you" letters from the Ph.D. program at Maryland or the community colleges I applied to, that is, those that responded at all. Since I couldn't move to find a Ph.D. program that had a professor of medical history to help with research, I was devastated. A friend told me that Maryland was hiring writing teachers, and showed me the job postings. There were openings for adjuncts to teach research writing, historical writing, and composition. No problem, right? My application got no response. My history thesis advisor told me that I wrote well though I needed to clean up my prose somewhat, so I decided to apply to the BGSU Teaching English program to help me land one of those writing adjunct jobs. I had no background in English other than the few classes I'd taken in high school and as an undergraduate, and I had no teaching experience. Foolishly, I thought writing shouldn't be difficult to teach. I was utterly misguided. History was my passion, but I was happy when BGSU accepted me to their English MA program. I dove in, hoping that I would learn how to teach and to improve my own writing. I never anticipated the changes I would experience.

When I began the English MA program, I was lost. I didn't know what a lesson plan looked like, I had no idea how to design class sessions and plan semesters, how to assess students, or how to teach to students' cognitive levels. Now I use pedagogical theories and scholarship, design scaffolding for more effective teaching, and design activities to benefit my students. In my second year of the program, I decided to put myself in a position to teach so I could gain experience. A friend suggested I substitute since I don't need a license to do so. I now substitute teach in the K-12 environment, happily applying pedagogical theories and techniques I've learned in my teaching English MA program while teaching in actual classrooms with

students. My specialties are ELA and Social Studies, though I cover all subjects in lower elementary level classes I sometimes teach. I am now a long-term “preferred” substitute at my neighborhood’s Elementary school, using much of what I’ve learned at BGSU in my work. I love helping the students learn to read, write, and think critically. The permanent teachers compliment me because I’m one of the few substitutes with education training who are able to accomplish their lesson plans, manage classrooms, and even add additional fun things to their day when time permits. Quite honestly, I enjoy substituting so much that I’ve decided not to seek permanent teaching employment right now. I love the flexibility of not having to grade papers, lesson plan, or design assessments, and I especially love not having to deal with all the administrative activities that permanent teachers complain about. I will likely add high school English and History to my teaching in the new school year, but for now, I’m thrilled right where I am. I enjoy growing as a teacher, writer, and thinker thanks to my English MA program. Perhaps the lure of doctoral study will emerge again for me someday, but since I am just recovering from two surgeries last month to re-attach my retina, I’m happy to have flexibility and enjoyment in my teaching life right now.

The four works I chose for my portfolio represent a snapshot of the growth I encountered in the program, and the transformation I met retooling from History to English. These documents best represent my slow and sometimes hesitant evolution from someone who just wanted to “do” history and teach it along with writing, to someone who learned to teach English Language Arts with all that teaching entails. I learned to appreciate the vast amount of scholarship available to help me effectively teach writing to students, and importantly I learned just how much I didn’t know. I purposely chose works that I struggled with rather than only those I felt I’d done well because the assignments that made me step outside my comfort zone caused more growth than

ones I felt more confident about. The theme of “my growth as an English teacher” includes remembering the anguish I often felt while learning.

The first work I chose is a lesson plan I wrote for Dr. Phil Dickinson’s “teaching literature” class. Dr. Dickinson’s class was the hardest class I’d taken to that point in my learning, as I had little literature knowledge and no experience teaching. I didn’t really want to take this class because I thought I only wanted to learn to teach writing, but since I learned so much about teaching in general and writing in conjunction with reading rich literature, I’m glad the class was a requirement. For this project, I chose to design a lesson plan to teach George Orwell’s *1984* in a two-year college, combining reading the book and discussing its themes with writing instruction for a paper about it. I’d already written a short research writing lesson plan for Dr. Andrea Mukavitz-Riley’s “teaching writing” class, but this assignment pushed my discomfort because of the literature requirement and the short time frame for the unit. In this lesson plan, I asked students to read, think, and write every day and discovered that I would also need to do the same if I was going to keep ahead of them! I feel like my rewrite of the *1984* lesson plan could go with me to either a high school or community college class and engage the students while achieving objectives and hitting common core standards for literature and writing. Dr. Dickinson specified we do a lesson plan for a unit to last no more than four weeks, but this lesson plan could be expanded to include a longer interval for reading assignments, more discussion, more collaborative work with peers, and teaching more drafting and editing techniques for their unit papers. This unit could also become the first of several works of literature studied in a semester course that would build upon close reading, rhetorical situation, and writing practice.

The second work I've included is also from Dr. Phil Dickinson's "Teaching Literature" class. Like the first, I chose it because it was especially difficult for me, encouraged me to step out of my comfort zone and grow as a teacher, and was the first syllabus I'd ever produced. When I first sat down to write a syllabus draft I foolishly thought it would be easy. Being wrong about how difficult these assignments would prove is another theme of my portfolio! I did not expect that deciding what to include and how to formulate my syllabus would involve identifying a large set of personal expectations I had about teaching, students, and classes. This assignment forced me to decide what kind of professor I'd be prior to my ever setting foot in a classroom. Was I more of a laissez-faire instructor, or was I one who needed organization, rules, and deadlines? How did I feel about students choosing to do the right thing for their education, or skipping classes and using excuses and "wiggle room" to get out of doing the work I assigned? Did I want to be an available friend-type of professor, or did I want students to know that I set firm guidelines that they had to adhere to? And how would I grade accordingly? All of these issues were important to getting to know myself better as a teacher, making this assignment significant. During my own student experience, syllabi functioned as mostly a list of reading assignments and due dates. Now as a teacher writing the document, I had to make sure I'd planned out everything in the semester including assignments, guidelines, learning outcomes, assessments, due dates, and planning for unforeseen circumstances that might affect the class. I developed a newfound appreciation for my professors' syllabi now that I developed my own. I studied many of syllabi to decide the tone and content of my own. I found that the type of teacher I wanted to be changed and adjusted as I thought about and wrote out the sections of my syllabus. Now that I teach, I realize that I follow the "teacher type" who sets reasonable assignments, boundaries, and due dates and wants students to show their best effort in their work. I am also the "teacher type"



who encourages students to communicate if they don't understand a concept or assignment, or if unforeseen events might cause them to have trouble meeting class expectations. I set forth guidelines that help potential slacker undergraduates know that I want them to work to their best ability and that I will reward those who choose to do so. After many drafts, and rewrites, I am happy with the syllabus I've produced though it will continue to be worked, edited, and adjusted as I continue to grow, and when it is used with a live class.

The third piece I chose for my portfolio illustrates serendipity but continues the theme of learning about myself as I transitioned into teaching English. This essay is the "lightbulb moment" when I went from slogging through assignments just because I had to do them to finally finding and celebrating the connection between my passion for History and my English studies. This essay is the first I produced as a historically minded English scholar rather than a historical scholar who was learning English. I finally realized that I could be happy with a foot in each discipline and that I could not only love both, but I could help students understand that English, writing, rhetoric, and even literary theory can enhance all other content and disciplines.

The essay's story started a few semesters before Dr. Kimberly Coates' literary theory class for which I wrote the original version of the work. My thesis advisor at Pitt State became a good friend as we shared our historical interests. She supported my admission to BGSU, but she knew I was overwhelmed in my first couple of semesters in the English program. In her classes, Dr. Lawson always asked students to stretch their minds, and to look at assignments as ways to expand our interests, critical thinking skills, and knowledge bases. After I graduated, she frequently sent me reading lists for her MA reading classes and seminars and shared lists of books she knew would be helpful or that I'd enjoy. Of course, there was no requirement for me to read these books because I'd graduated, but I knew from looking at the titles and authors that I

would enjoy reading and thinking about these volumes. I ordered the books and leafed through them when they came in even if I didn't have time to sit and read them cover to cover at the time.

The first reading list Dr. Lawson sent me after I graduated from PSU was one that contained works she especially thought would be helpful to me in bridging the gap between history and English. She suggested that I read quite a few titles by Michel Foucault in her first and subsequent lists. I bought the Foucault books, looked through them, found them too dense for me at the time, and put them on a shelf. Dr. Lawson made occasional teasing comments that suggested she knew I hadn't read Foucault, telling me how ubiquitous but essential he was but I just couldn't get into his works at the time. Back to Dr. Coates' summer Literary Theory class. I found the assigned reading sometimes difficult but always interesting, culminating with enlightening and lively class discussions. Dr. Coates assigned reflective papers every two weeks about any topic we gleaned from the reading and discussion. These papers weren't easy for me but I managed. Then one day, the reading assignments included two familiar theorists, Karl Marx, who I had no idea would show up in literary circles, and my old acquaintance, Michel Foucault. I read the material, finding connections between economic and historical theories I'd studied in the past. I've always gravitated to historical materialism in line with Marxist economic theories. Now, with Marx's theories in mind, as I read Foucault and his contemporaries and their take on control, punishment, and the power of the state, all in line with economics as motivating forces and their opinions on the benefit of literature and language. I got excited. Here was the connection Dr. Lawson wanted me to find, but more importantly, the connection between history and English finally drew me in and excited me. Foucault acts as a bridge between historical theories and literary ones. This is what I'd been looking for.

I began to feel the old passion I'd held for history now emerge in my English studies. In newly energized fashion I began to formulate and write the version of the essay I produced for Dr. Coates's class, staying up most of the night to work on it. I'd never felt as much passion for an English assignment before this one, and I could tell this essay was a turning point for me towards embracing English. Since Dr. Coates asked for a much shorter work, my rewrite included additional research, reading, and content. During the rewrite, I endeavored to link those parts of historical theory I'd enjoyed in the past and used in my past research with what I was now doing in English. I added more theoretical material from my English classes, pulling it into the essay, and feeling it further transform me into feeling like a newly minted English major, albeit one with historical interests. Dr. Lawson suggested to me throughout my English studies at BGSU that I should look for historical angles in my English assignments to motivate me, but now I really understood what she meant. She, Marx, and Foucault helped me grow as an English teacher and scholar. Dr. Lawson always pushed the "never stop learning" ideal, but the most important thing she did with urging me to read Foucault was to illustrate that if you find something you especially love learning about, there is always more to be learned, and explore that will expand your knowledge. This paper could have quickly become a thesis-length work because it had so many tangents and directions to go to for further research and study. But what is most important is that this paper brought history and English together for me.

The last work I included in my portfolio is the longest of the bunch. I wrote this paper for Dr. Carter Wood in her "Teaching Grammar in the Context of Writing" class. When I registered for the class, I thought it would either be grammar drills and instruction which I needed badly but feared much, or it would teach me how to write more correctly without learning all of the grammar constructions, labels, and sentence structures I'd somehow missed in my earlier life.

Happily, I was wrong on both counts. Having just experienced my turning point toward embracing English, I felt enthusiasm for whatever awaited me. About a month into this semester I began to substitute teach, finding that I loved teaching ELA, especially in the upper elementary grades. I started to use techniques and concepts about teaching writing that I learned in this class when I taught and spent time asking questions of and observing regular teachers during my planning periods. Regular teachers began to notice that I often enhanced their lesson plans with additional activities and help and that the students enjoyed what I did. I feel like I am helping to make a difference in the lives of the students I touch when I am in their classes.

I mostly work at the same schools my own children attended, walking to the elementary school as it is close by in my neighborhood. The area's demographics changed dramatically in the years since my children attended school. Private, religious, and new public schools have siphoned higher achieving students out of the neighborhood school, producing more a more transient student body, and handling a lot of behavioral and developmentally special needs children. Teachers, aides, and administration work hard to make the situation the best they can, but it's difficult. As soon as the school's principal asked me to be on the "preferred substitute list" (offered assignments for this school before non-preferred substitutes), I began to work at the neighborhood school almost exclusively, becoming familiar with students, teachers, and routines.

Teaching in general, and this school in particular, have become my passion now, and the research paper assignment from Dr. Carter Wood gave me a way to connect with both. As I began to flesh out the topic and outline, this work seemed to nearly write itself. Most of my frequent classes contain about 90% minority or ethnically "different" students, reflecting the demographics of the school as a whole. I believe that for every behavioral issue there is a story and a reason, so the idea of giving students their own voice from my teaching grammar class

resonated with me. The state standards here for English state that teachers must teach correct Standard American English only and require its use in each grade, objective, and subject. I knew that scholarship proved that allowing home dialects and teaching code-switching was the best way to help students transition to Standard English, but I have to adhere to the state standards. Researching and writing this paper gave me suggestions, study findings, and ideas about effectively teaching Standard English to non-mainstream speakers, without disobeying state guidelines. Thus, this work helped me continue to build my teaching skills. I try to make learning fun and have taken to explaining Standard English as similar to dressing formally for church, dinner out at a fancy restaurant, or the like whereas home language is informal and not wrong, yet appropriate for the playground and home-like casual jeans and tee shirts would be for clothing. This paper represents my present situation in transitioning to English teaching. It follows the theme of growth I used to choose my portfolio submissions because it embodies the evolution I've made from lost student to confident beginning teacher. I now have training wheels that enable me to know where to look for more strategies, and I have the knowledge allowing me to teach and to improve my teaching as I go. My goal for the 2018-2019 school year is to pick up high school English and history classes whenever possible along with teaching ELA in the neighborhood elementary school. I went from someone who just wanted to teach writing at the community college level because there were no available history professorships available to MA graduates, to someone who looks forward to teaching in the K-12 world. I will still be scanning job postings for adjunct professors to teach writing, but I feel that teaching K-12 students is so vital to the success of their generation. I love being an English teacher now!

Vicki Michalski

ENG 6090: Teaching Literature

Dr. Phil Dickinson

April 24, 2017 (Rewritten for Portfolio, Spring 2018)

### Unit and Assignment Plan

This unit covers George Orwell's classic dystopian novel, *1984*. This work is particularly significant and exciting given present-day political events. The unit is designed for a community college class on modern literature meeting three times a week for approximately 75 minutes each. The course objectives I planned this unit to meet are: upon successful completion of this four-week unit, students will gain critical skills to analyze and evaluate a modern literary work, learn about literary genres of science fiction and dystopia, learn the importance of language and the portrayal of "news" in the text and today's world, and contextualize a work of fiction.

The original assignment specified that this unit plan was to span no more than four weeks. However, since this is the first novel read and paper due in the semester, I would stretch the unit to six weeks to allow for slower reading and for discussing writing strategies, and to allow time for students to draft and improve their essay before turning in a final paper. I also would spread out the weekly reading assignments over one additional class period each, dividing them appropriately, so that there is less reading per class period since my students are community college students, many with families, work lives, and other responsibilities that might preclude them from successfully keeping up with the reading schedule. Our second unit in this class would build upon the first unit's scaffolding and focus even more on writing and critical thinking.

I planned teaching techniques, activities and assignments focused on meeting course objectives and on following my teaching philosophy. Activities and techniques include student writing as journal responses. These assignments help students organize their thoughts and observations through questions and prompts exploring themes from the book, allowing them to use the literary work as a window into worlds, cultures, and diverse ways of thinking. I feel this is important to develop critical thinking skills, and to expanding cultural worldviews. Students share their response journal writing in class discussions in a safe classroom where all opinions and answers are respected. A safe space for all students in discussion and other learning is an

essential element in my teaching philosophy. The neuroscience of memory acquisition tells me to keep passive learning periods to a minimum, revealing that lectures of over 10-15 minutes are ineffective. I utilize short, infrequent lectures to introduce themes and discussion topics. These few moments of an introductory lecture set up discussion question(s), posing open-ended questions to get the discussions going. To help students become partners in the learning process, and to teach them the critical thinking skills that will stay with them in college and beyond, I open these discussions with questions designed to grapple with the text and its relation to current world events. I pair these discussions with teaching students how to research issues to spot “fake news” compared with credible sources.

Affirming my philosophy of teaching to the cognitive level of my students, I pose “exit ticket” short answer questions to judge the effectiveness of student understanding and involvement in the material, thus assessing teaching changes necessary for learning. Exit slips assess the cognitive functioning level of the students, allowing me to apply teaching styles appropriate for the class. Student/teacher interaction to encourage learning is vital in my philosophy. Discussions, writing, and exit slips assist me in my interactions with students. Also, the unit is planned to encourage critical thinking gained from student participation in discussion and writing, another objective in my teaching philosophy. I teach with close attention to my students’ cultures, perspectives, and learning styles while requiring that students are respectful when dealing with differences of opinion. These teaching methods are illustrative of my teaching philosophy. I construct, explain, and detail all information about assignments to the students, giving them ample time to ask questions and receive feedback before significant assignments for assessment are due. Making sure that students are prepared for any assessment I provide is also part of my teaching philosophy.

The abbreviated syllabus/class schedule for this four-week unit is found after this synopsis. I included classroom activities as an instructor version of the schedule; the student version would contain topics and homework assignments.

I assess how well students met course objectives through writing assignments and engagement and participation in class discussions. Response journal assignments are written on a shared Google document so I can assess student writing, engage students with quick questions, and assess their ability/level changes in real time. Each response journal entry earns completion points and is used to assess understanding but not otherwise graded. The response journal

document is due at the end of the unit, so students have accountability for the assignment. Class discussions are also assessed. Students gain points for participation and for answering questions thoughtfully in discussions. In the last week of the unit, I give a content quiz on the book. This quiz requires short, concise answers of about 100 words on a few issues brought up in the text and class discussions. This quiz does not focus on minute details of what characters did or said. I am looking for critical thinking, not recitation. These quizzes will be assessed by looking at argument logic and noting how students tie their thinking to the text. A final essay of about 3-4 pages covering the student's choice of topic from among those I present further assesses student involvement with the text. A writing rubric is used to grade the paper.

I confess to struggling with this assignment. Because I have neither taught in the classroom nor taken any education classes, I was unfamiliar with planning a unit to include daily activities and assignments. The task was challenging, but despite the discomfort and difficulties, I feel it served me well. I broke the task into small pieces and confronted each, in turn, writing, re-writing, and re-thinking the entire task repeatedly as different pieces began to impact others. Filene's and Showalter's books helped me with a general overview, but there is quite a difference in reading about a task and confronting and completing it. I learned that planning could be a difficult task for a class group you do not know. Discussions and short lectures can take widely different amounts of time than planned for, so I planned more content than needed for each class so I would not be caught short. However, if I finish what I planned for the class early, students will begin their response journal homework. Working on their journal responses in class will lessen their homework and will give me an opportunity to observe the students' writing. In class writing allows students to take the time to ask me any questions they have about the process or the prompts.

I developed my curriculum planning ideas in table form which I liked and will likely use again. I found I could insert planning notes for each class, either changing them around as needed for time or in keeping discussion topics relevant to a part of the book students just read. I initially assigned about fifty pages of the book for each class session, later deciding it might be too much careful reading for students to accomplish given their other time constraints. I then changed the schedule so that except for the first week, the next two 100-ish page sections of the book were initially assigned on Fridays. I made the first half of about fifty pages due



Wednesday, the next half the following Friday, giving students a full week to read the section. I envisioned each element of the unit from an adult student point of view.

I hope that readers will see me as non-teacher learning how to plan a unit from scratch with no prior experience or training. I endeavored to format my classroom plans and homework to cover material and objectives. My plan teaches students critical thinking and writing skills usable across disciplines. I believe the plan it is a good start that can be changed and improved upon as I learn and teach. I believe the plan's strengths include requiring response journal writing to connect with class discussions and the way I presented reading assignments. The plan's weakness is my lack of experience so I might have over-planned the first three weeks and under-planned the last week. I wanted to slow the last week's pace for the assessment, and while students finished their paper, so I did not plan discussion and homework to allow for time for students to work and get help with their papers if needed. I think the most helpful thing for me was that I would read the book for an English class in High School. Granted, it was a long time ago, but that experience made me think about the way the teacher planned-out the activities. My teacher was a fan of class discussion, gently guiding us back to the material when we strayed. I found that discussions coupled with short writings help me learn material and think about various viewpoints that came out during the discussions. I want to share that method with my students.

*Note: March 1, 2018. Now that I am teaching, albeit, at the elementary school level, I re-reread this unit plan with "teacher's eyes." I feel that the assignments, lessons, and assessments I envisioned for this class before teaching are appropriate and would feel comfortable using this plan in a high school or community college classroom.*

**Assignment plan:**

Book needed for this unit: Orwell, George. *1984*. Signet Classics Edition, 1950.

Any full-length version of the book is fine, but the page numbers may not be the same as listed in the assignments.

Week/Class day	In Class Activities	Assignments/Assessments
<b>Week 1 Monday Part 1</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Welcome &amp; ground rules for class discussions: no right or wrong answers, respect for all students, no politics. Response journal</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Read the first half of part one (pages 1-63) for Wednesday. The rest of part one (to page 104) is due by Friday.</li> <li>RJ Convert a short paragraph from any article or book to</li> </ul>

	<p>expectations and requirements.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Short intro to our book, discussion of genre (dystopian, soft sci-fi)<sup>1</sup> context, and themes. Quick discussion of setting: We will read the first sentence of the book and talk about what it can suggest to us, and possibly why the author chose those words.<sup>2</sup></li> <li>• Class discussion: Are there ways in which government or the private sector intrude upon the privacy of US Citizens?</li> </ul>	<p>newspeak. Share the original and your newspeak version. Supply definitions of any newspeak words you created or used from the book. Due Wednesday.</p>
<p><b>Week 1 Wednesday Part 1</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Students are given “privacy”<sup>3</sup> worksheet to do. Discuss invasion of privacy and how the worksheet made them feel. Afterward, students to keep or destroy worksheets.</li> <li>• Sharing: writing assignment: newspeak articles. Discussion of censorship and language.</li> <li>• Discussion of relevance in the book and today’s world. Why did the Party want to rid the language of synonyms and antonyms? What was the purpose of newspeak in the book?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Finish reading part one (pages 64-104) for Friday</li> <li>• RJ: Write a short 100-word response to Friday’s discussion: How is language important to freedom? What about privacy?</li> </ul>

<sup>1</sup> Content in parentheses represent prompts/memory aids for the instructor - me. I plan to use this lesson plan in the future and I might need to be reminded of some of the content.

<sup>2</sup> For each of the classes, if the discussions conclude more quickly than expected, students will pair off and begin to develop ideas for their response journal writing assigned for homework.

<sup>3</sup> The worksheet includes questions that purposely invade student privacy (it will not be collected or seen by the instructor) like “Who are your friends?” “What do your friends do that they shouldn’t?” “How much money do your parents make?” etc.

<p><b>Week 1 Friday Part 1</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sharing of writing assignment: How is language important to freedom? Discussion of language in present day.</li> <li>• Discussion of character development: What do we know about Winston Smith? What does he do to make himself an enemy of the party? Why is it important for the superpowers to always be at work with one another? (convenient way to keep citizens repressed, keep supplies scarce, keep people afraid of each other).</li> <li>• Exit pass<sup>4</sup>: Favorite part of part one. Least favorite.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Start reading part 2 over the weekend. All of Part 2: pages 105-224 is due next Friday. The first half is due on Wednesday, pages 105-140.</li> <li>• RJ Write 100 words about what was going in the era when the book was written (written 1948-published 1949) for our discussion on Monday.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Week 2 Monday Part 2</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Context: what is it, and how does it affect a work of fiction? Sharing of Friday's RJ about the era when the book was written.</li> <li>• Discussion: Julia says to Winston that though the Party can make someone say anything when tortured, they can't make them believe what they've said. Discuss. What about brainwashing? Is it real? Do governments actually use it?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pages 105-140 due on Wednesday.</li> <li>• Read to page 224 for Friday</li> <li>• RJ: Write 100 words about how the Party controls history and why for our discussion on Wednesday</li> </ul>
<p><b>Week 2 Wednesday Part 2</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Discussion of writing assignment: The Party controls history – why? (to control the future, they erase the past so the citizens won't question or challenge</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Read second half of part 2: pages 140-224.</li> <li>• RJ: Write 100 words for our discussion on Friday: what is power? What makes a person</li> </ul>

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<sup>4</sup> Exit pass questions are given to the students for the last 10 minutes of class and require only short answers. Students must turn them in as they leave the class. There is no requirement that students put their name on the exit pass answers.

	<p>their actions). How can people prevent this from happening?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What are some historical events that someone has attempted to erase in the real world?</li> </ul>	<p>powerful? Explain your opinion.</p>
<p><b>Week 2 Friday Part 2</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sharing of RJ writing. Discussion of the context of the book during the history and events of the era in which it was written.</li> <li>• Discussion: Why does the party permit couples to marry but they are against love? (The purpose of marriage is to have children. Love would endanger the party by directing people's loyalties away from the government, and love uses energy and then people don't care about anything. The party wants your full energy (133).)</li> <li>• Exit Pass: How did part 2 make you feel? Why?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Begin reading part 3 this weekend (p 225 to end of book including afterward by Fromme for next Friday.)</li> <li>• Read First half of part 3 for Wednesday p. 225-274.</li> <li>• RJ: According to the brotherhood's handbook, why are the superpowers always at war? Write 100 words explaining your position.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Week 3 Monday Part 3</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lecture: introduction of essay writing assignment.<sup>5</sup> Formatting, requirements,</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Read the first half of part 3 for Wednesday p. 225-274.</li> </ul>

<sup>5</sup> Essay Assignment: Choose one of the following to write a 1000-1300-word essay: Cite pages you use from the book. Follow MLA formatting, including a Work(s) Cited page.

1. Using parts of Orwell's book to back up your position, write an argumentative essay on one of the following topics mentioned in the afterward; (1) Can man forget he is human? (2) Can man create a perfect society? (3) The greatest deterrent to achieving goals is hopelessness. (4) The arms race provides essential economic growth.
2. Write an essay that explains the historical context of Orwell's book. What happened before the book was published, and what has happened since? Which of Orwell's predictions have become a part of history?
3. Create a new ending for the book, adding an explanation of why you chose the ending you did, and explain how it is consistent with the rest of Orwell's story, citing examples.
4. Pick a character from the book. Using the book to back up your writing, tell the reader about this character. Include his/her likes, dislikes, hopes, dreams, job, actions, and confusions.

	<p>citations, and content information.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Introduction of the content quiz next Monday – a week from today</li> <li>• Discussion: How are Julia and Winston alike? How are they different? (Julia and Winston both work in the Ministry of Truth and resist the party. Difference: Julia carries does little things she knows are forbidden to rebel, whereas Winston becomes part of the large scheme to overthrow the government.) Why do you think they act in different ways?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The rest of part 3 is due Friday.</li> <li>• Begin working on your paper, it is due a week from Friday.</li> <li>• Content quiz a week from today.</li> <li>• RJ: Winston sees prisoners being taken to room 101. He watches their reactions and believes there is something terrible in the room. Write 100 words about what is in the room and what it would contain for you and why?</li> </ul>
<p><b>Week 3 Wednesday Part 3</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lecture on Theme, Setting, Plot, Point of View – Rhetorical situation of the text. How does this apply to the paper you’ll be writing?</li> <li>• Discussion: According to the Brotherhood handbook, the superpowers are always at war. Why? (To use the products of the country without raising the standard of living-also it’s a convenient way to keep citizens repressed, keep supplies scares, and keep people afraid of each other). How does constant war tie into the slogan: "War is Peace?"</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Content Quiz on Monday</li> <li>• Rest of book due Friday</li> <li>• Essay assignment due a week from Friday Outline or rough draft due Monday if you want me to look it over for you.</li> <li>• RJ: Write 100 words to explain how Winston ultimately feels about Big Brother and why.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Week 3 Friday Part 3</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Class discussion and question session about the essay assignment. If students want me to look at their rough drafts and/or outlines, they must be</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• RJ: Write 100 words about what concerned you most in our text and why? Do you see this coming true today?</li> <li>• Study your notes and book for the quiz on Monday, and work on your essay assignment.</li> </ul>

	<p>available for me on Monday.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Discussion: freedoms students and citizens are granted and what freedoms or rights they are denied. Who controls the system(s) that govern us? Pertaining to the book, how does such a large group of people become so completely submissive to the body of power that governs them?</li> <li>• Exit ticket: What is the most significant thing Orwell wrote about that has a parallel in your own life or world?</li> </ul>	
<p><b>Week 4 Monday</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Content Quiz on entire book.<sup>6</sup></li> <li>• As students finish their quizzes, I will be available to look over outlines or drafts of their essays. When everyone is finished with the quiz and it is collected, students are to split into groups of no more of four to discuss the work they've done so far on their essay. Peers will offer suggestions and/or feedback. I will continue to work on looking at papers and offering feedback as the peer groups meet.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Essay Assignment Due Friday</li> <li>• RJ document due Friday</li> </ul>

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<sup>6</sup> The content quiz includes short answer (100-word paragraphs) essay questions about the characters, plot, ironies, and themes from all three sections of the book, and a couple of questions from the class discussion content. The quiz is not intended to test knowledge of minute elements, but to assess student engagement with the book, class discussions, response journal prompts and to verify that students read the whole book. Cliff notes, spark notes, and homework helps are available online, thus, the quiz is constructed using content questions that assesses critical thinking rather than rewarding regurgitation of material covered in these summaries. The quiz will be short with only about five questions. That will be long enough to ascertain if the students read the book or not.

<p><b>Week 4 Wednesday</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Answer any student questions about the essay assignment.</li> <li>• Discussion: What makes 1984 a dystopic novel? The definition of dystopia from Dictionary.com is “an imaginary place or state in which the condition of life is extremely bad, as from deprivation, oppression, or terror.”</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Essay Assignment Due Friday</li> <li>• RJ due Friday</li> </ul>
<p><b>Week 4 Friday</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Graded quizzes returned to students.</li> <li>• Students turn in essay/paper assignment and response journal.</li> <li>• Lead-in to the next work we will be reading.</li> <li>• Exit ticket: What did you like the most about the unit we just finished? What did you like the least? What would you suggest to improve the course?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Enjoy your weekend. No homework!</li> <li>• Next week we will begin a new unit on a different book.</li> </ul>

**ENG 101 -Introduction to Literature**  
**Fall 2017**  
**MWF 9:00 to 10:20 am**  
**Russ Hall Room 200**

Professor Vicki Michalski

Office: 250 East Hall

Phone: x3210, cell 410-336-9650 for emergencies only

Email: vmichal@bgsu.edu

The best way to reach me is by email. If it's timely or extremely important, please use all capital letters in the subject line. I usually respond within one day during the week. You may also call my office and leave a message, or you may text my cell.

Office Hours: 11am-1pm Monday through Friday in person or via online chat. Feel free to email me to make an appointment, even if you can't meet during those times. I'm flexible.

Course Description: This course is an introduction to the study of literature. In it, we will discuss some important questions: What is literature? Why write literature? Why read literature? In the course, you'll read literature from several genres and time periods and learn the vocabulary used in literature study. This course will help you learn to critically read works, to gather meaning from language, to gain a deeper understanding of the context and worlds that literature addresses, to appreciate the impact of the era in which the author wrote the work, and to develop a better understanding of your own relationship in the world through literature.

Program Goals/Objectives:

Upon successful completion of the course, you should be able to

- Produce critical readings of literary texts using different methods of interpretation and analysis, and identify and interpret elements in the texts.
- Assess the roles that literature has played historically and continues to play for humans
- Draw connections between literary texts and the biographical, historical, and cultural contexts of the author.
- Complete concise, succinct, and well-written responses to questions about our work
- Develop a broader cultural literacy and be aware of the role of literature in society.

Required Materials (any full edition): Aidoo: *Our Sister Killjoy*; Bechdel: *Fun Home*; Levi: *Survival in Auschwitz*; Morrison: *Beloved*; Saramango: *The Tale of the Unknown Island*

**Grading and assignments:**

The grade you earn for this course will be determined based on the following distribution:

Reading Quizzes	15%
Attendance and participation	20%
Reading Responses	20%
Close reading of a literary text or passage	10%
Critical Analysis Papers (2)	35% (15% and 20%)



Grading scale: 90-100% = A; 80-89% = B; 70-79% = C; 60-69% = D; below 60% is a failing grade. Grades will not be curved; each student will receive the grade they earn. In general, students who do their work an hour before it is due do not earn good grades, and do not learn the skills necessary for college level courses. Students who neglect to do their readings will find it impossible to pass this class. Start your papers early so the due dates don't sneak up on you! If you encounter problems, communicate with me as soon as possible!

1. Short Reading Quizzes (15% of your grade):

We will have periodic short reading quizzes to make sure students are doing the required reading. These are available on our web-platform and are graded automatically. Quizzes will be posted on a random basis throughout the semester, so you should always be prepared.

2. Attendance and Participation: (20% of your grade):

Learning is a cooperation between you, me, and your classmates. Your presence in class is vital to your learning. If you miss classes, you will likely do poorly on quizzes, discussions, and on other assignments. I understand that illnesses and emergencies happen, so please contact me for any absences you feel might be excused. Excused absences are limited to "verified illness," group activities sponsored by the university, court mandated activities (jury duty, subpoenas), military service, and religious observances. If you know that you will be absent or late for classes because of prior commitments, please discuss this with me during the first week of class. Communication is key.

Every three unexcused absences will lower your final grade point average by 2%. Please make sure you sign the attendance sheet during every class. If you come in late, please stay after class and let me know so I can mark you present but tardy. If you are late three times, it will equal one absence. If you miss a class for any reason, you are responsible for finding out what was covered and for making up all assignments. You are responsible for all work covered in class, all announcements, and any/all changes to the syllabus announced in class. If you're having a problem affecting your attendance, please communicate with me.

You can only offer thoughtful comments or participate fully in class if you have done the assigned readings. Students are expected to fully read whatever is assigned before the class when it is due. Consistent participation in-class discussions and demonstrating knowledge of the assigned readings will contribute positively to your grade. Bring the assigned reading material to class every day, these may be electronic copies, printed-copies, or books.

3. Reading Responses (20% of your grade):

Ten times during the semester, students will write a brief response of about 250 words about the day's reading. These are uploaded to our web-platform before the class when they are due. We will discuss these responses at the beginning of class, so please bring an electronic or physical copy with you. These responses should comment on themes, figurative language, and symbolism found in the text. Reading responses can also raise interpretive or

critical questions concerned with the text's meaning, or make judgments about the period, history, politics, and ethical questions that are relevant to the reading. These questions are "open-ended" or interpretive, and they usually have no right or wrong answers. Reading responses are intended to incite thoughtful discussion. Great responses are based on evidence and the reasoning you used to support your analysis and judgment.

4. Close Reading assignment (15% of your grade)

This is a test of your skills in close reading, especially for works of poetry and short fiction. You will be expected to analyze a text carefully and develop an argument regarding the entire work through a close reading. This is a short paper of about 750 words. No outside sources may be used for this assignment.

5. Two Critical Analysis Papers 35% (The first is 15% of your grade, the second is 20%)

Two critical analysis papers will be required during our course, the first is due at mid-term, and the second is due the last week of class. These papers should be 800-1000 words each. In these papers, you will combine close reading skills with critical concepts or historical information introduced in class. This is not a research paper, as students will work within the material, concepts or ideas introduced and/or discussed in class. The goal for both papers is for students to produce a strong argument supported by textual and contextual evidence.

**Course Policies:**

Common courtesy and appropriate classroom behavior: Courtesy in dealings with your peers and teachers is vital to creating a learning environment friendly to everyone. All members of our university community are expected to treat each other with respect and dignity. I expect you to behave that way toward your classmates and me. *I will not tolerate any rude, coarse, or offensive remarks based on race, gender, ability, sexual identity, or anything else you can think of, either in class discussions or in written assignments.* Our university community is made up of students from diverse cultural, economic, and ethnic backgrounds. Think before you speak in class discussions. Is what you are saying worded appropriately? Would an elderly relative take offense at your language? Would you have hurt feelings if someone said the same thing to you or about you? Inappropriate language or behavior is not acceptable. Discussions are a vital component of learning. During discussions, have fun but take the discussion seriously, and always listen and show respect to other people's questions and ideas.

We will sometimes discuss and write about literary texts that cover controversial topics and opinions. Diverse backgrounds combined with possibly provocative texts require that you show respect for ideas that may differ from your own. Respectful discussion is welcome, disrespectful comments and behavior are not. Disrespectful behavior of any kind will result in your dismissal from class and will merit an after-class meeting with me along with an unexcused absence for the day's class. Three or more incidences of disrespectful behavior during the semester will result in my dropping you from the class.

A note on course content: We will be discussing literary works that might be disturbing and even traumatic to some students. If you do not want to study a few works that examine race, gender identity, sexual orientation, emotional abuse, dysfunctional families, etc. then please take a different course. We will handle tough subjects gently and compassionately. If you ever need to step outside during a discussion, you may feel free to do so without any penalty, but you will be responsible for any missed material. If you leave the room for a significant time, please plan to get notes from another student, or see me privately after class. If you want to discuss your reactions to the material either privately afterwards with me or publicly in class, I welcome this as an important and appropriate part of our course.

Academic integrity policy: Anyone caught cheating or plagiarizing (turning in work that is not your own) will automatically fail the assignment in question, may fail the course, and could be subject to disciplinary action by the University. This policy is outlined in the Academic Honesty Policy section in the Student Handbook. Plagiarism is defined as “representing as one’s own in any academic exercise the words or ideas of another including but not limited to quoting or paraphrasing without proper citation.” An easy way to avoid such problems is to do your own work, and when you use the thoughts or words of someone else make sure you use proper citations. Any questions? Please ask in class or contact me privately.

Late assignment policy. Each student must turn in all assignments by the due date. Late assignments will not be accepted except in the case of extreme emergencies that will require documentation, or excused absences as mentioned in the attendance policy. Do your work early. Assume that everything that can happen will happen if you procrastinate. Your electricity will go out, your hard drive will crash, your best friend will call you crying, your dog will have puppies, etc. If you do your work early, you can arrange to overcome those hardships. If you do have a documented, extraordinary circumstance, contact me about your assignment. While most common life experiences like having a cold are not extraordinary, admission to the hospital for an appendectomy is extraordinary.

Make-up policy: Except for students with a certified illness or university sanctioned documented excused absence, there is no-make up option for a missed exam or assignment. If you have an upcoming planned excused absence, make-ups should be arranged by email, phone, or in person with me prior to the absence. If the absence is related to illness, please let me know as soon as possible so we can come up with a plan for your continued success in class during your illness (if it is extended) and when you return. Please contact me upon your return to class to produce documentation of the illness or emergency. There are no re-takes of exams or assignments if you did not finish in the allotted time or if you earned a low grade.

Personal Electronic Device Policy: Cell phones should be turned to silent before entering class and may not be used in class whatsoever. Students may use laptops, e-readers, or tablets in class only to view the texts we are discussing. Each cellphone ring, incidence of texting, or occurrence of using electronics to surf the web, use Facebook, etc., will result in a 1% grade reduction from your final grade. I understand that life happens, so if you are having a

documentable family emergency for which you must use your phone or keep it available, please let me know before class begins so I am aware of your situation.

### Class Schedule

This schedule is subject to change. Students are responsible for all changes announced in class even if they are absent on the day of the announcement. Reading for each class is due on the day listed on the schedule. If link/url for a reading is not noted, the file is found on our class web-platform or it is a required book for the course. **You are expected to read the assignments listed for class prior to that day's discussion. Reading responses must be turned in on the web platform before the class.**

#### Week One: What is literature?

Monday 8/21	Welcome, introductions
Wednesday 8/23	Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. "I have a Dream"; Audio and Text: <a href="http://www.americanrhetoric.com/speeches/mlkhaveadream.htm">http://www.americanrhetoric.com/speeches/mlkhaveadream.htm</a> Langston Hughes, "Let America Be America Again" ( <a href="https://www.poets.org/poetsorg/poem/let-america-be-america-again">https://www.poets.org/poetsorg/poem/let-america-be-america-again</a> ), Louise Erdrich; "Dear John Wayne" <a href="https://genius.com/Louise-erdrich-dear-john-wayne-annotated">https://genius.com/Louise-erdrich-dear-john-wayne-annotated</a>
Friday 8/25	Shirley Jackson, "The Lottery" <a href="http://fullreads.com/literature/the-lottery/">http://fullreads.com/literature/the-lottery/</a>

#### Week Two: The Epic

Monday 8/28	Homer, <i>The Odyssey</i> , Book 1 <a href="http://classics.mit.edu/Homer/odyssey.1.i.html">http://classics.mit.edu/Homer/odyssey.1.i.html</a>
Wednesday 8/30	Homer, <i>The Odyssey</i> , Book 19 <a href="http://classics.mit.edu/Homer/odyssey.19.xix.html">http://classics.mit.edu/Homer/odyssey.19.xix.html</a>
Friday 9/1	Dorothy Parker, "Penelope," <a href="https://www.poemhunter.com/poem/penelope/">https://www.poemhunter.com/poem/penelope/</a> Finish discussion of <i>The Odyssey</i>

#### Week Three: Drama

Monday 9/4	Labor Day, No Class
Wednesday 9/6	August Wilson, <i>Fences</i> , Act I ( <a href="http://sonomavalleyhigh.org/home/CA49709534937256/.blogs/post15259/Fences%20script.pdf%20.pdf">http://sonomavalleyhigh.org/home/CA49709534937256/.blogs/post15259/Fences%20script.pdf%20.pdf</a> ) Summary/introduction is optional. <b>Reading Response Due</b>

Friday 9/8	Wilson, <i>Fences</i> , Act II, from same website
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**Week Four: Poetry**

Monday 9/11	Paula Bardell, "Silence (over Manhattan)," <a href="http://war-poetry.livejournal.com/410602.html">http://war-poetry.livejournal.com/410602.html</a> Emily Dickinson: "It was not death," "Safe in their Alabaster Chambers", ( <a href="https://www.poets.org/poetsorg/poet/emily-dickinson">https://www.poets.org/poetsorg/poet/emily-dickinson</a> ), Elizabeth Barrett Browning, Read the first two poems here:: <a href="http://www.telegraph.co.uk/culture/books/booknews/10680518/Elizabeth-Barrett-Brownings-10-best-poems.html">http://www.telegraph.co.uk/culture/books/booknews/10680518/Elizabeth-Barrett-Brownings-10-best-poems.html</a>
Wednesday 9/13	Walt Whitman, "Song of Myself" 1892 Version, Parts 1-20 ( <a href="https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems-and-poets/poems/detail/45477">https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems-and-poets/poems/detail/45477</a> ) <b>Reading Response Due</b>
Friday 9/15	Continue Whitman "Song of Myself" parts 21-33 from same website

**Week Five: Poetry**

Monday 9/18	Whitman "Song of Myself," remainder from same website
Wednesday 9/20	Alan Ginsburg, "A Supermarket in California" <a href="https://www.poemhunter.com/poem/a-supermarket-in-california/">https://www.poemhunter.com/poem/a-supermarket-in-california/</a> and "Sunflower Sutra" <a href="https://www.poemhunter.com/poem/sunflower-sutra/">https://www.poemhunter.com/poem/sunflower-sutra/</a> (listening to readings is optional) <b>Reading Response Due</b>
Friday 9/22	Gwendolyn Brooks, "Beverly Hills, Chicago," ( <a href="https://www.poets.org/poetsorg/poem/beverly-hills-chicago">https://www.poets.org/poetsorg/poem/beverly-hills-chicago</a> ), W.H. Auden, "The Unknown Citizen," <a href="https://www.poets.org/poetsorg/poem/unknown-citizen">https://www.poets.org/poetsorg/poem/unknown-citizen</a>

**Week Six: Fiction/Prose**

Monday 9/25	Charlotte Perkins Gilman "The Yellow Wallpaper" <a href="https://docs.google.com/file/d/0B6rNi6-mDSzfX0lvMTRzd3QwSkU/edit">https://docs.google.com/file/d/0B6rNi6-mDSzfX0lvMTRzd3QwSkU/edit</a>
Wednesday 9/27	Franz Kafka "In the Penal Colony," <a href="http://www.kafka.org/index.php?aid=167">http://www.kafka.org/index.php?aid=167</a>
Friday 9/29	Alice Munro, "Moons of Jupiter" chapter one ( <a href="http://www.freebest-books.com/Classics/the_moons_of_jupiter/2.html">http://www.freebest-books.com/Classics/the_moons_of_jupiter/2.html</a> ) <b>Close Reading Paper Due</b>

**Week Seven: Fiction/Prose**

Monday 10/2	Jose Saramago, <i>The Tale of the Unknown Island</i>
Wednesday 10/4	Dina Nayeri "A Ride out of Phrao," ( <a href="http://lithub.com/o-henry-prize-winner-dina-nayeris-a-ride-out-of-phrao/">http://lithub.com/o-henry-prize-winner-dina-nayeris-a-ride-out-of-phrao/</a> ) part 1 <b>Reading Response Due</b>
Friday 10/6	Dina Nayeri, "A Ride out of Phrao," to end

**Week Eight: Why Do We Write?**

Monday 10/9	Primo Levi, <i>Survival in Auschwitz</i> , p. 9-70
Wednesday 10/11	<i>Survival in Auschwitz</i> , p. 76-158
Friday 10/13	<i>Survival in Auschwitz</i> , finish book & forward. <b>Paper #1 Due</b>

**Week Nine: Fall Break**

**Week Ten:**

Monday 10/23	<i>Beloved</i> p. 3-75
Wednesday 10/25	<i>Beloved</i> p 76-158 <b>Reading Response Due</b>
Friday 10/27	<i>Beloved</i> p. 159-195 & forward

**Week Eleven**

Monday 10/30	<i>Beloved</i> 199-235
Wednesday 11/1	<i>Beloved</i> 236-277 <b>Reading Response Due</b>
Friday 11/3	<i>Beloved</i> to the end

**Week Twelve**

Monday 11/6	Robert Pinsky "Shirt," ( <a href="https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems-and-poets/poems/detail/47696">https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems-and-poets/poems/detail/47696</a> ), Langston Hughes, "October 16: The Raid," ( <a href="https://www.poetrynook.com/poem/october-16-raid">https://www.poetrynook.com/poem/october-16-raid</a> )
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11/8	Wednesday	Audre Lorde, "Afterimages," ( <a href="https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems-and-poets/poems/detail/42582">https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems-and-poets/poems/detail/42582</a> ), <b>Reading Response Due</b>
11/10	Friday	Edgar Allen Poe, "Alone," <a href="https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems-and-poets/poems/detail/46477">https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems-and-poets/poems/detail/46477</a> ,Fatimah Asghar, "If They Should Come for Us," <a href="https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poetrymagazine/poems/detail/92374">https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poetrymagazine/poems/detail/92374</a> ,

### **Week Thirteen: Why Do We Read?**

11/13	Monday	Ama Ata Aidoo, <i>Our Sister Killjoy</i> p. 1-83
11/15	Wednesday	<i>Our Sister Killjoy</i> , p. 84-108,
11/17	Friday	<i>Our Sister Killjoy</i> , finish. <b>Reading Response Due</b>

### **Week Fourteen**

11/20	Monday	Marianne Moore, "The Fish," <a href="https://www.poets.org/poetsorg/poem/fish-1">https://www.poets.org/poetsorg/poem/fish-1</a> , Elizabeth Bishop, "The Fish," <a href="https://www.poets.org/poetsorg/poem/fish-2">https://www.poets.org/poetsorg/poem/fish-2</a>
11/22	Wednesday	Marianne Moore, "The Pangolin," <a href="https://www.poemhunter.com/poem/the-pangolin/">https://www.poemhunter.com/poem/the-pangolin/</a> Elizabeth Bishop "Pink Dog" <a href="http://www.poetryatlas.com/poetry/poem/2261/pink-dog.html">http://www.poetryatlas.com/poetry/poem/2261/pink-dog.html</a>
11/24	Friday	Thanksgiving, No Class

### **Week Fifteen**

11/27	Monday	<i>Fun Home</i> , p. 1-54
11/29	Wednesday	<i>Fun Home</i> p. 55-120
	Friday 12/1	<i>Fun Home</i> , to end. <b>Reading Response Due</b>

### **Week Sixteen**

12/4	Monday	Greggory Currie, "Does Great Literature Make Us Better?" <a href="https://opinionator.blogs.nytimes.com/2013/06/01/does-great-literature-make-us-better/?_r=0">https://opinionator.blogs.nytimes.com/2013/06/01/does-great-literature-make-us-better/?_r=0</a>
12/6	Wednesday	Course Wrap up/summary. Paper #2 due next class

Friday 12/8	<b>Critical Analysis Paper #2 Due</b>
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Vicki L. Michalski

Dr. Kim Coates

English 6070

23 July 2017 (rewritten Spring 2018)

### Why Foucault?

With a thank you to Dr. Kirsten Lawson, Pittsburg State University (Kansas) History Department

With my history MA diploma firmly hung in its place on the wall, I received an unexpected reading list from my former thesis advisor. Dr. L., who had become a treasured mentor and friend. She included a note stating that since I'd graduated, I could tell her to take a hike and ignore the list, though she thought the suggestions would prove valuable in the future. Her reading list contained several titles by Michel Foucault along with some others of historical interest. I ordered the books, but after they came in, they sat ignored as I tackled my English MA program. When we talked from time to time, Dr. L. occasionally made comments about how ubiquitous Foucault was and how he popped up at just the right moments, likely sensing that I had not yet made time to read his works. She was right on both.

Dr. L. and I share a love of history related to medicine, healthcare, and the cultural and social effects of disease. She advised me to look for ways to turn writing assignments into works related to my interests to retain my passion for research and writing. In my history classes, I was able to do that very thing. "The Myth of the Smallpox Blankets," became my Native American class project, dispelling myths and revealing factual reasons for Native population reduction so quickly after white presence. I tackled how and why insane asylums went from idyllic places for the mentally ill to recover in nature and peace only to become warehousing facilities full of abuse and death for my Early Federal Period class. My master's thesis was about the relationship

of racial segregation in Baltimore to morbidity and mortality rates in the 1918-19 influenza pandemic, finding that in disease processes, what affects a marginalized group also affects the dominant group. After embarking on an English teaching MA, I no longer found research subjects to excite me. Dr. L. knew that I was struggling and suggested that I try to find the best of both worlds in English and history to rekindle my interest and passion. I tried, but it was difficult. Unexpectedly, my literary theory class began to “hook” me, as I revisited *historical* materialist and literary critic Karl Marx, and as the class reading assignments introduced me to Michel Foucault.

I was excited to see Marx’s name in my reading because he helped bridge the gap between historical economic theory and literary theory, and because I already knew a bit about his ideas. I’ve always been a “show me the money” and I’ll “show you the motive” historian, so Marx’s economic theories were part of my prior studies. Learning about New Historicism and Political Criticism tie into my love of historical materialism, especially because they return to a focus on studying the context in literature after the sterile and anti-authorial structuralism, formalism, and deconstruction phases of literary theory. Marx wrote about the history of power and its abuses in society in his work on politics and economics, arguing that literature can never be fully understood without the context of history, economics, sociology, and culture (Rivkin and Ryan, “zero” 644). As a historically minded person, I agree that context is important to any study of authors, literature, and subject matter. I was overjoyed to read that history and context returned to literary study after it was repressed for so long, now falling under the title of “New Historicism.” (Rivkin and Ryan, “Writing” 505).

Still giddy at Marx’s introduction as a literary/political theorist, while learning about the “New Historicism” movement appeared my “soon-to-be friend” Foucault. Foucault was the son

and grandson of surgeons, so he had an interesting link to my love of medical history. He was born in 1926 in France, growing up in the time of Nazi occupation. Thus, he developed a first-hand understanding of the role of power in society. He studied philosophy and psychology in college, later becoming disenchanted with psychiatry and leaving his country to teach French in other places in Europe. He earned his doctorate in philosophy, returning to France to teach and research both philosophy and “the history of ideas,” later becoming a visiting professor at several U.S. universities (Roth 685). Since Foucault wrote extensively about the role of social sciences in shaping human experience, his material draws together my interest in culture, history, and the study of literary criticism (Roth 684) with a bit of economics and power politics thrown in. I decided that Dr. L was, as usual, wise in her recommending Foucault’s works to me.

I continued to explore Foucault’s ideas about literature in my literary criticism class. Author Klages notes that theorists such as Foucault and Derrida lived in the era of 1960s radical politics in the USA and Europe, writing for academics and students in the 1970s who held mostly the same types of political concerns. They are part of the “New Historicist” movement. New historicists examined inequalities of “race, gender, sexual orientation, physical ability, etc.” preferring to ponder the deeper meanings of literature rather than looking only at individual words, grammar, and imagery. They wanted the “meat” of the meaning, to understand literary texts as tools to examine our world and the eras that lead up to the world we live in now (Klages 7). They desired to know and understand the context in which the author wrote the texts. New Historicists and similarly minded scholars like Foucault examined culture as a system of analyzing codes that govern individuals, groups, and institutions. These theorists examined how a person in a given culture makes meaning and acts in concert with the meanings s/he understands. A myriad of cultural influences, meanings, and cultural ideas serve to shape

individuals; the New Historians study how cultural meaning emerges from cultural events (Klages 125).

Foucault studied how discourse -everything written, talked about, and thought about a given subject- shapes power and knowledge relations. He saw power and knowledge as inseparable but not opposites (Klages 142). Foucault disagreed with Althusser's ideas of power as strictly a way to keep people in line by the threat of punishment, arguing rather that power operates as an ideology. Foucault termed power "productive" rather than repressive in that it does not just punish; it also creates "situations, relationships, and subjects" (Klages 143). The goal of power is to create subjects who act the right way on their own, and don't need anyone to enforce punishment to make them behave. Foucault wanted to know what creates a "good" person who obeys the rules because they have an internal moral compass and believes the rules are good, and to discover if "bad" folks disobey because they don't believe these rules. (Klages 144). Foucaultian scholar Lisa Beasley notes that Foucault felt that human respect for external law is because of their learned version of right and wrong that rejects the self and sees care of the self as "immoral" (Lazaroiu 822). Foucault further argued that the circulation of power and knowledge is multi-directional, creating an exchange of power along with goods, people, and ideas. Power is multi-directional because there is always a counterforce of power working in resistance to it. Wherever power creates a disciplinary mechanism, people resist it and seek ways to subvert it (Klages 145). Numerous examples in society prove his theory.

Foucault argued that society is set up with these disciplinary mechanisms to subject people to political and economic forces. In a culture ripe with domination and power, those in control see humans simply as the power of labor in a system that uses their individual and collective bodies as tools for the political aspirations of those holding dominant power roles

(Foucault 549). Additionally, Foucault's descriptions of panopticons including Bentham's *Panopticon* make multiple references to "people of little substance" and "fears of disease and 'others.'" These statements highlight how those in power see everyone else as "lesser" and believe them to be "other," often blaming "others" for any problem that confronts society (Foucault 553-54). Foucault's arguments on the creation of discipline using the Panopticon's design of visibility to unverifiable inspection and his work on power situations in politics fall directly within my interests (Foucault 555) as a historical and social materialist. Foucault's writing and theorizing cover cultural, historical, political, and sociological themes, reflecting these themes in his literary works and his critical readings.

Often classified as a humanist, Foucault saw education as a way to teach the ethics of self-constitution through individual choices. He viewed self-determination as a form of self-regulation, as individuals continually grow through their self-regulation, becoming ethical subjects (Lazariou 822). Schools are increasingly going to methods employed in "restorative practices" types of training to impress upon students as early as Kindergarten that making good choices creates good outcomes, and to self-regulate their reactions to other students who do not make good choices (Wachtel). I find that Foucaultian views on education and schools further reflect the philosopher/historian's interest in science and culture, especially relating to the subjugation of people to the power of domination. His writings suggest his belief that schools surveil students at all times as in the Panopticon imagined by Bentham, by segregating them into self-contained classrooms by age. Additionally, the freedom of unstructured time in early childhood is lost to school schedules as time becomes predictable periods, semesters, or terms, training students to adhere to time guidelines necessary when they graduate and become workers. Those in power, administration, teachers, or oversight committees, monitor students constantly,

with the results of written examinations documenting individual capacities and levels entered into cumulative records, and allowing the comparison of individuals with others in a group against the mean or average of all of the group (Roth 687.). Foucault, who tirelessly worked for the rights of prisoners in the latter years of his life (Roth 685) viewed students as prisoners of a sort. He argued against the negative consequences of partitioning of students into classes and into precise time periods, believing that these systems lead to “imprecise distributions and uncontrolled disappearance of individuals” into the group (Foucault, *Discipline and Punish* 143).

As expected, Foucault’s detractors argued that though he supported libertarian humanist thought in education as a potentially liberating force, such an approach serves to develop the child into a controllable ‘object’ that the practices intend (Marshall 100). Detractors say the “molded” and controlled child does not portray libertarian humanist ideals. The student is regulated and molded socially and individually through surveillance and normalization techniques by the power holders (teachers, administration, and policy writers), the same thing Foucault fought against in his writings about prisons. Many educators also feel these controlling aspects present in educational policies are attacks on their own professional expertise, academic freedom, passion and commitments as researchers, teacher educators, and teachers (Brass 216). Perhaps the answer to these charges is for educators, particularly in the K-12 environment, to enhance their political awareness and become far more active in pushing back against present educational policy. We can do this politically in meetings and by lobbying, and we can also be agents of change through our encouragement to new teachers, existing education, and teacher education students (Brass 218).

Just as Foucault charged doctors with modifying patient stories to fit them into biomedical paradigms in a doctor-oriented and not patient-oriented abusive power structure

(Misselbrook 312), I often wonder if administrators and non-teachers do the same thing subconsciously to students. Students seen as “problems” are often labeled as “difficult” “aggressive,” “below grade level,” etc. and grouped according to their perceived “differences. This type of behavior de-individualizes all students and can create an “us” and “them” environment. Foucault’s theories push me as an educator to fight lumping students into any pre-conceived or labeled group, and to re-individualize each student into the unique individual they are. While I cannot control what goes on a student’s “permanent record,” I can teach each one and consider each one as an individual and try to nurture and teach to the best-suited level for that student. Also, like Foucault, I feel it is important to separate each student from normalizing judgments that many teachers and administrators made when comparing a student to the “norm” and to try to be a bit flexible with time, something that I cannot always do. When one subject leads to the next without changing classes, I can lengthen or shorten that specific instructional time if students are doing well with the lesson, but when it is the set time for lunch, special activities, or dismissal, there is no flexibility in the school schedule at all. Students feel this lack of flexibility as controlling.

In suggesting I read Foucault, Dr. L. gave me a gift of understanding, revealing her knowledge of my interests and my passion for learning and inquiry. Though she freely admitted that Foucault’s writings were challenging, dense reading, I believe she also saw Foucault as a way for me to relate English to history. Foucault kindled my interests in history in conjunction with literature because the concerns of New Historicism held with my historical research interests and concerns especially given the present political era. I’m sure she also knew that I would find additional thought-provoking material in Foucault to apply to my new career in teaching. Thank you, Dr. L., and thank you, Michel Foucault.

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### Valuing Language Diversity while Teaching Standard English

*“Beliefs about students shape the instructional behaviors of teachers.”* ~ Geneva Gay (54)

While substitute teaching in a school district with a diverse student population, I’ve enjoyed getting to know students from many different cultures and backgrounds. I believe that people from diverse backgrounds enhance the cultural fabric of the broader community, sharing wonderful new foods, languages, dress, and traditions for all to enjoy. My long first career as a flight attendant brought me into contact with co-workers and passengers from all over the world and from every walk of life. I am happy that teaching also allows me interaction with diverse people and cultures, expanding, brightening, and benefitting me by broadening my world views. I’ve examined my own beliefs and am sure I am ready to serve all students impartially and as valued individuals. As a substitute teacher, I’ve taught English and History/Social Studies at different school levels to find that I most enjoy teaching elementary school age children. I’ve been accepted by “my” elementary school as a “preferred” teacher (they offer preferred substitutes jobs at that specific school first, before offering openings to the general substitute list), so I’m able to work there full-time teaching ELA and all other subjects. I’m now well-known by most students and teachers and am treated as “one of their teachers” rather than as “just a sub.” I enjoy working at this age level because I feel I make a difference in student lives, both in the English language and in helping them gain self-confidence as their skills increase. “My” school serves children that are white, newly immigrated African, African-American,

Jewish, Middle-Eastern, Korean, Vietnamese, Chinese, Russian, Hispanic, Eastern European, Haitian, and likely many more I inadvertently left out. We also serve children diagnosed with Autism, ADHD, and other developmental and learning difficulties mainstreamed into our classrooms.

Many students, primarily younger ones, struggle with English skills, some growing up with non-English home languages, or “different” dialects and word usages than standard English. Even with the help of the lower year (K-2<sup>nd</sup>) teachers, many upper-level elementary school (grades 3-5) children are still below grade level in their English acquisition and usage skills. Low achieving students frequently receive services from special education teachers who go from class to class helping those who need additional attention. I have worked as a special education teacher substitute and wonder if the few “special” teachers can spend enough time with the lagging students to catch them up before they go to middle school in 6<sup>th</sup> grade. I also wonder how I can help students most efficiently when I teach in regular or in remedial classes.

Concern for the students at my school leads to my research focus. This article reveals what my research revealed about language diversity, and will share ways I discovered to navigate the tightrope between measuring everyone against the “standard” of standard English and allowing students to use their own “voice” or language dialect in school. I endeavor to do this while honoring “otherness” in students yet helping them learn the skills necessary in a society that judges them harshly if they deviate from standard English. I particularly address the status marking errors that may deny them opportunities as they go out into the world. The question I kept in mind as I researched and read is: *How can we best value our students’ diversity while still teaching standard English to help them succeed in life?* I have seen frequent problems of English usage that need extra attention in many students, and I have shared strategies that

scholars suggest to help linguistically diverse students acquire the ability to switch back and forth from their home language or dialect to the “school and business” standard. Most importantly, I believe educators can validate student language diversity in their classes while still helping them achieve educational success.

### Embracing Language Diversity in the Classroom

*“Teachers carry their personal cultural background into the classroom. Students and teachers construct together an environment of meanings enacted in individual and group behaviors of conflict and accommodation, rejection and acceptance, alienation and withdrawal.” ~ Geneva Gay (9)*

Educators can embrace diversity and “otherness” as a positive force. Otherwise, “others” become outcasts, seen as inferior or somehow “less than.” We as teachers must, therefore, validate and celebrate all our students. Cultural groups determine “otherness” within diverse populations and in classroom settings. These groups constantly change, blend, and shift in response from the environment and their members. Language, identity, and knowledge in culturally “other” groups can bring richness to student writing, but only if writing teachers work to appreciate their students as being at the confluence of many identifications rather than seeing them as only one. Opening our minds to view students as multi-faceted is key to understanding the diversity within our students. No student is just one element so we should value each of them as the total of all their attributes (Kerschbaum 617, 619, 625). We must value all of our students - not despite their differences - but *because of* them.

Culture, a system of social values, behavior standards, worldviews, and beliefs gives meaning and order to our lives and the lives of others. Our own culture determines how we think, believe, and behave, affecting how we teach and learn (Gay 9). Most educational practices in the United States were designed by and have always exemplified mostly European middle-class values. White, European middle-class hegemony is so ingrained that teaching as if all students

should conform to historically standard norms as the expected and right thing to do (Gay 9).

Teachers and students all carry their own cultural background into the classroom. Students and teachers together can construct an environment of meaning in the classroom to “produce individual and group behaviors of conflict and accommodation, rejection and acceptance, and alienation and withdrawal (Gay 9).” We can build an enriching classroom environment for all.

Intellectually, we as educators, want everyone including our culturally and linguistically different students to do well in our classrooms, to be treated equally, and to learn to their potential. We can demonstrate how much we value each student through constructing classroom activities, lessons, and even what we put on the walls as decorations to help students of all backgrounds learn. Teachers must understand that even when it is difficult getting the class to function together, the diversity of our students enhances everyone’s experience and learning. Students of color tend to suffer disproportionately in school curriculums designed for the “majority,” as do other culturally different students. Language differences, social standing, and the difficulties for students who come from impoverished backgrounds without access to books and learning activities at young ages can make it harder for students to succeed. Culturally responsive and accepting teaching can never solve all problems for students of color and other minorities, as funding, administration, and policymaking must be reformed, along with social, political, and economic inequities existing in our society. Many struggling students quit school when they do not feel intellectually stimulated (Gay 1) while others “check out” of an assignment or subject area. It is my job as a classroom teacher to make sure that all students are stimulated and valued.

Over decades of colonialization and economic growth in English speaking countries, English expanded into a global language, signifying power and domination over vernacular

languages. Since English teachers can knowingly or inadvertently extend the ideological domination and linguistic imperialism of English, author and scholar Canagarajah urges teachers to examine their hidden beliefs and motivations. We, as educators, must be sure that we teach English to benefit our students but allow and embrace their own vernacular and home languages as well (Shelton 58). The best way we can demonstratively value student cultures is to value student voice and linguistic differences while teaching standard English constructions to enable student success once they leave our classroom. To do this, we must be aware of certain types of errors made by our students that can create discrimination against them in society. Teachers must endeavor to teach our students to avoid the worst errors by employing standard English teaching strategies.

#### Status Marking Errors

*“When a word or phrase sharply differentiates educated from uneducated speakers, we call that expression a status marking error.” - Schuster 55.*

A status-marking error in grammar describes a word, phrase, or usage that seems to differentiate speakers who are uneducated from those who speak standard American English and those who do not, at least to some people. Status marking errors trigger a perception in some listeners that these errors indicate that the speaker is uneducated, though this perception is certainly not always true. Some native English speakers consider status marking errors “extreme” so people who regularly use them can suffer economic and social handicapping in society (Schuster 55). When people apply for entrance to colleges or other educational opportunities, and when they apply for jobs, non-standard language issues may cause their applications to be disregarded. Though not the only language issue employers report as disqualifying job applicants from receiving an interview, status-marking grammatical errors are a top factor. Students for whom English is not their first language sometimes make status-marking

errors, as do students speaking African American English dialects at home, and non-minority students who have not acquired grammatical competency in English. Status-marking errors are not just a minority issue. Status-marking errors constitute a significant issue to address to ensure our students' success in their economic and social lives well after they leave school.

Examples of status-marking errors include grammatical constructions using non-standard verb forms including “brung” rather than “brought,” and “had went” rather than “had gone.” Subject-verb disagreement problems considered status-marking include “they was” rather than “they were,” and “ he don’t think” rather than “he doesn’t think.” Also, the use of double negatives considered status-marking includes constructions like “there has never been nobody here,” Another status-marking error is the object pronoun as subject as in “him (sic) and her were hired for the job (Weaver 145).” These are some of the most easily identified status markers, though depending on the listener or reader, there can be others. Though many scholars, parents, and teachers argue that society does not serve all students by requiring standard American English, the business, professional, and academic communities all require it. So, educators must find a way to teach Standard English and prepare students to use it (Yoder 82). Status-marking errors are not the only ways that language ability, use, and dialect can serve to divide our students from each other, or from what some feel is a discernable “right way” to speak and write. Status marking errors are errors of grammar and word usage (as judged by comparison to standard English).

#### Grammar errors.

*“It’s impossible to escape the fact that regular use of nonstandard English in the larger society is likely to handicap the user, economically and socially.” - Schuster 55.*

Deborah Dean notes that some English teachers and many parents continue to expect student writing graded for grammar and usage to employ a “right/wrong” dichotomy.

Standardized testing perpetuates this trend, grading students through multiple choice “choose the best/right answer” and essay writing (20). Teaching grammar and word usage should be taught as part of reading and writing activities, not as stand-alone units. Learning to read and write helps students make better sentence construction choices (Dean 24). Numerous studies show that grammar is better to address in the editing stage of writing. Students do not benefit from grammar exercises absent of context.

Studies also show that children raised in poverty have language abilities like children diagnosed with specific language impairment. The low-income children score lower than expected for their age and grade, likely because they experienced less vocal input of quality than children from wealthier families. The differences in early childhood seem to represent the link to delayed language abilities (Pruitt and Oetting 2). Testing outlined by Pruitt and Oetting included vocabulary and grammar including the length of utterance, word structure, and complexity of syntax (3), validating the need for quality vocal input in the years before Kindergarten. I frequently encounter language differences in the elementary classes I teach, mainly when I am functioning as a special education teacher tasked with helping low-achievement students with language acquisition skills. Elementary students in lower achievement groups usually consist of children with language issues as non-native English speakers (ELLs), children with specific language impairment, and children raised in poverty. Each student speaks in their own way, dialect, or language, so instruction is most effective when educators can communicate with students in a way that allows for student voice, language, and ability level.

Grammar errors can be helped by writing practice, by reading rich texts, and by instructors helping students learn when and where to use the new grammatical constructions they acquire. Engaging non-native English speakers to use English to the best of their ability in social



interaction, reading, and writing to share ideas will promote student English acquisition more than studying grammar (Weaver, Teaching 27). Since we know that grammar is learned efficiently in the context of reading and writing, we can help by using standard grammar in teaching and the writing we share with our classes.

### Language, Dialects, and Accents

*“A language can be thought of as a collection of dialects that are historically related and similar in vocabulary and structure. Dialects of a single language characterize social groups whose members choose to say they are speakers of the same language. Accents are linguistic markers of region identifying people as belonging to a particular social group, even when that group is as loosely bound together as are most American regional groups.” - Finegan 373.*

It can be difficult for native English speakers to understand people for whom English is not their home or first language due to variations in accent, grammar, or vocabulary. Often, non-standard dialects of English and different accents within regional American English can also play into language discrimination our students may face. According to Linguistics scholar Edward Finegan, dialect refers to a language variety that includes vocabulary, grammar, pronunciation, pragmatics, and any other feature of a linguistic system. Dialect can encompass the characteristics of a particular regional, social, or economic group. Gender-based linguistic research reveals that men and women can also differ from one another in their use of the same language. In linguistics, the term “dialect” refers to the language characteristic of a regional or social group, whereas the term “accent” refers to differences in pronunciation only, such as a “Southern accent,” a “Boston accent,” or a “Baltimore accent” (Finegan 373-374). African American English, for example, is a language variety socially and culturally learned and used. Some of the words and grammars in this dialect are different than in standard English. Thus it is a dialect rather than an accent (Paris 308).

In embracing students’ language differences, Weaver reminds us that many non-

mainstream speakers are often not open to accepting that their language dialect or variety might not be acceptable in all situations. In fact, these non-mainstream speakers may resist teachers and schools seeming to reject their home or peer language and might also reject help in teaching them to code switch to standard English. Some students, primarily English language learners, might be incapable of using the grammatical features in standard English that we wish to teach them (Weaver, Grammar, 145). Knowing these students might not be able to use specific grammatical features in standard English requires teachers to have alternative strategies in mind, perhaps offering them other grammatical constructions or usages.

According to language scholar Dennis Baron, “Language both shapes and reflects reality (Weaver, Lessons, 229). Many people reject or ridicule others because of their differentness in speech. Sometimes my students laugh and ask where I’m from because my pronunciation of random words is not the standard for Baltimore. I’ve always treated this as a learning experience to point out that different people have different accents and use different words, we are not all the same. I tell the students that I see this as a positive thing. The linguistic patterns that differ from place to place can be reframed as enriching and not “other” or grounds for rejection. From African American English (Ebonics) to grammatical or phonological differences like Southern Drawl and Midwest Twang, there are usually more similar elements than different. As long as we can find a way to understand everyone in the classroom, teachers can celebrate and validate the differences without telling any of the students that their speech is “wrong” or sub-par. As teachers validating diversity, we should not ask students to change their speech or to deny the richness of their difference or diversity. People can change, but their significant personalities and inner selves cannot and should not change. Instead, teachers can treat difference as a stable thing that can be used to enhance the way we teach all students about diversity and differences

(Kerschbaum 620). Educators can develop activities that bring out and celebrate differences in custom, culture, and language to celebrate difference and to enhance understanding. Code-switching is one such strategy to enhance understanding while teaching standard English skills.

#### “Code-switching” as Used by Instructors

*“The teachers here check to see if we are following the material. They’ll ask us what they said allowing us to say it in Chinese or they’ll ask us what’s this in English. We can also ask them what some Chinese word is in English or what our English vocabulary word is in Chinese. It’s really helpful. I think it helps me learn and improve my English too. My other school didn’t have bilingual teachers. I got lost and couldn’t follow what they were saying.” - High School transfer student quoted in Fennema-Bloom, 28.*

Two types of “code-switching” appear in the scholarly literature. Instruction by bilingual educators uses the first type of code-switching to increase the English proficiency of students who enter the American educational system from a non-English speaking country. These bilingual teachers switch back and forth from the home language to English as they teach. Unfortunately, having bilingual teachers is not possible if there are not enough bilingual teachers available in the languages needed, or if the policy of the school board insists on total immersion in English for all students, including recent immigrants. A study by Fennema-Bloom noted that in a perfect program, students receiving bilingual programs would receive intensive English as a second language training in English, but the subject content (math, science, social studies and so on) would be taught in the native language to help students keep from falling behind in those classes. As the English level of the students in this type of program increases, the time spent instructing in the subject content classes taught in the native language would decrease until the students could join regular non-ESL classes. This idea seems logical, but the reality is that many students enter schools at varying levels of English proficiency making it challenging to bring them up to the same level at the same time. Also, there are few available bilingual textbooks, so English texts above the students’ English level must be used, defeating the purpose of teaching in

the home language. Finally, many schools place pressure on teachers to improve student English competency with the goal of mainstreaming these students into regular classes and having them participate in standardized tests as quickly as possible (Fennema-Bloom 27).

Sandra DuPlessis also noted that code-switching in peer tutoring netted positive benefits for students who did not comprehend concepts explained in English, and for those students not fluent enough in English to express themselves well when given academic tasks. In her article, peer tutors summarized lectures in the group's first language, and then followed up with group discussion. Students noted that this strategy provided clarity, helping them understand the concepts and allowing them to participate in discussions. Most importantly, students reported that having tutors code-switch to their home language gave them a feeling of being valued (Duplessis 1194). Author James D. Williams reports a drawback to bilingual instruction that there are so many languages spoken by students that it is difficult to find qualified bilingual teachers for less common languages like Korean, Vietnamese, Tagalog and so on. Teachers fluent in French, Italian, or German now find those languages useless in the classroom, while there are far too few teachers who are bilingual in Spanish and English to meet demand in most schools. School classrooms in many areas of the United States today are multilingual, leading to teacher difficulties in designing assignments and evaluating student progress through grading assignments and tests (Williams 222).

Bilingual instruction tends to be criticized in the scholarly literature and is difficult for teachers to implement in practice. Naturally occurring code-switching between students in classrooms nets positive results when most students in that class speak the same home language. Code-switching between students is as effective as monolingual teachers teaching code-switching bilingual students (Fennema-Bloom 28). In my school, a Spanish speaking teacher

helps students learn to code switch from Spanish to English. She pulls Spanish speaking students from regular classes who need extra help to work with them, even inviting bilingual Spanish and English students to come along with their newly immigrated friends. But, few teachers speak any of the many other languages and dialects we encounter from newly immigrated students. African American English is rarely treated as a separate dialect or language system by the “special education” teachers who help children with low ability levels work within smaller groups or one on one. I see the need to teach code-switching to all students, not just those who qualify for ELL status and help. Each student who needs extra help, regardless of home voice should receive it.

Students feeling valued and fully accepted in academic settings can lead to a lessening of violence against teachers. In studies carried out in New York, Espelage found more frequent violence directed toward teachers associated with disorganized school (class) structures, negative school climates, lack of administrative social supports, and with classroom crowding (Espelage 76). This study validates that valuing the diversity of all students can lessen negative school climates, and with it, student violence. Anything teachers or administrators can do to lessen violence against teachers should be undertaken. I see frustration and lack of understanding so endemic in schools, often from minority students. So many of the behaviorally problematic students I encounter, including a few who act out violently against teachers and other students, seem to be set off by their inner frustration when they do not understand the material taught in their class, or when they feel disrespected or devalued.

#### Teaching “Code-switching” to students

*“Though students should be able to write in their own languages, the resolution does not suggest that students not learn Standard English, though it does attempt to correct attitudes toward the mythic superiority of it.”~ Staci M. Perryman-Clark (470) regarding the CCCC resolution.*

In April 1974, the Conference on College Composition and Communication (CCCC)

adopted a document called the “Students’ Right to their Own Language” in which they stated that they supported allowing students to speak and even write in their home language or dialect (CCCC). This document applies to African-American students and any other students speaking or writing the language of their nurture or any other they bring with them into the classroom (Perryman-Clark 469). The CCCC is made up of scholars who function as faculty in university posts, mostly Ph.D. individuals teaching English courses. It is staggering to realize that in the four-plus decades since the release of this position statement, some teachers still insist that students never, write or speak in their home language or dialect in K-12 classroom settings. According to Perryman-Clark, the CCCC council affirmed that composition/writing could confirm the student’s right to their own language, teach standard English, and help demonstrate that all student languages and cultures are relevant. Studies show that allowing students to use their home language or dialect does not keep them from learning standard English, rather studies have demonstrated that the students using their own language have an easier time learning Standard English if they have parallels for their own language to equate with it (Perryman-Clark 470). Research studies consistently prove that home or native language fluency is key to language and literacy learning, and also promotes general learning (CCCC, “Understanding” 5).

Awareness of parallels in standard English to students’ own language is a fundamental tenet of code-switching. Switching back and forth between languages, dialects, or styles requires changing depending on the audience. For example, if a Spanish speaking person knows and uses the word for “cat” in Spanish (Gato), he learns the English word (cat) and then s/he can switch back and forth between them depending on circumstance. At home s/he can speak the Spanish word and when speaking to an English only speaker, s/he can speak the English word. Scholar Dean says that all children learn code-switching at an early age. Code-switching is very simply

the adjustment of their language for appropriateness in different genres or situations. Students speak with their friends on the playground differently than they talk with their grandmother, teacher, or parents. They instinctively know what code-switching entails, though they often have never heard the term (Dean 23). As teachers, we code-switch between our home “speech” and the way we speak in the classroom. Code-switching is very common even if people are not aware they do it.

Sadly, despite instructional efforts to help students, teaching code-switching can cause students who speak a non-standard English dialect or those who use just a few non-standard features (words like “ain’t”) to push back against the idea that their language variety or usage is not acceptable in all life situations. They can resent teachers requiring that their home or peer language change for school or other purposes. They sometimes view the school’s rejection of their language as oppression, and some students can dig in and fight attempts to help them code-switch to standard features. Weaver suggests teaching code-switching as part of editing to help minimize the perceived threatening nature of change and help diminish those students’ resistance to it. Everyone needs to edit, and every student will likely have items that need help in his or her writing (Weaver 145). Another of Weaver’s suggested techniques is to relate code-switching to changing our clothing depending on where we are going and what we are going to do. Just as we would wear appropriate clothing for a fancy event or solemn occasion, we change our language for appropriateness depending on the audience we speak or write to address (148). I hear teachers correcting student speech regularly, so I explain to the students why their regular teachers want them to learn standard English. Paris admonishes teachers not to correct student speech.

Paris argues that educators should allow students to speak their own languages in school as their languages enrich everyone. Further, he admonishes us not to correct incorrect speech,

saying that we should teach them standard English in the context of their own languages when they write. This strategy parallels teaching code-shifting as appropriate for formal purposes like writing and minimizes cultural and racial tensions in the school (Paris 321). John W. White counters peer opinions of those who want students to “leave their cultural hats” at the classroom door, using only proper English for speaking and writing. His strategy is to teach conventions of standard English through code-switching while acknowledging and celebrating the unique and effective forms of discourse students bring with them to class. He argues that using home language elements as a basis for code-switching can better induce students to add standard English to their existing language abilities (44). Mr. Ramsey, a middle school teacher described by author Flynn, presents code-switching and learning standard English as a way to give students access to opportunity without deeming standard English more correct or student home language as “wrong.” He teaches standard English as the “language of power” that allows students to succeed, not because he wants to assimilate or indoctrinate them, but so they understand what is expected of them in their later lives (Flynn 28). This outlook is fundamental to allowing students their voice while teaching them standard English usage that will help them in academia, business, or life.

In teaching our students to code-switch, we also help them see literacy and language as real tools that people outside school use to change the world, create discourse, and question things they see as injustices. Heather Bruce suggests teaching literacy as a social practice to allow our students to think, question, and to envision their writing as active rather than passive. Bruce, like Weaver, sees revision as a way to reframe, reform, and restructure writing to make it effective for the intended purpose. She also envisions revision as transformational as it can teach students to rethink, explore alternatives, and look at familiar things in different ways (32-33).



Bruce suggests teaching revision not just as a series of ways to help students struggling with language, but to work with code-switching to write standard English when appropriate but to envision using their full language potential appropriately for their intended audience.

#### Code-switching and Code-meshing

*“When used by scholars, code meshing is a social practice which intentionally integrates local and academic discourse in order to index specific discursive, ideological and rhetorical stances of the interlocutor. Code meshing both accommodates the merging of discourses that other scholars have previously discussed, and advances the consideration of lexical, rhetorical, and structural hybridity previously unexamined.”*  
*Canagarajah, 2006; and Bhatt, 2005, as quoted in Michael-Luna and Canagarajah, 57.*

Code-switching, both for monolingual teachers instructing students on how to code-switch themselves, and bilingual instructors code-switching while teaching, is a term that refers to specific rules that describe when, why, and for what circumstances each language is best used. Whether we teach students to code-switch for “formal” rather than “informal” events, such as school and home, or for writing a formal application letter to college rather than an informal Facebook post, moving in and out of home language and English is considered by scholars to be separate from actual language use.

Scholars use the term “code-meshing” to describe context that cannot be separated through switching between home language and English. Code-meshing is more integrated than code-switching, as code-switching refers to switching back and forth between separate discourse (language) styles. Code-meshing focuses on retaining bilingualism, while code-switching focuses on balancing between English as primary and the students’ home language as secondary. In both systems, the norms of both languages are respected and maintained (Michael-Luna, and Canagarajah 58). Because I am monolingual and work primarily with young students, I focused my research on code-switching as a workable strategy to help non-home English speakers. Code-switching is a strategy with proven efficacy. I felt it necessary to educate readers to differentiate

between the two systems, though in many ways they are similar to each other. However, code-meshing or code-switching are not the only methods to help teach standard English.

### Teaching Literature to Enhance Standard English

*“For our students to view themselves as readers and writers, we must first immerse them in a literacy-rich environment connected to what we are learning. Writing does not occur in isolation; it involves careful layering of independent, whole-class, and small-group reading, writing, and reflecting.”-Short-Harste, and Burke, 1996, as quoted in Weaver, Grammar, 267*

Author Geneva Gay notes that teachers must learn how to recognize, honor, and incorporate the personal abilities of students into our teaching strategies. Gay explains that teachers should emphasize developing talent potential in underachieving students, especially those of color (1). Language and dialect are tied to our sense of identity as human beings. Teachers must respect and demonstrate that respect for other language varieties to their students. An excellent strategy to aid demonstrating respect for linguistic diversity is to share literature that reflects other varieties besides just standard English (Weaver, Grammar. 146). Literacy instruction helps students create an environment promoting critical thinking in which they increase their abilities to comprehend, interpret, and produce texts of their own. Literature study promotes understanding through an examination of diverse characters, language, and through examining stories of inclusiveness and discrimination against other people.

Laurel Taylor believes that using nonfiction texts to mentor students learning to write is very efficient, as nonfiction is just as much fun and exciting to read and teach as novels, short stories, poetry or drama. The reality in these stories helps students identify with and care about characters in the text because they existed, and using these nonfiction stories as mentor texts helps students see what well written (and often standard English) texts look like. Non-fiction texts can also help promote diversity by bringing out injustices in society. These acts can help

students write powerful and compelling sentences and essays based on styles they have encountered through studying these authors and texts (Taylor 49-50).

Studies of second language acquisition reveal that immersion in oral and written language where students will listen, speak, read, and write to understand and be understood is most effective, even if grammatical structure and rules of the second language have been taught beforehand (Weaver, Teaching, 48). Weaver's study of research data and theories also noted that the student should be open to learning from the input, and the input must be rich enough to provide the learner data to learn patterns and rules of the second language (Weaver, Teaching, 49). Thus, age and ability level appropriate literary works to read and discuss act to enhance learning standard English for all students, not just those from an ELL background. Further, grammar is best learned through reading quality textual material and through students writing and editing their own works. Teaching isolated formal grammar, even to highly motivated students in advanced classes, makes no appreciable difference in their ability to write, edit, or to score higher on standardized tests (Weaver, Teaching 26). Therefore, it is imperative that English educators expose our students to literary texts, and that students write as much as possible by modeling what they read in these texts to help formulate their sentence construction and grammatical style. Additionally, teachers must help students understand the improvements they can and should make during the editing of their written drafts.

Finding rich texts is essential to teaching standard English, and to diversity in our classrooms. Since textbooks tend to confirm European American status, culture, and contributions while excluding many racial minorities and social classes, we must find texts that focus on interpretation and critical analysis of events like racial, ethnic, gender, and class discrimination to share with our students. We must educate students to think independently.

Sadly, children tend to lose their passion for thinking when they begin to see efforts to educate them are focused solely on conformity and obedience. Critical thinking means being open to new evidence that challenges ideas and helps students see both sides of issues. Critical thinking asks who, what, when, where, and how, and helps students use knowledge to determine what is important (Hooks 8). Only by teaching texts that honor all minorities, we can help open student minds to see each other as equals, not as “other” and to honor all language varieties.

We must, however, understand that we as teachers might not be able to entirely change student beliefs and values about diversity and language, particularly if they do not want to change. We can push students to see differences between their own experiences and those of other cultures, but students will often push back and resist our best efforts. Sometimes students do not understand institutional or systemic racism, or sometimes they resist because we tell them different things than what their family or cultural groups tell them. Studies show that significant changes in student beliefs and attitudes are rare and occur only over many years’ time. Still, as educators, we should continue to teach to help students read, discuss, and write about multicultural literature, particularly those works that show systemic oppression related to race and social class (Thein 54). Reading works that do not conform to student beliefs often produce tension, and this tension is what opens students up to understanding what the textual character’s beliefs, actions, and choices are. Occasionally this tension leads students to question their own beliefs (Thein 58). As hard as it might be to challenge students to accept and embrace diversity through teaching works with diverse characters, situations, and authors, it benefits all students to do so. Change might not occur because of one book, one experience, or even one year of culturally compassionate teaching, yet I am still going to give students my heart and soul trying.

In Conclusion

Geneva Gay reminds educators that promoting cultural, communal, and political thought among different ethnic and cultural groups helps address racism and the unequal distribution of power and privilege in society. It is in the best interest of our students if we teach ethnic, racial, and cultural knowledge, identity, and pride as we teach language arts. Teaching pride along with other knowledge and identity can promote student self-confidence and higher performance in our classes, and in student lives. We, as professionals, can best help the diverse students we instruct by being warm, demanding high-quality academic performance, and by caring for our students through simple actions like smiles and establishing a feeling of community, sharing, and closeness in our classrooms. (Gay 55).

As a frequent ELA teacher substitute, I follow the primary teacher's teaching style and lesson plans, even though I can add to the lessons where appropriate. I can, and do, teach some code-switching, and I spend one-on-one time with students who need extra help with ELA activities while the class is engaged in writing, reading, or instructional exercises. Sometimes students do not understand instructions for worksheets or other writing, and I am usually able to explain the activity in a way that is appropriate to their cognitive level. I feel that I make a difference in the learning experience for all students, especially minority students, by embracing everyone's cultural and linguistic differences. The students, in turn, respond to me warmly and openly as they gain understanding and validation. I hope to be taking over a classroom for 6-8 weeks during maternity leaves so I might have more opportunity to engage with a class while being with them consistently for a longer period than usual. I am no longer puzzled about how to teach standard English to students of varied backgrounds since I have learned about the most common errors and several strategies to teach to further their standard English skills. I now feel that I can teach English in a culturally compassionate way, stressing code-switching and literary

works and promoting student writing and editing.

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