

Summer 8-3-2018

## Final MA Portfolio

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FINAL MASTER'S 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

1 August 2018

Professor Kimberly Coates, First Reader  
Kimberly Spallinger, Second Reader

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## Narrative

Zora Neale Hurston famously wrote, “There are years that ask questions and years that answer” (21). The previous twelve months, as a graduate student at Bowling Green State University, encapsulate an answering year. Pursuing a master’s degree is a tumultuous and electrifying experience. Only days away from graduation, I present my single largest writing project to date. Creating a master’s portfolio summarizing my education at Bowling Green State University is an academic achievement. Selecting the four projects before you could have presented a challenge, however, the selection process was rather seamless. Instantly, I knew which four projects to include within this portfolio that best represent my work as a graduate student. The revision process is another story altogether, but more on that aspect later.

I began academia at a local community college approximately twelve years ago this month. Life presented a few unexpected challenges, as life does, which delayed my academic progress. I eventually graduated with my undergraduate degree in May of 2017 only to quickly begin Bowling Green’s graduate program the following August. Deciding to obtain a master’s degree was a relatively simple decision based on my desired career path – college English instructor; a master’s in English is a required component for a career as an English instructor. However, I was unprepared for the level of self-transformation that would transpire because of Bowling Green State Universities master’s English program. I already held a bachelor’s degree in English Writing, *what more could I learn* I naively thought.

The master's portfolio revision process is the single most profound aspect of my education in becoming an instructor. As students, we write papers assuming “this is our best work.” I was unprepared for the copious amounts of learning about to transpire. To begin the revision process, my first reader recommended two texts, *They Say/I Say: The Moves That*

*Matter in Academic Writing* by Cathy Birkenstein and Gerald Graff, and *Style: Toward Clarity and Grace* by Gregory G. Colomb and Joseph M. Williams. Both texts should be required reading before beginning a masters in English, or any graduate degree for that matter. I will forever be grateful for having read these texts as they have singlehandedly transfixed my writing style.

Over the course of revising my portfolio, I learned I had a rather terrible habit of writing in past-tense, a fondness for fragmented sentences, and a propensity for odd syntax. Praise should rain down on my first reader who graciously endured multiple portfolio revisions (Thank you, Dr. Coates!). Because of the revision process, I have a solid understanding of MLA rules and regulations, proper formatting techniques, and fluid paragraph transitions; in addition, a keen eye for attention to detail. Applying revisions to my selected projects was a work of love and dedication to the process of writing. These four projects best represent my desire to become a college English composition & literature instructor. Each project captures ideologies and philosophies I bring with me into the classroom. I relish a syllabus inundated with inclusive, reflective authorship, therefore, each project explores expanding the canon to include female authors and multicultural authors.

My love of inclusive authorship ignited in the fall of 2017 after reading Zora Neale Hurston's "What White Publishers Won't Print." Because of Hurston, I began researching canon inclusion only to discover a wealth of controversy and misrepresentation. Despite this, my first project, a research paper for ENG 6070 "Appealing for Normalization: Race and Inclusion in Publishing," emerged from a desire for inclusivity in the literary canon. Discovering Zora Neale Hurston is the literary equivalent of finding a pencil in a heap of pens. Her essay, "What White

Publishers Won't Print," and novel, *Their Eyes Were Watching God*, have left a significant impact on me.

Until fall 2017, most of my academic literature experience circumnavigated male canonical authors. Finding Hurston was akin to finding a piece of me; Hurston refused to fit into preconceived expectations much like myself. Her writings include her own personal experiences combined with a call to action: Hurston asks readers to see African-Americans as individuals. Her novel *Their Eyes Were Watching God* further motivated me to explore multicultural authors out of respect for not only Hurston but all the authors who are neglected canonically. "Appealing for Normalization: Race and Inclusion in Publishing" includes Roland Barthes's theory of author relevance which I struggled to thoroughly understand in the first project draft. Through diligence and research (and far too many YouTube videos), I was finally able to successfully revise this project to accurately apply Barthes's theory to the work of Zora Neale Hurston.

I may not have been introduced to Hurston if it was not for my fall 2017 ENG Professor's syllabus. Her decision to include Hurston forever changed my approach to English. For instance, my second portfolio project, created for ENG 6020 "Reflection: Personal Components of Syllabus Creation," details my personal journey from student to instructor through the conception of my first composition syllabus. Drafting a composition syllabus is a crucial component of English teaching. Our students seek our guidance through their academic journey. Because of this enormous responsibility, I place heavy emphasis on my syllabus representing not only who I am, but also who I hope my students become by taking one of my courses. As most of us know, writing is a process. We may write draft after draft after draft only to revise and start anew. It is imperative composition students learn the process of writing through the act of revisions because writing is never finished. In my classroom, rough drafts are a requirement.

Much like writing is a process, understanding literature is a process. My third project, a critical response paper for ENG 6090 “Literature: An Exploration of Humanity and Compassion,” is written as a hypothetical email to a student seeking clarification regarding the study of literature. I, too, once struggled with the concept of studying literature until I realized the numerous ways in which literature not only expands our horizons but also makes us better people as we explore other cultures and experiences. “Literature: An Exploration of Humanity and Compassion” includes a complete syllabus for an Introduction to Literature course. My motivation for teaching inclusivity is exemplified throughout this syllabus. I chose new and exciting authors who may (or may not) be unknown to students in the hopes I broaden their horizons. Also included in my LIT syllabus is a poetry module on rap. Rap is a fundamental component of poetry that students typically encounter daily. Bringing reflective literature into the classroom is not only validating for students but it also encourages student participation. The syllabi contained in this portfolio lean heavily on inclusive authors, multicultural authors, and female authors. Male canonical authors are also included, yet, they are not the sole focus. I would rather introduce my students to new and exciting literature in the hopes of expanding their worldview than continue the tradition of exclusionary course material. My third project is a critical component because it details the cumulative transformation from student to an instructor via the creation of my first set of syllabi. The inclusion of syllabi in my portfolio is vital due to my career path as it signals a tangible piece of work at the end of my academic path.

The final project for my MA portfolio stems from a Women Studies 6200 course I took as an elective. I chose to include the seminar paper, “Inclusion: Revising Canonical Authors and Classroom Literature,” as my fourth and final project to emphasize the need for an updated canon. Students (especially female students and students of color) relish an opportunity to read

literature reflecting their lives and experiences. Our outdated canon primarily composed of dead European white males demands change. Specifically, I continue to seek new multicultural authors and female authors to explore and analyze not only for myself but for my future students. If my students are walking away from my course with a newfound love for multicultural authors, then I have succeeded somewhere along the way. My passion for inclusion is, hopefully, infectious.

I am grateful for the education afforded me at Bowling Green State University. As I sit here assembling my master's portfolio I am proud to call myself a soon-to-be graduate of Bowling Green. The master's program, especially the portfolio project, has instilled in me a life-long passion for sharing my knowledge with others and, hopefully, encouraging future students to seek new paths of their own. Thankfully, literature will be there to guide us all.

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Professor Labbie

ENG 6070

Fall 2017

### Appealing for Normalization: Race and Inclusion in Publishing

At first glance, the title of Zora Neale Hurston's 1950 essay, "What White Publishers Won't Print," may give some readers pause. We might assume Hurston's essay argues against racist white publishers. On the contrary, Hurston's argument in "What White Publishers Won't Print" focuses on publishers' inability to print literature that which does not fulfill a traditional socioeconomic system of African-Americans. Demolishing this system is necessary to expand African-American authorship. Hurston's essay, "What White Publishers Won't Print," directly relates to inclusivity challenges in authorship and publishing in America. Hurston's essay points blame at identity and authorship. She is not arguing exclusively about bigotry per se, but rather what Hurston is calling for is a change in publishing as it compares to identity and capitalism. This essay analyzes race and ethnic studies specifically through exploration of Hurston's essay, "What White Publishers Won't Print," and how it relates to publishing, normalization, and inclusion in the literary world. Additional analysis in relation to Hurston's work incorporates the literature of Roland Barthes, author of the essay, "The Death of the Author," and poetry by Langston Hughes. Lastly, we will discuss Pulitzer Prize-winning author, Alice Walker, who is credited for a revival in Hurston's work after discovering Hurston's unmarked grave in 1973.

Superficial exploration of Harlem Renaissance author Zora Neale Hurston's (b. 1891) work can be misleading. As mentioned above, the title of "What White Publishers Won't Print"

could confuse some readers. We could make the mistake of assuming Hurston is blaming publishers for this indifference. Regardless of how we the readers interpret Hurston's essay her agenda is to awaken an audience from the longstanding socioeconomic system of African-Americans. She even admits to surprise "by the Anglo-Saxon's lack of curiosity about the internal lives and emotions of the Negroes" (Hurston 1). Hurston is basically arguing that Anglo-Saxons generally lack any interest in literature pertaining to the day-to-day lives of African-Americans, their emotional and romantic connections. A lack of interest in African-American literature, as Hurston describes, equates to a "lack of literature about the higher emotions and love life of upper-class Negroes and the minorities in general" (Hurston 1).

Hurston's essay implies that a leading factor of disinterest in African-American literature stems from racism. Furthermore, Hurston claims most white readers are skewed in their vision of African-Americans. Instead of perceiving African-Americans as equal, many Anglo-Saxon views are trapped in the history of slavery. Even a "college-bred Negro still is not a person like other folks," protests Hurston (1). Hurston admits these limiting perceptions are rooted in "slavery times," and America has "come a long, long way [since] then" (Hurston 1).

Such limiting perceptions directly influence supply and demand of reflective African-American literature. Hurston is right that fault does not lie entirely in the laps of publishers for they are "cool to the idea" of moving away from hackneyed visions stifling African-American writers (2). Publishers, for the most part, answer to audience demand. Supply and demand is an age-old economic battle cry. Where there is supply there is, subsequently, a hefty demand and vice versa. It is unfair to lay fault exclusively in the laps of publishers. Publishers are only fifty-percent responsible, the remaining responsibility lies at the feet of the public masses.

Change must arise from “average Americans” who are unwilling to view African-Americans as anything other than the engrained vision in their minds (Hurston 2). These average Americans must wipe their minds clear of all preconceived beliefs and start afresh. Hurston’s call to action involves an opening of the mind – a clean start – by removing “indifference, not to say skepticism, to the internal life of educated minorities” (2). She’s asking readers to view someone not only in a historical context but also as unique individuals. Hurston’s essay begs the reader to see beyond “typical” by respecting minorities not only in the shadow of the past but for the very essence of who they are today; for someone is not only their past but also their present.

Hurston’s plea to readers to push aside preconceived perceptions ties in with literary theorist Roland Barthes’s theory about authorship from his essay, “The Death of the Author,” published in 1967. When it comes to the topic of authorship, most of us would argue that an author has complete control over what readers ascertain from a writer’s work. While this may be true, author control typically ends when we apply Roland Barthes’s theory. According to Barthes, “the absence of the author” essentially “transforms the modern text” at the hands of the reader (Barthes 3). Basically, Barthes’s theory implies authors essentially lose the ability to control audience interpretation.

Barthes’s argues that an author “pre-exists it, thinks, suffers, lives for” their writing (3). This suffering is something akin to “antecedence a father maintains with his child” (3). A relationship is formed between the author and paper, sacrifices made. As the author commits themselves to paper a part of their relevance dies according to Barthes. Ultimately, the authors intent/meaning is irrelevant to the reader which is highly challenging for multicultural authors as it assumes that identity markers such as race are irrelevant to an author’s work.

Barthes's theory of an author's irrelevant intent/meaning begs the question: Is Hurston's race irrelevant? I find this theory challenging to grasp when coupled with Hurston's work. Her powerful authoritative voice is difficult to ignore because her words figuratively reverberate off the page. To consider Hurston's race irrelevant pulls at every moral fiber of my being. For how can her race not be relevant? Hurston's work is as powerful now as it was when she penned the words in 1950. Practically every sentence from "What White Publishers Won't Print" reflects Hurston's race, relevance, and inclusivity. An audience who dismisses Hurston's race commits a moral crime against literature.

Relevance and inclusivity are equally applicable to Hurston's friend Harlem Renaissance author Langston Hughes. Before his death in 1967, Hughes played a pivotal role in the African-American literary community. Hughes, an African-American poet, author, and playwright, won numerous writing awards at the same time Hurston was leaving her mark on the literary community. Hughes and Hurston became great friends who would regularly hang-out at Hurston's downtown apartment. On several occasions, Hughes and Hurston collaborated artistically. Hughes poem, "The Weary Blues," eloquently captures his authentic, relevant African-American voice:

To the tune o' those Weary Blues.

With his ebony hands on each ivory key

He made that poor piano moan with melody.

O Blues!

Swaying to and fro on his rickety stool

He played that sad raggy tune like a musical fool.

Sweet Blues!

Coming from a black man's soul.

O Blues! (Hughes)

Hurston and Hughes were breaking into the literature scene simultaneously with Harlem Renaissance author Jean Toomer. Born African-American, Toomer is most famous for his novel, *Cane*, which was published in 1923, just fourteen years prior to Hurston publishing her acclaimed novel, *Their Eyes Were Watching God*. Toomer's writings received "extensive praise," routinely acclaimed as a literary "avant-garde" and as "the most important Black poet" before publishers began rejecting his work based on Toomer's denial of racial identity ("Jean Toomer").

Contrary to Hurston and Hughes, who authentically represented their culture and presentation of self, Toomer's inauthenticity would impact his literary career. Toomer "did everything he could to distance himself from the work that linked him to African-Americans, a work where he was and would be identified as a Negro or a black writer, he would have been very disturbed. And there is something rather sad and tragic about that choice" (Byrd). Toomer, a light-skinned African-American man, chose to live as a "white" man to prevent racial prejudices. When we apply Hurston's audience appeal to break down typecasts in "What White Publishers Won't Print," Toomer's decision to publish his work as a white man contradicts the very essence of Hurston's agenda who wanted African-Americans to take pride in their ethnicity. By distancing himself from his heritage, Toomer's death as an author is uncanny.

While many may agree with Barthes theory that an author's intent/meaning is virtually irrelevant once placed in the hands of the reader, Hurston's acclaimed novel, *Their Eyes Were Watching God*, implores us to question Barthes theory. Henry Louis Gates, Jr., author of the afterword in *Their Eyes Were Watching God*, declares:

Language, in these passages, is not merely "adornment," as Hurston described a key black linguistic practice; rather, manner and meaning are perfectly in tune: she says the thing in the most meaningful manner. Nor is she being "cute," or pandering to a condescending white readership. She is "naming" emotions, as she says, in a language both deeply personal and culturally specific. (Hurston 204

Henry Louis Gates, Jr.'s argument is directly applicable to Barthes theory of relevance. Hurston's implication cannot be irrelevant for she has specifically named feelings that are "both deeply personal and culturally specific" (Hurston 204). If a reader is thinking and feeling Hurston's work, then Hurston has, for all accounts and purposes, successfully transposed intent onto her readers.

Published nearly a century ago, *Their Eyes Were Watching God* catapulted Hurston's already tumultuous literature career into limbo. She regularly "bucked the system" by including authentic linguistic practice in most of her work. Hurston's refusal to comply with society's expectation of African-American literature notes a dramatic decline in her readership and, ultimately, her literary career. Rather than write marketable literature, Hurston chose to accurately and authentically represent the African-American culture until the time of her death in 1960.

We can attribute the recent revival in Hurston's work to African-American author Alice Walker who discovered Hurston's unmarked grave almost thirteen years after Hurston died from a stroke in 1960. A Pulitzer Prize-winning author who wrote the 1973 essay, "Looking for Zora," Walker describes her search for Hurston's grave "in a segregated cemetery in Fort Pierce, Florida," as a place symbolic "of the black writer's fate in America"; not only-but also, long forgotten and discarded by America (Walker). The irony of Hurston buried in a segregated cemetery with three-foot-high weeds, almost forgotten as a literary genius, directly references, à la Hurston, the readers lack of interest in African-American writers. Upon discovery of Hurston's unmarked grave in 1973, after hiking through "snake-infested land" no less, Walker had a tombstone erected with an inscription reading "Zora Neale Hurston: A Genius of the South" (Walker). (We should note Hurston was buried in an unmarked grave because of familial discontent and, Hurston's family refused to pay for a headstone, nor did they even attend her funeral (Walker).)

Walker's admiration for Hurston is apparent; she describes Hurston as "one of the most significant unread authors in America" (Walker). Significant because Hurston's powerful literary canon could have struck an end to the civil rights unrest still plaguing America. Much of her work centers on African-Americans remaining true to their cultural heritage, therefore, distancing themselves from a patriarchal society. Hurston, whose parents were both former slaves, did not use the word "racism" in her writings which could be misconstrued as support for whites when, in all actuality, Hurston lobbied for the respect of black culture during the Harlem Renaissance.

The Harlem Renaissance, born out of the 1920's, was an extraordinary "explosion of literature, music and other artistic forms created and inspired by African-Americans" resulting in

a “dramatic influx of Southern blacks into Northern cities” (“Harlem Renaissance Blossoming”). Such an influx was not without conflict. The Harlem Renaissance raised a troubling issue: “How could one be both black and American without sacrificing either aspect of one's identity [and] maintain one's racial heritage while integrating into mainstream society?” (“Harlem Renaissance Blossoming”). A national discussion began to unfold regarding African-American awareness (“Harlem Renaissance Blossoming”). Through their literary contributions, authors such as Hurston, Hughes, and Toomer brought attention to the rights of African-Americans. Nearly one hundred years later, America still finds itself discussing African-American inclusivity and awareness. Hurston’s pleas to toss aside African-American socioeconomic systems have fallen on mostly deaf ears as America finds itself staring into the face of a repressive administration who is disparaging minority communities at every opportunity.

The current presidential administration’s discourse directed towards the African-American community appears to be misrepresented and confusing. Rather than appealing to African-Americans directly the administration speaks to white Americans in the hopes to gain their support by appearing inclusive. This false representation by “talking to white people about black people so they will think [the government] cares about black people” further divides a country already divided (Fausset, et al.). If Hurston were alive today, she would probably find the administrations propensity for using false stereotypes of African-Americans horrific and deplorable. Inclusivity struggles to progress amongst an administration depicting “an inaccurate portrayal of the community that seeks to define the community by only its biggest challenges” (Fausset, et al.).

In 1950, Hurston’s “What White Publishers Won’t Print” appealed to readers to put an end to preconceived notions about African-Americans, yet, here we are sixty-eight years later

asking Americans to respect black America who “has a large community of striving, successful, hard-working people: college educated, in the workforce” (Fausset, et al.). In Hurston’s own words, “it is urgent to realize that minorities do think and think about something other than the race problem” (Hurston 3). The current administration “is giving voice to every stereotype [white people have] ever heard...about black people” instead of promoting normalization and inclusivity (Fausset, et al., 2016).

The role of inclusivity and preconceived notions play a significant role in the publishing world. However, is it an author’s responsibility to encourage inclusivity and normalization? NPR author Jean Ho discusses this specific question in her article, “Diversity In Book Publishing Isn’t Just About Writers — Marketing Matters, Too.” Throughout her article, Ho challenges the reader to ponder whether multicultural authors “hold the key to solving the industry’s historic and systemic whiteness” (Ho). I agree with Ho who argues, “I think it’s an undue burden for the writer of color that’s just trying to get people to care about their book...to then also be the one to have the answers.” According to Ho’s article, a recent 2015 study by independent publisher Lee & Low Books, “launched the first major study of staff diversity in publishing.” The results are staggering. Among the forty or so publishers who participated in the study, “nearly 80 percent...identified as white” (Ho). What’s more, this lack of inclusivity in publishing begs the question Hurston implies – is diversity in publishing an author or audience issue? This notion that an author of color is responsible for solving our countries racism issue is a problem. Liken it to asking a rape victim how to stop rape from happening. Shocking, when put in that perspective, is it not? The victim is not responsible for eliciting change; nor should an author be held responsible for socioeconomic systems and patriarchal strongholds.

We can argue that a lack of systemic inclusivity and normalization in the publishing community is an author issue, however, diverse artists have influenced the literary and art world for centuries. To hold multicultural authors accountable for a lack of inclusion is unfair. Only recently, precisely within the past couple of years, we have seen a revitalization of the multicultural author. Conversely, people of color have been influencing and leading the literature world long before the recent movement began. Contrary to what we may believe, the fresh cultural movement, while essential, points to a broader issue - normalization. The only recent difference, according to publicist Kima Jones, is “now that we're in a time in the history of publishing where we're starting to get more representation and pay for our work, getting the awards for our work, getting recognized” (Ho). But Hurston’s words still echo loud and clear:

Argue all you will or may about injustice, but as long as the majority cannot conceive of a Negro or a Jew feeling and reacting inside just as they do, the majority will keep right on believing that people who do not look like them cannot possibly feel as they do.

(Hurston 4)

How do we change reader injustice? One option is to expand audience appeal by listening to reader demands for reflective literature. Ho describes a recent situation involving a graphic novel written by G. Neri “based on the true story of a young boy in a Chicago gang.” Publishing house Lee & Low, while working with juvenile detention center librarians who sought a book reflecting “the realities of their students” (Ho), discovered the graphic novel. Through the assistance of the librarians, Lee & Low discovered a niche market – books reflecting a students’ reality. Reflective literature introduces “readers to a new voice that's not like any other voice that's out there right now" (Ho). A systemic lack of normalization and reflection in the publishing world is a violation of artists such as Hurston:

Literature and other arts are supposed to hold up the mirror to nature. With only the fractional “exceptional” and the “quaint” portrayed, a true picture of Negro life in America cannot be. A great principle of national art has been violated.” (Hurstun 4)

Over eighty years ago, “What White Publishers Won’t Print” asked readers to see African-Americans as individuals. Alice Walker’s discovery of Zora Neale Hurston’s grave has individualized Hurston as a literary genius and solidified her place in the canon. The recent revitalization in Hurston’s work is especially exciting as her novels and essays are enjoyed across the nation, in schools, and by the public. Readers are hard-pressed to ignore Hurston’s racial relevance when reading *Their Eyes Were Watching God*. We cannot help but imagine Hurston’s voice reading the words aloud, for an author is no more present than Hurston is in her writings. Her intent is strong and clear to the reader. An audience who maintains the breath and beat of Hurston’s soul while exploring her essay does not lose vision of the author. Hurston’s relevant presence reflects her plea for an end to a socioeconomic system. Her application of race, normalization, and inclusivity lend themselves towards an awakening from the longstanding notions afflicted upon the African-American community. The responsibility to uphold this awakening ultimately lies within all of us. As members of the audience, we must expand our vision beyond the traditional white author – “Let there be light!” (Hurstun 4).

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Jennifer Northrip

Professor Jordan

ENG 6020

Spring 2018

### Reflection: Personal Components of Syllabus Creation

Ten courses, plus a capstone project, encompass a Master of Arts in English with a Specialization in English Teaching at Bowling Green State University (BGSU). Each of the ten courses reflect critical teaching components for current/future instructors. Two required courses, ENG 6020: Composition Instructor Workshop and ENG 6200: Teaching Writing present several personal challenges from the start. Both courses are grounded in fundamental elements of teaching composition: writing a syllabus and drafting a teaching unit. Lacking prior certified teaching experience coupled with apprehension to create a teaching document and we have one soon-to-be instructor with a hesitancy issue.

Learning how to draft a syllabus is the single most significant teaching process I wish I knew at the start of my graduate program. My classmates, most of whom are already teaching, approach syllabi creation with the utmost ease. Up until January 2018, the idea of writing a syllabus was both thrilling and terrifying. Thrilling because writing a syllabus implies I am on the path to teaching, and terrifying because I lack prior syllabus experience. A syllabus is a contract between student and instructor. An informative document detailing a student's academic expectations and course goals. Like most educators, I view a syllabus as a reflection of myself. Creating an enthralling, progressive syllabus for my future students is an important component of the teaching process.

The transition from thinking about creating a syllabus to writing an entire composition unit encompass fourteen weeks or one entire college course. ENG 6020: Composition Instructor Workshop includes a series of discussion boards for students to interact amongst one another throughout the course. What began as an intimidating process, writing a syllabus and assignment unit, become second nature at the close of those fourteen weeks. I present a reflection of how I transition from a graduate student into an instructor through ENG 6020 course discussions and a subsequent syllabus creation.

Let us begin with Week One discussion, where my confidence is obviously an issue, “To be honest, I struggled last semester (my first at BGSU) with my non-teacher status.” Of the fifteen or so students in the course, only I and one other student do not have formal teaching experience. But, I do not let this fact deter me. I quickly roll into Week Two with quips and phrases from one of our video assignments, *Take20*, a film about the teaching of writing:

Royster’s advice to “make students feel about learning the same way my favorite teachers made me feel” is sticking with me. Bizzell’s comment that teaching composition is important for students to “succeed in other college classes” felt empowering because that is a goal of mine (to teach students so they will succeed in college & career). Reynolds comment that he teaches because “it’s changing, it’s exciting,” is encouraging. One attraction to teaching English/Composition/Literature is the constant need to stay current. Rose's comments about reading aloud impacted me too. One of my undergraduate instructors recommended reading papers aloud. At first, it felt a little silly, but now I find myself reading papers aloud without realizing I am doing it. I've found this to be especially helpful when I am stuck on a word/thought.

Reading over my Week One and Two discussion comments, I am struck with how directly these personal conclusions impact my syllabus. I want my students to feel the same way my favorite teachers made me feel. I also want my students to succeed in academia. I chose validation as a course theme to emphasize student voices, whether spoken or written, are important and valuable. Week Two comments about staying current in research is another reflection of my syllabus. Selfishly, through student discussions & assignments, I continue to learn, too. Lastly, Week Two teaches me to pass along the tip of reading papers aloud to my students. Many of my classmates are already working with students, therefore, they bring experience and knowledge to our discussions from which I can readily apply to my own future students.

Moving into Weeks Three and Four is when I start to really hone in on my syllabus approach: the how's and when's to teach students processes and concepts. I also gain a better understanding of the importance of peer work, also known as the *dreaded* group project. Looking back on my own discussion comments:

Undergraduate courses, in fact, included a large group project that applied several strategies from our text: Our instructor delayed our writing project till mid-semester even though he discussed the project on day one; The assignment, again like our text, was specifically designed for a group; One of our pre-project discussion boards discussed group work pros & cons. Many of us found this resource helpful because we openly discussed our fears regarding group work (group members not participating, one person completing all the work, etc.).

Through discussions with classmates I begin to shift towards implementing group work for my students. But, as noted in my discussion post, it is imperative students discuss proper

approaches to working in a group before beginning projects. My future students will be required to familiarize themselves with group members to help facilitate project management and create strong working relationships.

Along with group projects, my syllabus includes multiple quizzes. Weeks Four and Eight conceptualize the idea for 1000 and 500-word quizzes sprouted, “I understand freewriting exercises as ten minutes (or less/more) of assigned writing, any topic, where students write freely without editing. Just getting thoughts on paper.” My theory on writing quizzes is for students to free write based on a one-word prompt for a short amount of time, say, fifteen minutes or thirty minutes. I want students to write without researching or Googling, which is why the strict time limit. Week Four is the catalyst for my Module One prompt, “Why We Write”:

I get the impression students would benefit from a discussion on "why learning how to write" is imperative to their success. Regardless of whether they are moving onto college or beyond, learning to write well is beneficial. Math majors, business majors, tech majors, they need to know how to write. How do we teach students to respect the process?

Week Eight confirms use of one-word quizzes is the correct choice for my syllabus, “Freewriting is always such a struggle. Therefore, I love Gallagher's word game - just one word opens the mind.” Gallagher’s word game is not the only assignment idea to come from course discussions. My favorite and one of the most influential weeks was Week Five where classmates and I toss around ideas for student writing projects. My subsequent validation letter assignment (aka. writing project #1) stems from a desire:

To teach a community-engaged writing class project. Something where we have community members come into the classroom (or via video) to put a face with the issue. Perhaps an appeal to a city board to create a garden space, or a playground, or something along those lines.

Each writing module contains grammar lessons; in addition, writing projects and quizzes. During Week Six, as my classmates and I discussed teaching grammar, I shared my belief that “grammar should be taught *softly* in conjunction with writing. Meaning: carefully and gently to not overwhelm the students. Otherwise, I fear they would focus too much on grammar, losing track of their writing.” The grammar lessons for each module focus on one, or a couple, grammatical issues. I especially like how the first module begins with Stanford’s “Top Twenty Errors in Undergraduate Writing” article to introduce students to the grammar aspect of the course.

Introducing students to new topics and ideas is a passion project of mine. My desire to have an inclusive approach to teaching composition (and literature) ignited during graduate school. Week Seven discussion highlights an assignment idea I will implement during Unit Two of my syllabus. The syllabus modeled below is only five weeks of a fifteen-week course. A full course syllabus will most definitely include a “writing assignment for students to research news articles for tone and style then put together a collaborative project using Prezi or something similar. The goal of the assignment is to locate an author’s tone, diction, and phrasing.” It is imperative my students learn to closely analyze not only their own writing but also the writing of others.

A second project idea sprung from Week Eight, which will “include a resume genre assignment into a future lesson plan. Maybe creating resumes for “dream jobs?” This teaches

real-world experience students can literally hold in their hands – their resume.” I do not want my students to walk away from my class without knowing how to write a resume. I want them to have tangible evidence of the work they have accomplished to use for future courses and/or career opportunities. Thus, the idea for a cumulative portfolio project due during the final unit, Unit Four. The portfolio will contain four writing projects and a course reflection. Week Eleven is also the brainstorm moment for the writing projects in my syllabus:

Instead of one lengthy paper, I'd prefer assigning multiple 2-3-page papers throughout a semester. Students gain ample opportunity to practice not only the process of writing but also gain familiarity with researching, paraphrasing, and bibliographies.

Requiring students to create four writing projects and portfolio is not without challenges. Therefore, clear, concise communication between myself and my students is imperative. Week Nine and Ten display qualities of my role as an instructor in the classroom. During Week Nine, I was reintroduced to communication issues that can arise in online learning:

The stressing of clear, concise, correct information was foremost. Speakers spoke of confusion in online forums when instructors are vague or indirect. Most of all, the speaker emphasized responding to students within 24 hours. A week is way too long!

My syllabus repeatedly requests students to contact me when questions/concerns arise. Because of our course discussions during Week Nine, I created a mandatory online video conference between myself and my students. Communicating via video conference gives the student and I an opportunity to meet face2face while simultaneously bridging the virtual divide that sometimes arises with online learning. I want my students to know I am there for them, we are in this together, even if we are miles apart.

I have not always felt my instructors were involved in online courses, therefore, Week Ten emphasizes my goal to teach online courses differently from what I have experienced, “A significant amount of the instructors’ approach online classrooms like the island for misfit toys: minimal effort and practically zero interest.” Based on personal experience, and our discussions from Week Ten, I plan to teach online courses with enthusiasm for not only our course material but my students as well, hopefully, my enthusiasm is infectious.

Personal experience made the decision for me to use scholarly terminology in my future classrooms, too. During Week Eleven I realize the value of using terminology relevant to discourse, “Let me break the news to you, teachers are leaving out terminology. Last semester, my first in BGSU's MA program was terminology overload. There was so much I didn't know! I made a mental note to introduce my students to terminology from day one.” However, since my students will most likely be first years (freshman undergrads), I want to include common definitions alongside terminology to ease them into this new language. Simply tossing out composition terminology without context will likely leave students confused and overwhelmed.

Speaking of terminology, around Week Twelve as I craft my syllabus, I stumble upon the work of Dr. Christopher Emdin, Associate Professor in the Department of Mathematics, Science and Technology at Teachers College, Columbia University. All this influence and brainstorming encourages me to seek new ways to inspire students. Week Twelve pays homage to Emdin’s inspiration:

Emdin’s Ted Talk on teaching magic makes me want to shout, “Can I get a THESIS?” in the classroom. Emdin’s book, *For White Folks Who Teach in the Hood...and the Rest of Y'all Too*, encourages inclusivity on all levels (community, background, home), yet isn't just for teachers who teach in urban schools. All educators would gain from reading his

book, it's that good. Is our own enthusiasm for writing not infectious? If we are teaching writing with this "I'm not a writer, but you can be" mentality, are we not transferring some of that hesitancy onto our students?

Emdin largely influences my syllabus approach of including music videos and diverse authors as well.

During Week Twelve, we read Joan Didion's piece, *Why I Write*, which:

Spoke to me on such a deep level. This is how I think, how I feel. Didion's piece left me wondering: why are writers so hesitant to say, "I'm a writer," as if it's a dirty word. Writing seems so intangible at times that perhaps this lack of something tangible prevents us from calling it what it is: writing, therefore, we are writers.

However, Didion's piece also left me wondering how we create a sense of space in the classroom where students feel safe enough to say, "we are writers." Week Twelve is also when I decide to have my students read the brave, safe classroom article Dr. Jordan shared with us early in the ENG 6020 course because I want my students to "feel safe enough to express themselves." Call me naive, but "I AM attempting to create the next Didion, Rowling, or Ward. I want to be a part of that process! To encourage aspiring writers to write and publish!"

Referencing safe spaces ties in with Weeks Thirteen and Fourteen both of which note my approach as an instructor. Because of the research I conduct for this discussion post, I feel confident my inclusive approach to teaching is the right path for me and my future students.

Here, I write:

My approach to teaching L2 writing is nearly identical to Hirvela's: a combination of reading and writing with a strong emphasis on paraphrasing, reliable sourcing, and argument. If I teach at my community college alma mater (I hope!), it's very likely some of my composition students will be L2 learners. Nearly 20% of the students are Hispanic, 65% white. Therefore, I would combine composition concepts with culturally diverse reading material.

Rounding out the semester is Week Fourteen which cements the use of quizzes in my syllabus based on an article from The Chronicle of Higher Education, "We Know What Works in Teaching Composition," arguing for the constant practice of writing:

The author compares writing to learning to play the piano. He notes we cannot learn to play the piano by listening to a teacher lecture. Nope, we certainly would be at a disadvantage from those who practice daily. Therefore, journaling, or, at least the act of writing daily, is imperative to becoming a writer. (I'm approaching the term "writer" from the view that anyone who "writes" is a "writer.") I imagine an assignment for my future online students where they write 500 words per week (in addition to discussion boards and other assignments) on Gallagher's one-word quiz idea. I will supply one word to provoke writing and students have to write 500 words on that one word, which is related to our weekly topic at large.

Mostly, I want students writing, writing, writing. Thus, the 500 and 1000-word quizzes, discussion boards, and writing projects all require students to become familiar with the process of writing.

Nearly five months ago, I thought writing a syllabus was unapproachable. Although this course was challenging, as I look back now at the personal and academic growth I have achieved I am, to be blunt, flabbergasted. Attached is a Composition Unit Syllabi I created after taking this course. I, also, successfully created a literature course syllabus that includes four writing projects and a portfolio coupled with an incredibly inclusive reading list (the literature syllabus is included in my MA portfolio, too). Because of ENG 6020, I am certain becoming a college instructor is the correct path for me. ENG 6020 has directly influenced the way I will approach teaching composition in the future. As I reflect over the past almost five months, the apparent evolution of self is obvious. The most obvious changes are how I now view myself as an instructor rather than a student, and, the dramatic increase in my confidence evidence through the draft my first syllabi.

## Unit Plan for English Composition 101

**Course Title:** English Composition 101 – ONLINE

**Semester:** Spring 2019

**Course Theme & Description:**

In this first-year writing course, conducted completely online, we will examine the power of validation through the rhetorical situation. What does validation mean to you? Telling someone, “I hear you, I see you” is validating. Do you feel seen or heard? What you say matters. According to Oprah, “even Beyoncé in all her Beyoncéness” seeks validation.

**Unit One Description:**

This course is comprised of four units. Unit One is shown in detail below. The below example includes unit content pages as they would appear online for students. Content Pages are shown in bold. Module One includes all content pages students are expected to read.

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Unit One: The Power of Writing

**Module One: Why We Write**

Welcome to ENG 101. I am so glad you are here.

Throughout this semester we will be discussing, "What does validation mean to you?" Telling someone, “I hear you, I see you” is validating. Do you feel seen or heard? What you have to say matters. According to Oprah, “even Beyoncé in all her Beyoncéness” seeks validation. In this first-year writing course, conducted completely online, we will examine the power of validation through the rhetorical situation.

In our class, revision is not an option. It is a requirement. We will write first drafts, second drafts, even third drafts but there are not "final" drafts because writing is never "finished," only "polished." There is always something to modify in writing. A sentence. A paragraph. An idea. It truly is endless. Part of the writing process is revising your work.

Take some time to familiarize yourself with our online classroom. Peruse (in the traditional sense) through our course modules. Read project guidelines and discussion board topics. Make note of assignments due this week, and future projects.

You'll notice one of your assignments is to schedule a ZOOM conference with me to take place during module 4. I've provided a link for you to schedule the conference as an opportunity for you and I to discuss any concerns, questions, or suggestions you may have. You will use Doodle

to schedule the conference. Doodle displays available days and times. Select the one that best works for your schedule. Please do this quickly, the good slots go fast! Make a note to download ZOOM (it's free) before module 4 if you haven't already done so.

Begin each module at "Start Here." Typically, I include around two or three content pages per module. Think of these pages as virtual lectures.

Each module will include several links to required readings & viewings. You'll notice our content covers both the writing process and our course theme: Validation.

Please complete readings and view the videos by Wednesday of each week.

### **Assignments this week:**

- Readings & videos
- BRAVE classroom (exampled below)
- Grammar lesson (exampled below)
- discussion board (exampled below)
- Schedule 15-minute ZOOM conference (conferences take place during Module Four)
- Plagiarism & Syllabus Quiz

### **Readings:**

- [College Composition as Critical Thinking](#)

### **Videos:**

- [Oprah's Do I matter](#) (1m 28s)
- [Validation Elicits Participation](#) TEDx (10m 30s)
- [The Danger of Silence](#) (4m 19s)

### **BRAVE Classroom**

A major component of critical, analytical thinking is the discussion. Discussions are an opportunity for people to thoughtfully engage with one another. A place to discuss different opinions and ideas. However, where these discussions take place must be a safe space or else people may feel uneasy with sharing and discussing.

To have brave discussions, it is imperative our discussion space is a safe place. I see our classroom discussion board as a large dinner table, where we gather together to discuss our weekly topics, together.

Please read [Arao & Clemens \(2013\) From safe spaces to brave spaces A new way to frame dialogue around diversity and social justice](#), then discuss in your introduction post.

## Grammar - Top Twenty Errors in Undergraduate Writing

The Stanford Hume Center for Speaking and Writing published the [Top Twenty Errors in Undergraduate Writing](#).

Per Stanford:

*Readers judge your writing by your control of certain conventions, which may change depending on your audience, purpose, and writing situation. For example, your instructor may or may not mark errors in your paper if he's more concerned with its argument or structure than he is with sentence-level correctness; he could also decide an error is not serious. Some instructors may even see the errors listed below as stylistic options. However, a large-scale study by Andrea Lunsford and Karen Lunsford (2008) found that these errors are the most likely to attract readers' negative attention. Before handing in your papers, proofread them carefully for these errors, which are illustrated below in the sentences in italics.*

[Read the Stanford article](#), then share which errors you typically make in our introduction discussion post. We all make errors. This is an opportunity to learn from them!

### Discussion Board – Introductions

Hello, everyone.

I'm excited to get to know all of you and having interesting, thoughtful discussions.

Think of the discussion board as our virtual classroom. Here, we discuss and engage each other in discourse.

Discussion boards are worth a large portion of your overall grade, so make a mental note to engage and interact with your classmates.

Reminder: Schedule your ZOOM conference using the scheduling app link provided in module one.

**For our first discussion board: Introduce yourself to the class.**

1. Your name/nickname and major.
2. Experience writing? Do you enjoy writing?
3. What are your errors from *Top Twenty Errors in Undergraduate Writing* (From our reading this week)
4. What does **BRAVE** classroom mean to you? (From our reading this week)

**Discussion board directions:**

- Please post your initial response to the discussion board by Wednesday, 11:59 pm (MT).
- Additionally, please respond to three classmates by Sunday, 11:59 pm.
- Make sure to post your responses on separate days of the week.

Make connections with one another and start building our online community!

P.S. Discussion board etiquette is listed in the syllabus. A quick recap: be courteous and respectful.

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## Module Two: The Rhetorical Situation

A rhetorical situation is the meat and potatoes of a rhetorical act. What is a rhetorical situation? A rhetorical situation consists of a **speaker/writer**, an **exigence** (aka. an issue), a **medium** (think: speech or a written text), and an **audience**.

Here's an example: you are writing a paper on French fries for this course. You are the **writer**, the French fries are the **exigence**, your **medium** is a written text, and your classmates and I are your **audiences**.

This is a rhetorical situation.

Say you are discussing the most recent Marvel film with your friends. You are the **speaker**, the film is your **exigence**, your **medium** is speech, and your friends are your **audience**.

This, too, is a rhetorical situation.

Next week, during Module Three, your Writing Project #1 proposal is due. Take some time this week to familiarize yourself with the project assignment. Start brainstorming ideas! Send me an email with any questions and concerns: [instructor@college.edu](mailto:instructor@college.edu)

### Assignments this week:

- Readings & videos
- Grammar lesson
- Discussion board
- 1000 Words Quiz/Free Writing
- Grammar Quiz

Reminder: complete readings & viewings by Wednesday of each week.

### Readings for this week:

- [Using Rhetorical Strategies for Persuasion](#)

- [Basic Rhetoric and Writing Strategy](#)
- [How to Make Your Voice Heard in Washington](#)
- [5 ways to contact your elected officials and make your voice heard](#)

**Videos this week:**

- [The Rhetorical Situation](#) (6m 16s)
  - [How to use rhetoric to get what you want](#) (4m 29s)
- 

**Module Three: Thesis and Introduction Paragraphs**

A thesis is an academic argument. Basically, your thesis is the topic of your paper in one succinct sentence located about mid-way through your introductory paragraph.

Keep in mind, a thesis is not a question. It does not end with a question mark. A thesis summarizes your position (aka. opinion) on the paper topic. Then, you back up your position with analytical details and evidence.

An introductory paragraph contains your thesis. Introductory paragraphs also contain a "hook" to capture your audience's attention making them want to read more. Typically, an introductory paragraph does three things. Firstly, it states your position on the paper via your thesis. Secondly, it hooks your reader. And, thirdly, it tells your reader what you are going to discuss.

This is also known as, "Tell them what you are going to say, say it, tell them what you said."

"Tell them what you are going to say" - Introduction and thesis

"Say it" - Body of your paper

"Tell them what you said" – Conclusion

**Assignments this week:**

- Readings & videos
- Grammar lesson
- Discussion board
- Writing Project #1 Proposal
- 500 Words Quiz/Free Writing
- Grammar Quiz

**Readings:**

- [Creating a Thesis Statement](#)
- [Developing a Thesis](#)
- [The Single Best Thing You Can Do for Your Relationship](#) (article on validation)

**Videos:**

- [The Power of a Great Introduction](#) (4m 42s)
  - [Writing an Effective Thesis Statement](#) (1m 45s)
  - [How can writing change the world?](#) (15m 58s)
- 

**Module Four: The Writing Process & Revisions**

Writing is a process that involves at least five distinct steps that lead to a polished draft: prewriting, drafting, revising, editing, and polishing. When a student learns about the four steps of the writing process, they will likely produce a logical and well-written composition.

**Step One: Prewriting**

Anything you do before you write a draft of your document is prewriting: thinking, taking notes, talking to others, brainstorming, outlining, and research.

**Step Two: Drafting**

Drafting occurs when you put your ideas into sentences and paragraphs. Here you concentrate on explaining and supporting your ideas fully, you also begin to connect your ideas.

**Step Three: Revision**

Revision is the key to effective documents. At this step you also refine your writing, making each sentence as concise and accurate as possible. Make connections between ideas explicit and clear.

**Step Four: Editing**

Check for repetition, clarity, grammar, spelling and punctuation. The last thing you should do before printing your document is to spell check it.

**Step Five: Polishing**

This is the last step of the process. Congratulations! Time to celebrate! Remember though, writing is never final!

In our class, revision is not an option. It is a requirement. We will write first drafts, second drafts, even third drafts but no "final" drafts because writing is never "finished," only "polished."

There is always something to modify in writing. A sentence. A paragraph. An idea. It truly is endless. Part of the writing process is revising your work.

Revision can be the longest step of the process. This is where you connect your ideas, finetune your research & analysis, to craft a solid, polished paper.

**Assignments this week:**

- Readings & videos
- Grammar lesson
- Discussion board
- 500 Words Quiz/Free Writing
- Grammar Quiz
- ZOOM conference with Instructor

**Readings:**

- [Resource for Writers: The Writing Process](#)
- [Steps for Revising Your Paper](#)
- [Shitty First Drafts](#)
- [How to Use Your Voice to Create a Better World](#)

**Videos:**

- [Get comfortable with being uncomfortable](#) (10m 55s)
  - [Pain & Art: Write What You Honestly Know](#) (18m 39s)
- 

**Module Five: Validation Paper/Writing Project #1**

Our videos for module 5 are meant to inspire and motivate! Oppezzo's TED Talk discusses a theory on brainstorming. I firmly believe when the proverbial 'writers' block' is happening it's best to step away from the project. Getting some fresh air does wonders for brainstorming new ideas. Just do not walk away for too long and forget you have a project due Sunday!

Please do not hesitate to contact me about your project (instructor@pretend.com). I will respond within 24hrs, if not sooner. I typically always have access to my email, except between the hours of 10pm - 7am MT – an instructor must sleep.

Our discussion board this week is an excellent resource for project suggestions and help from your peers. Post any ideas you might be stuck on or offer feedback to a classmate. Collaborate!

**Assignments this week:**

- Videos
- Project Discussion Board
- Writing Project #1 is **due by Sunday, 11:59pm MT**

**Videos:**

- [Want to be more creative? Go for a walk](#) (5m 24s)
- [Want to change the world? Start by being brave enough to care](#) (11m)
- [His Epic Message Will Make You Want to Save the World | Short Film Showcase](#) (4m 23s)

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Jennifer Northrip

Professor Coates

ENG 6090

Spring 2018

Literature: An Exploration of Humanity and Compassion

From: student@collegestudent.edu

To: instructor@collegeinstructor.edu

Subject: Why?

“...I just wanted to know why you think learning about literature is so worthwhile that you've dedicated your work to it, and what exactly is one supposed to get from discussing a fictional story in general?”

From: instructor@collegeinstructor.edu

To: student@collegestudent.edu

Subject: Re: Why?

Years ago, as a young college student myself, I asked one of my professors practically the same question, “Why does literature matter?” I, too, struggled to understand the worthwhileness of literature, and, most importantly, why literature was a required course for all students regardless of their major. That is until, as you mention in your email, I made the connection that eventually decided my life path, becoming the dedication of my life’s work.

What was the connection? I realized learning about literature introduces students to inclusive authors and new experiences, nurtures our humanity, and develops close reading skills.

In the ongoing discussion of ‘why studying literature is important,’ many literature instructors, according to *Teaching Literature* author Elaine Showalter, believe literature “is important not only in education but in life” (24). I happen to agree with Showalter, a respected teaching scholar, who celebrates the fact that literature is an important component in academia because it trains “our students to think, read, analyze, and write” (Showalter 25). Learning how to think, read, and write helps develop communication skills and critical analysis skills to better prepare you for, say, those business writing courses we discussed last Monday.

I have created an inclusive syllabus to help develop close reading skills and create new experiences. Another respected academic scholar, Peter Filene, author of *The Joy Teaching*, recommends college instructors build their syllabi from “basic principles to more sophisticated ones” (95). Using Filene’s advice as a springboard, our syllabus is designed to move from basic thoughts to more challenging concepts.

Our Introduction to Literature 101 (LIT 101) course is allocated two novels per semester; in addition, selected essays and articles. I have selected four novels to choose from to satisfy our course theme – validation. As noted in our syllabus, along with your classmates you will vote on two of the four listed novels as our two reading selections for the semester. These novels were selected for several reasons. Not only do they fulfill our course theme of validation, but they are also a culturally inclusive group of respected authors. You may choose two from this list:

- *The Other Wes Moore: One Name, Two Fates* by Wes Moore
- *Just Mercy: A Story of Justice and Redemption* by Bryan Stevenson

- *Enrique's Journey: The Story of a Boy's Dangerous Odyssey to Reunite with His Mother* by Sonia Nazario
- *Mornings in Jenin: A Novel* by Susan Abulhawa

Why read inclusive authors? In the very simplest of terms: because it makes you a better person. How? Let's discuss the merits of humanity and how inclusive literature applies. Firstly, there is no way around the obvious – much of the literary cannon is comprised of dead white European male authors. From the 2nd century until the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, acclaimed literature is dominated by white male authors. Do not misconstrue my comments as anything other than a fact – not a negative – the canon is still relevant and respected. This is also not a strike against multicultural authors from the above-mentioned time either, because there are many we will discuss next week per our syllabus. Rather, this is a call for *more* – more inclusivity, more differences, more choices, more, more, more.

Inclusive literature shapes the person you are, the person you are becoming by bridging divides between cultures. You are learning on several different cognitive/emotional levels. As you read *Mornings in Jenin: A Novel*, you experience post-1948 Palestine through the eyes of the author. Her personal experience expands your worldview, makes you think outside the proverbial box. Not only are you experiencing a multi-generational view of a Palestinian family, but you are also learning about history, too. Much of the cannon, multicultural authors included, is rooted in historical information – history and literature intertwined. Furthermore, cultures and beliefs differing from what you are accustomed to are experienced via literature. Through literature, you gain a better understanding of how society is impacted in a post-war Palestine. As a reader, you gain cultural, historical and social knowledge unique to other parts of the world, not to mention the emotional journey literature takes us on.

Rather than telling you how you should feel, literature allows you to walk in another's shoes, thus, you experience – right alongside the author – their heartbreak and joy. Selecting *Enrique's Journey: The Story of a Boy's Dangerous Odyssey to Reunite with His Mother* provides an opportunity to explore and analyze our capacity for empathy and sympathy. Mark Roche, a Professor at the University of Notre Dame, declares, “One of the best ways to overcome oneself and one's subjectivity is to immerse oneself in another culture,” and the best immersion process is literature (Roche 7).

Think of literature as an art form, just as you would the Picasso painting you and Rylee were bantering about yesterday. When you study one of Picasso's paintings, you become engaged in the author. You may wonder what Picasso was thinking when he painted *The Blue Room*; what motivated him to create this masterpiece. You might also explore how style, form, and lighting all indicative of that time influenced Picasso's work. Now transpose that same thought process onto the book you mentioned reading in high school, E.M. Forster's *A Room with a View*, which transports you to early 20<sup>th</sup> century Britain and Italy. Forster's main character, Lucy, is suffocating under societal rules pertaining to social identity; Lucy struggles for self-identity and self-awareness. When you studied Forster's personal life, you learned he battled to obtain the same awareness as a gay man living in a homophobic society, like his character Lucy in *A Room with a View*. Via Forster's fictional character Lucy, we are granted a window into Forster's world. Such a window allows you to explore early 20<sup>th</sup>-century social norms which, in turn, encourages compassion and empathy. As Professor Roche explains, literature “gives us distance from the clichés and biases of the present” (Roche 12). Basically, your experiences gained through literature will allow you the ability to relate to, say, your future business clients, family, friends, and acquaintances, hopefully, making you a better person.

Not only will you learn how to relate but you will also learn close reading skills. Skills which go beyond simply reading text. Close reading skills inspire meaningful classroom discussions as you and your classmates wonder what the author meant – it may not be what you think! These discussions, which you reference in your email, expand your thinking as you gain a better understanding of the text, compare ideas and concepts, and expand your worldview. Although such skills may seem trivial, in fact, it is crucial that we read literature and participate in thoughtful lectures and classroom discussions. Reading literature asks you to perform recollection, understanding, application, analyzation, and evaluation (Roche 14). Basically, literature:

teaches us to weigh the significance of an event or occurrence or an encounter and to imagine alternatives. It enhances our awareness of structure, form, language, nuance. It teaches us how to synthesize evidence, articulate a complex view, and draw appropriate conclusions. (Roche 14)

Close readings skills are directly applicable to your future career path, or any career path for that matter. They teach you how to write an effective argumentative paper, perform research, read critically and analytically. Eventually, because you are taking LIT 101, you will be able to draft a memo, write a powerful argumentative essay, or even write company policy with ease because you have learned close reading skills.

This all being said, I hope I have helped you understand why literature is an important component of academia. Many people may assume literature courses are not fruitful, however, as I have just explained, there is much to be gained from taking LIT 101. In fact, after taking LIT 101, you will be able to discuss the merits of literature with confidence using your newfound close reading skills. Thanks to the different cultural experiences our syllabus provides,

compassion and kindness will reflect in your window/mirror views of the world. As a final note, I have attached our syllabus to this email. Take some time to think about my email as you familiarize yourself with our course readings. Send me an email next week with your book selections. Please let me know if you have any further questions or thoughts.

## Introduction to Literature Course Syllabus

**Course Title:** ENG 101 – Introduction to Literature ONLINE

**Semester:** Spring 2019

**Instructor:** Jennifer

**Contact Information:** instructorJennifer@email.com | cell: 555-555-5555 (I will respond within 24hrs.)

We are together for sixteen weeks. Please do not hesitate to reach out to me with any concerns, suggestions, and/or issues. I am here for you.

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**Course Description & Theme:**

In this first-year literature course, conducted completely online, we will examine the power of validation through literature. What does validation mean to you? Telling someone, “I hear you, I see you” is validating. Do you feel seen or heard? What you say matters. According to Oprah, “even Beyoncé in all her Beyoncéness” seeks validation. As we read literature by inclusive authors, we will reflect upon the power of words by creating our own validating writing.

This course, conducted entirely online, moves quickly. You will be required to read continuously throughout the course. You will be tested on whether you have read the assigned material through discussion boards, quizzes, and essays. In addition to the weekly discussion boards, you will have four writing projects that will comprise your course portfolio, which is due at the end of the semester.

**Course Objective:**

- To learn to read closely, think critically and analytically through reading, discussion and written assignments.
- To broaden intercultural reading experiences and to deepen a student’s awareness of the universal human concerns that are the basis for literary works.
- To create a greater appreciation of language as an artistic medium and of the principles that shape literary works.
- To understand literature as an expression of human values within a historical and social context.

**Course Outcomes:**

- Write clearly, coherently, and effectively about various genres in literature.
- Address the culture and context of literature in discussions and writing.
- Demonstrate an increased level of comfort with various genres: short stories, fiction, and poetry.
- Read, analyze, and develop a process of analyzing works of literature

- Use evidence from text to support a thesis
  - Enjoy literature and appreciate unique characteristics of each genre studied.
  - Apply writing skills to support an argument.
- 

### **Course Texts:**

My goal is to provide as many texts as possible through links, PDF's, Canvas uploads, and embedded copies. Any texts not included in the list below will be provided by me throughout the course. I aim to reduce your semester out-of-pocket expenditures as much as feasible. I was a student once, too!

During the first week of class we will vote on the books listed below. Choose two books from this list of four you want to read this semester.

- *The Other Wes Moore: One Name, Two Fates* by Wes Moore
  - *Just Mercy: A Story of Justice and Redemption* by Bryan Stevenson
  - *Enrique's Journey: The Story of a Boy's Dangerous Odyssey to Reunite with His Mother* by Sonia Nazario
  - *Mornings in Jenin: A Novel* by Susan Abulhawa
- 

### **Course Policies & Expectations:**

- Late Work: No.
- Attendance: This is an online course. You are expected to spend approximately 8 – 12 hours per week on various components of this course.
- Email: You may need to reach me via email at some point throughout the semester. All emails should be written in a professional manner. Please use specific 'Subject' headings, including your course number and concern/suggestion (Ex: "101 – Essay #2"). Emails should include grammatically correct text. Avoid abbreviations. You are communicating in a professional manner; your email should reflect this.
- Keep copies of your class work for future reference.
- Internet connection: You are expected to have access to the Canvas learning platform. Failure to secure internet connection is NOT an excuse for missing a deadline. McDonald's, Starbuck's, local & school libraries, etc. all offer internet access (you will have to purchase an item to use the internet at McDonald's, Starbuck's, and similar establishments.)

### **Plagiarism:**

- We will discuss plagiarism in more detail during unit one. Please note: The instructor and students in this course will adhere to the University's general Codes of Conduct defined in the Student Handbook. Specifically, the Code of Academic Conduct (Academic

Honesty Policy) requires that students do not cheat, fabricate, plagiarize or facilitate academic dishonesty. For details, refer to: Student Handbook.

### Students with Disabilities:

- Please contact me during/before module one to discuss any special needs. In accordance with the BGSU policy, if the student has a documented disability and requires accommodations to obtain equal access in this course, he or she should contact the instructor at the beginning of the semester and make this need known. Students with disabilities must verify their eligibility through the Office of Disability Services for Students.

### Assignment Submissions:

- Please use Canvas dropbox for **all** assignment submissions. Each assignment will correspond with a Canvas dropbox.
- Do **NOT** email assignments. Any emailed assignments will be considered a “0” in the gradebook.
- Use MLA format, 12 pt. Times New Roman font, double-space, one-inch margins.
- Format your paper as noted below:

<p><b>Your Name</b>  <b>Instructor’s Name</b>  <b>Course Name &amp; Number</b>  <b>Month &amp; Year</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>Assignment Title</b></p>
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### Discussion Board Guidelines:

1. Post your initial response to the discussion board by Wednesday of each week, 11:59 pm (MT). Approximately 200 words.
2. Remember to include a link to an outside article you find relevant to our module topic.
3. Make sure to post your responses on separate days of the week.
4. Additionally, for full points possible, please respond to two classmates by Sunday, 11:59 pm.

Discussion board etiquette: We are here to explore literature. Please be kind and respectful when participating in class discussions. If you have any questions or concerns please email me through Canvas, directly to my school email, or call me. I will respond within 24hrs.

**Grading Evaluation & Expectations:**

Discussion Boards	<b>25</b>
Quizzes	<b>20</b>
Writing Assignments (total of four)	<b>40 (Ten points each)</b>
Portfolio	<b>15</b>
<b>Total points possible:</b>	<b>100</b>

You must turn in all assignments completed and on time. Do NOT email assignments. You must use the Canvas dropbox function.

**Grading Scale:**

- A: 100-90
- B: 89-80
- C: 79-70
- D: 69-60
- F: 59-0

You must complete ALL major essay assignments listed in this syllabus to obtain a passing grade. However, completion of all assignments does not necessarily guarantee a passing grade.

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**Assignments:**

1. Each module includes readings & videos, a discussion board (possibly two), and assignments.
2. There are three quizzes. Two reading quizzes cover unit readings. One syllabus quiz at the beginning of the semester.
3. There are four writing projects. One for each unit. You will turn in a portfolio the last week of class comprised of all four projects. You cannot wait till the last week of class to begin the portfolio.
  - Writing Project # 1: 2-3pages Literary Analysis of novel selected for unit one. What is the author trying to convey? What are you feeling after reading the book? Don't just write a summary. I want to know that you "heard" what the author is trying to say.
  - Writing Project # 2: 2-3pages Validation Paper. Select a group of people, someone you know, yourself, etc. and "speak" on their behalf for a positive change.
  - Writing Project #3: 2-3pages Literary Analysis of novel selected for unit one. What is the author trying to convey? What are you feeling after reading the book? Don't just write a summary. I want to know that you "heard" what the author is trying to say.

- Writing Project #4: 2-3pages Validation Poem and Course Reflection. Write your own poem on validation. Also, include a reflection on readings.
  - Portfolio: 8-12pages Comprised of your four course writing projects.
- 

### Course Calendar – Spring Semester:

#### Unit One: Fiction/Novel

Module One:	‘Significance of Literature’ readings & videos; ‘Validation’ readings & videos; BRAVE classroom content; Introductions Discussion Board; Plagiarism & Syllabus Quiz
Module Two:	<i>Novel #1</i> (selected by students) 1 <sup>st</sup> half of text; Additional readings & videos about Diaz & related material; Discussion Board
Module Three:	<i>Novel #1</i> (selected by students) 2 <sup>nd</sup> half of text; ‘Validation’ readings & videos; Discussion Board; Readings Quiz
Module Four:	Project peer review discussion board; <b>Writing Project #1</b> – Literary Analysis 2-3 pages

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#### Unit Two: Short Stories

Module Five:	<i>Boys</i> by Moody; <i>Girl</i> by Kincaid; <i>Hollow</i> by Breece D’J Pancake; <i>Madison at Guignol</i> by Joyce Carol Oates; ‘Validation’ readings & videos; Discussion Board
Module Six:	<i>The Museum</i> by Leila Aboulela; <i>Bettering Myself</i> by Ottessa Moshfegh; <i>A Bouquet</i> by Fatima Al-Mazroeu; <i>Mrs. Dutta Writes a Letter</i> by Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni; <i>Interpreter of Maladies</i> by Jhumpa Lahiri; Discussion Board
Module Seven:	<i>Taylor Swift</i> by Hugh Behm-Steinberg; <i>Harrison Bergeron</i> by Vonnegut; ‘Validation’ readings & videos; Discussion Board; Readings Quiz

Module Eight: Project peer review discussion board; **Writing Project #2** – Validation Paper 2-3 pages

### Unit Three: Fiction/Novel

Module Nine: *Novel #2* (selected by students) 1<sup>st</sup> third; ‘Validation’ readings & videos; Discussion Board

Module Ten: *Novel #2* (selected by students) 2<sup>nd</sup> third; Discussion Board

Module Eleven: *Novel #2* (selected by students) Remainder of novel; ‘Validation’ readings & videos; Readings Quiz; Discussion Board

Module Twelve: Project peer review discussion board; **Writing Project #3** – Literary Analysis 2-3 pages

### Unit Four: Poetry

Module Thirteen: *O Captain! My Captain!* By Walt Whitman; *Because I could not stop for Death* by Emily Dickinson; *The Hollow Men* by Eliot; *I look at the World* by Hughes; *Caged Bird* by Maya Angelou; ‘Validation’ readings & videos; Discussion Board & YAWP Video Assignment (combined DB grade)

Module Fourteen: *Be Nobody’s Darling* by Walker; *Tonight, in Oakland* by Smith; *A Song for Soweto* by Jordan; *Not One More Refugee Death* by Pérez; *You, If No One Else* by Villanueva; ‘Validation’ readings & videos; Discussion board

Module Fifteen: Tupac; Kendrick Lamar; Jean Grae; Queen Latifah; Kate Tempest; Discussion Board; **Writing Project #4** – Validation Poem & Reflection

Module Sixteen: Course Overview Discussion Board and Peer Portfolio Review; \***Portfolio due\***

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Jennifer Northrip

Professor Gajjala

WS 6200

Summer 2018

### Inclusion: Revising Canonical Authors and Classroom Literature

As a young girl, I read feverishly. On any given star-filled night you would find me tucked beneath my bedsheets, flashlight in my right hand, a book in my left. Exhaustion the following day was an acceptable sacrifice when there were characters to meet and adventures to take. Small stacks of books would topple off my nightstand as I searched for a new, or familiar, literary friend. Mark Twain, Ray Bradberry, and Norton Juster authored several of my favorite childhood characters. Yet, there was one common theme amongst the books I held so dearly in my hands. Nearly all the authors were white, and a majority male. I longed to read about characters who reflected my life. Growing up in Hawaii and California, my friends and neighbors were diverse and multicultural. Many of the literary works I read did not include biracial families, multicultural friendships, and/or people of color. My friends and I would harass our elementary teachers and local librarians for books reflecting our lives without much success.

A lack of multicultural and female inclusivity in literary works became even more apparent when I entered high school. Female classmates and I would question our English teachers, “Why are literature reading lists filled with dead white men?” We wondered, where are the *Other* authors? Teachers stumbled for answers; students were instructed to read what was assigned – a revolt was brewing *Les Misérables* style. Literary works did not represent female students or students of color, nor were students generally inspired by the literature assigned.

Much of our reading lists were dated and unreflective. Even though classic literary works are still relevant, expanding the canon to include multicultural authors and female authors would increase female and multicultural student participation, create a sense of belonging, and fulfill female and multicultural students desire to read reflective literature.

Students respond to literature that either mirrors their lives or provides a window onto the world. Many female students struggle to connect their lives with, for example, the life of Hester from Nathaniel Hawthorne's *The Scarlet Letter*, Gatsby from F. Scott Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby*, or Ishmael from Herman Melville's *Moby Dick*. Without strong relational references, students lack experience, resources, and desire to read such dated literary pieces. Students of color and female students, who are the least represented in canonical literature, are suffocating from a lack of inclusion and reflective literature. Students today desperately seek not only validation but relevance. They no longer *just* want to read classic literature, they also want to read literature reflecting their daily lives, including the hurdles and struggles. Expanding the literary canon to include works of authors relevant to female and diverse students purposefully strengthens bonds between student and academia. This bond, in turn, motivates students to participate and engage in classroom activities and assignments. Hence, students' withdrawal from classroom participation. Academic grades may suffer as students become less engaged, therefore, less interested in their English classes and literature in general.

Female students and multicultural students suffer the greatest academic repercussions due to sexist philosophies compounded with a patriarchal society. Lillian S. Robinson, author of *Treason Our Text: Feminist Challenges to the Literary Canon*, argues that "the predominantly male authors in the canon show us the female character and relations between the sexes in a way that both reflects and contributes to sexist ideology" (83). This reflection of sexist ideology

reinforces participation challenges for diverse students and female students. A predominantly male canon confounds female students who are seeking windows to a worldview. If a female student's view is repeatedly, figuratively, blocked how is she to remain engaged?

Since the 1970's, "feminist scholars have been protesting the apparently systematic neglect of women's experience in the literary canon, neglect that takes the form of distorting and misreading the few recognized female writers and excluding the others" (Robinson 84). For far too long, canonical male authors misrepresent female characters singularly as sexual objects. Such objectification transposes itself onto the reader, especially young female readers. Many male canonical authors create female characters who are then read by female readers. Female authors are read predominantly by female readers. Our students are fighting to engage in a literary canon that fails to represent females in a more accurate view. When we combine glaring misrepresentations with obvious distortions in female authorship representation we must ask: How do we increase female student involvement while simultaneously introducing female authors into the canon?

Robinson ascertains that introduce female authors into the canon we must first acknowledge that classic literary works by male authors are still relevant and valuable. Therefore, we are not singularly discrediting male canonical authors. Once we have noted their relevance, she argues that "by incorporating works by women into the established canon...the least threatening way to do so is to follow the accustomed pattern of making the case for individual writers one by one" (Robinson 86). Simply put, female literary works must be judged on an individual basis rather than wholly. This process, however arbitrary, is lengthy and cumbersome. Female authors would slowly integrate into the literary canon at a proverbial snail's pace. Not only would students suffer during the inclusion process, but female authors

would, too. To put the inclusion process into perspective: Robinson's essay on female canon inclusion was written in 1983. Some thirty-five years later we are still discussing assimilation of female authors into the literary canon.

Conversations regarding academic canonical inclusion and expansion were founded during the 1970's feminist movement (aka. Second wave of feminism). Feminist authors such as Lillian S. Robinson, Jo Freeman, Adrienne Rich, Hélène Cixous, Alice Walker, Mitsu Tanaka, and The Combahee River Collective brought feminism literature to the forefront. From the 1970's to the 90's, feminism was a tidal wave movement. Women's rights marches and protests crashed against the government and society alike. Then, in the 1990's, interest in feminism started to wane. Only recently with the 2018 #metoo movement have we witnessed a resurgence in feminism. Celebrities, athletes, politicians, educators, students, friends and neighbors are melding together to force feminism into the light: Equal rights and equal treatment for all females. Social media platforms such as Twitter and Instagram are the modern-day woman's megaphone for feminism. As such, many industries have seen a recent turnover in policies and procedures to incorporate equal rights for women, and yet, the canon remains stifled by patriarchal rule.

Regardless of how inclusive literary canons are they will still exclude many deserving authors. Consider for a moment that authors such as Zora Neale Hurston, Arundhati Roy, Hanif Kureishi, Toni Morrison, and Amy Tan are not canonized. Expanding the canon to include multicultural authors and female authors consequently increases student participation, too. Additionally, it would also create a sense of belonging for female students. Author Janice Law Trecker's essay, *Women in US History High School Textbooks*, depicts an overall lack of female inclusivity in textbooks:

An analysis of current high school textbooks shows that they omit many women of importance, while simultaneously minimizing the legal, social, and cultural disabilities which they faced. The authors tend to depict women in a passive role and to stress that their lives are determined by economic and political trends. (133)

Female presence is a systemic issue, not “just” a literary canonical issue. Systemic abuse of female presence throughout the school system results in female students lacking a sense of place. Failure to represent females and/or people of color in literature, history, and science “texts read by high school students not only affects students’ ideas about the relative importance of men and women in society, but also contributes to their degree of interest” (57), thus, directly calling into question a student’s sense of belonging. To understand this disparity, I examined a 2004 study which found that, on average, history books contain “only 1,335 female names in the indexes of the 18 books of our main analyses, as compared to 12,382 male names (a ratio of about 11 to 100)” (Roger et al. 58). Furthermore, Trecker emphasizes that female students are less likely to pursue undergraduate and graduate degrees due to a serious lack of female representation in academia (Trecker 133-139).

Student participation rates would see a rise in female academic performance due to an expansion of reading lists. Many female students participate less in the classroom than their male peers. Considering the weighty effect participation has on a student’s overall grade, participation is an important factor when determining a student’s academic success. A 2010 case study involving Malaysian undergraduate students found that “Engaging class content ranked third in the list of most frequent factors mentioned as influencing students’ participation” (Mustapha et al. 1081). Of those factors, “participants mentioned interesting topics...as the third most influential factor in determining their level of participation in class” (1081).

The most important reason multicultural and female authors should be included is that students want to read reflective literature. Students, especially female students, and students of color, want to read literature that reflects their lives. A reflection of themselves equals validation and validation means they are being heard. Validation is one of the most important components for today's youth in and outside academia.

While many educators are making canonical changes on their own most struggle with administration pushback or a lack of inclusion training. Sandra Osorio, assistant professor in the School of Teaching and Learning at Illinois State University, acknowledges that teacher education is an issue, “teacher training programs aren’t always adequately preparing teacher candidates – about 80 percent of whom are white – to teach with diverse literature” (Lorna 15). If 80% of teachers are white this would lead one to believe that a majority white canon is accurate. However, these percentages are not reflective of student demographics. Last year, fall of 2017, a little over 50 million students were enrolled in K-12, of which 24 million were white and 26.3 million were students of color (“Fast Facts: Back to School Statistics.”). Therefore, we find ourselves in a situation where white teachers are teaching white literature to students of whom a majority are not white. Professor Osorio concludes “Lack of representation in texts “makes [students of color] feel like they have to assimilate or change who they are in order to fit into what is being shared” (Lorna 13-14). Therefore, says Osorio, “When students are provided that mirror—when they see characters like themselves described in the pages they are reading— they are often more drawn to and interested in the texts,” thus, their sense of belonging and class participation increase exponentially (Lorna 14).

Updating classroom reading lists are challenging for instructors who lack the wherewithal. Sourcing multicultural authors and female authors not already referenced in the

canon can leave an educator scratching their head. Educators already under pressure to meet administration and state regulations are stressed for time. What little time they do have is regulated to grading and prepping upcoming lesson plans. Little is left in respect to sourcing new reading material. An updated, inclusive canon would reduce the workload for educators by providing a reliable list from which to choose inclusive literature.

Violet Harris, professor emerita of curriculum and instruction at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign notes that the “nonfiction book *Sugar Changed the World* [Aka. *Sugar Changed the World: A Story of Magic, Spice, Slavery, Freedom, and Science* by Marc Aronson and Marina Budhos] ...is unlike other books for young people in its unvarnished depiction of the horrors of slavery” (Collier 14). Harris argues:

we don't want to talk about the horrific nature of slavery with children, so as a consequence we get books that focus on an itty-bitty teeny component of it and sort of humanizes the slave owner and the institution. But a book like *Sugar Changed the World* would make a tremendous difference. (14)

The difference being that books such as *Sugar Changed the World: A Story of Magic, Spice, Slavery, Freedom, and Science* depict slavery in a more humanistic representation. Such representation is important for students of all colors to read and experience because it not only validates but it also provides a reflective window view (14). When students are presented with one type of voice – typically, a white male voice – the students window onto the world is narrow and limiting.

Changes to student reading lists have a profound impact on the success rates of female students and students of color. Karimah Tennyson-Marsh, an eighth-grade teacher at Century

Community Charter School in California “decided to use culturally diverse literature with all her lessons—to find books with characters and themes that reflected her students’ lives and heritage” (Lorna 13). Tennyson-Marsh’s decision has greatly affected her students, who are 80% African-American, 20% Hispanic/Latino. After inclusion of diverse authors, including reflective literature, test scores from the 2015/2016 year “show 46 percent of her students are meeting or exceeding standards for reading—up from 36 percent the previous year” (Lorna 13).

However, there are strong opponents to leaving the canon as-is. Controversial author Harold Bloom, a Sterling Professor of Humanities at Yale University, is an infamous literary critic and strong opponent to canon revisions. Bloom studies twenty-six specially chosen canonical authors in his book *The Western Canon: The Books and School of the Ages*. Of these authors, only two are female (Dickinson and Austen). Not surprisingly, Bloom’s study list lacks any authors of color. This fact is not lost on Bloom, whom for all accounts and purposes, seems to relish his adversity in the literary world. In *The Western Canon: The Books and School of the Ages* Bloom retorts:

As the formulator of a critical concept I once named "the anxiety of influence," I have enjoyed the School of Resentment's repeated insistence that such a notion applies only to Dead White European Males, and not to women and to what we quaintly term "multiculturalists." (7)

The “School of Resentment,” a term originated by Bloom, refers to feminist authors and multicultural authors whom Bloom argues only want to update the canon to continue their political motives. Perhaps literary critics like Bloom are protecting tradition. Maybe they are afraid of change and losing their influential ties in the literary community. Bloom continues:

Thus, feminist cheerleaders proclaim that women writers lovingly cooperate with one another as quilt makers, while African-American and Chicano literary activists go even further in asserting their freedom from any anguish of contamination whatsoever: each of them is Adam early in the morning. (7)

Despite tradition, it is time to place a call to action. Updating the canon does not just fall on the shoulders of critics, teachers, administrators, and authors.

Students are taking control of their own education, such as the students at Reed College in Oregon. “Reedies Against Racism,” a student group, is calling for the removal of all white authors in Reed College’s Humanities 110 course. Reed students are displaying their contempt for current reading lists, due to the abundant number of white authors and proposed white propaganda, through sit-ins and classroom disruptions (Timpf). Although student activism is warranted, removing all white authors from school reading lists is not necessarily the right move. A reading list with a cohesive blend of inclusive authors, including male and female authors, and authors of color is a first step; ultimately, bridging the divide.

Expanding the canon is not a simple procedure. As discussed, many educators lack the time and wherewithal to accomplish updating reading lists on their own. However, many resources exist to aid in the process. Websites such as Teaching Tolerance ([www.tolerance.org](http://www.tolerance.org)) and Equality and Human Rights Commission ([www.equalityhumanrights.com](http://www.equalityhumanrights.com)) provide free programs, lesson plans, and educational tools for virtually anyone in academia who want to increase inclusivity in the classroom. When in doubt, ask your students what they want to read. Going directly to the source (students) is usually a fruitful and smart tactic. Listen to your students – validation is a powerful tool inside the classroom. A list of reflective literature is included at the end of this essay, too.

That all being said, there is still much left to change, but the challenges ahead are not insurmountable. How do we increase student participation, create belonging, and provide reflective literature to our students? By educating our teachers and giving voice to a long-heard cry for inclusivity in the canon. Only then can our students begin to feel validated and recognized for who they are, not who we want them to be. Reflective literature will reinforce that students are not alone in their plight. For students who lack a sense of belonging, an inclusive reading list emphasizes a community of peers. Lastly, female students and students of color who are provided expanded canonical reading lists excel in academia. As instructors, our students' success is our greatest achievement.

Reflective literature examples by authors\* of color and female authors, including LGBTQ authors, listed by topic:

Bullying: *Orchards* by Holly Thompson, *Wings* by Christopher Myers

Discrimination: *Just Mercy: A Story of Justice and Redemption* by Bryan Stevenson, *Salvage the Bones* by Jesmyn Ward

Immigrants: *The Book of Unknown Americans* by Cristina Henríquez, *Only in London* by Hanan Al-Shaykh, *Preparation for the Next Life* by Atticus Lish

Racism: *Between the World and Me* by Ta-Nehisi Coates, *Their Eyes Were Watching God* by Zora Neale Hurston

LGBTQ: *Princess Princess Ever After* by Katie O'Neill, *Giovanni's Room* by James Baldwin, *Sister Outsider* by Audre Lorde, *The Danish Girl* by Lili Elbe

Middle east: *Persepolis* by Marjane Satrapi, *Beyond the Veil* by Fatema Mernissi

Asian: *The Boat to Redemption* by Su Tong, *Wolf Totem* by Jiang Rong

Intuit & Métis: *The Break* by Katherena Vermette.

\*(Many, if not all, of the above books are award winning.)

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