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## Cultivating a New Educator: Teacher and Students Sharing Growth

Megan Campbell

*Bowling Green State University*, [meganc@bgsu.edu](mailto:meganc@bgsu.edu)

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FINAL MA PORTFOLIO

Megan Looney

[meganc@bgsu.edu](mailto:meganc@bgsu.edu)

Cultivating a New Educator: Teacher and Students Sharing Growth

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Dr. Heather Jordan, First Reader

Ms. Kimberly Spallinger, Second Reader

## Table of Contents

<b>Cultivating a New Educator: Teacher and Students Sharing Growth: Narrative .....</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Project #1: A Murderous Moral Tale: Depictions of the Ideal Victorian and her Behavior in Wilkie Collins' <i>Jezebel's Daughter</i> .....</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>Project #2: Critical Thinking and Counseling Through the Power of Literature .....</b>	<b>29</b>
<b>Project #3 (Pedagogy): Developing an American Identity: Syllabus and Assignment Plan .....</b>	<b>37</b>
<b>Project #4 (Substantial Research): Evolving and Adapting Rhetoric and Theory: Indigenous Theory Writing Back .....</b>	<b>56</b>

Cultivating a New Educator:  
Teacher and Students Sharing Growth

As teachers, we strive to instill a love of learning into our students, but we sometimes forget to practice and embrace our own learning. In the teaching profession, we can become bogged down with meetings, grading, testing, coaching, unit planning, curriculum mapping, and a slew of other responsibilities. And in the rush to meet all of these requirements, the pursuit of our own learning and growth can be lost. Shamefully, my personal pursuit to begin the English graduate program was not born from a want to continue my path as a lifelong learner. I wanted to earn my Master's in English so I could offer College Credit Plus writing and literature courses to my high school students; in my mind, a Master's degree was just going to be a hoop I had to jump through to provide better opportunities to my students. But within my very first courses, I quickly realized the program was going to offer me so much more. In every course and in every project, I have been able to take a critical look at my skills as a writer, reader, and educator, and in each of these aspects, I have grown exponentially.

Through the completion of this program, I have grown as a learner and an educator. By taking the plunge and starting my Master's during my first year teaching, my pedagogy has become stronger than I would have ever expected in only four years of teaching. It was not just me that benefitted from furthering my education, but my students have also reaped the benefits of the knowledge, theory, and practices learned. With every course and every project, I have been able to experiment with my classroom, and even though not every experiment worked, my students and I grew from the experience. My students were able to see my learning (both successes and failures in action), and then model that same learning. My successes as an educator can be linked to the experiences and knowledge I gained through my time in the program, and this portfolio helps to illustrate some of that growth. The theme of this portfolio is

my growth as an educator and learning alongside my students; each piece was chosen because the learning gained from it has altered my pedagogy and influenced every aspect of my classroom. During the writing process of each project, I was able to connect more with my students' learning, emotional, and cultural needs. And my own learning and experiences with each project developed my confidence as a writer and researcher.

### **Project 1**

“A Murderous Moral Tale: Depictions of the Ideal Victorian and her Behavior in Wilkie Collins’ *Jezebel’s Daughter*” is the first piece in this portfolio, and it is my final project for Dr. Piya Lapinski’s “Victorian Femme Fatales” course. I can still remember the energy I felt when writing this piece. All writers know the blurred memories of researching, writing, revising, and then marveling at an essay we barely remember forming. But this process was vivid, memorable, and altered how I viewed myself as a writer and educator. This project helped me to expand my abilities with analysis and weaving theory with literature. Previously, I had always been self-conscious of any writing that was literary focused; my expertise had always aligned more with nonfiction research and persuasion. Therefore, I had centered my classroom around this less subjective writing; literary analysis was a rare assignment in my classroom. But that confident energy I felt when writing the project sparked me to experiment. How could my students benefit from more literary analysis-based writing? And I asked this directly to my students using my project (and some other examples) as points of reference. Students were able to openly discuss why we read, why we analyze, and why we must inform other readers of our analytical findings. Through these discussions, inspired by my work on this project, students feel more confident when connecting with literature and arguing their interpretations. When I am confident, my students can feel confident as well.

The revision process for this project was trying because of my connection with the piece. I did not want to damage the flow and reasoning I had developed when first writing. My fellow peers and first readers provided some surface revisions for the project, so to gain more feedback, I took it to my junior level students. As a means to teach revision, I modelled how in-depth revision can and ideally should be. We discussed the revision I had already completed, and then they set loose with colored pens upon my writing. They loved the opportunity to “ink my paper up” and see how I write. I became vulnerable to their feedback just as they are to mine. And it benefitted me to gain their perspectives because their feedback turned my attention to areas where clarity and organization could be improved.

## **Project 2**

My second project allowed to me analyze the therapeutic powers of literature. The piece originated as the critical essay for Dr. Phil Dickinson’s “Teaching of Literature” course. In “Critical Thinking and Counseling Through the Power of Literature,” I discuss literature’s power to bring students and teachers together in difficult discussions that allow for emotional growth. Literature has always been an emotional outlet for me, and through this essay I explore how literature can be used as an outlet for all students. Reading and analyzing can be more than determining a theme or historical context; our students can question the tragedies around them and find new ways to cope.

While revising this piece I focused on creating a clearer argument. When originally writing this essay, there were so many topics and examples I wanted to incorporate, that my focus became blurred. Through revisions, my examples and reasoning developed a focused flow that continually returned to the same argument: literature and its emotional need in the

classroom. My personal examples also became more detailed so other teachers can begin to see the therapeutic application of literature in their own classrooms.

### **Project 3 – Teaching Based**

My teaching-based project is another piece from Dr. Dickinson's "Teaching of Literature" course: a unit plan and syllabus for an undergraduate literature course. In high school and in my undergraduate first year comp courses, literature did not originally take a front seat. I went into teaching English because I loved both writing and literature, but at the undergraduate level, my focus is on ensuring students will be successful researchers and writers in their future course work. At the high school level, writing and research again take precedence. We read literature, but in most unit plans, the reading just supports or introduces the written summative piece to follow. I was losing sight of how to place literature as a focus while still maintaining all of the other skills that needed to be taught. This project allowed me to regain confidence in and highlight literature as the powerful force it can be in the classroom.

In this project, "Developing an American Identity: Syllabus and Assignment Plan," I create a unit plan and syllabus for an undergraduate literature course. The central question for the entire course is, "What is an American Literary identity?" I have taught "American Literature" to sophomores in the past, and the textbooks and reading lists for those courses always focused on the white American identity. Through this course development, I wanted students to explore how American identity is not singular and how the American Dream changes throughout history, socio-economic status, race, and cultural experiences. By the end of the course, students would explore not only how the American identity is expressed and defined by different groups of people, but also how they can define and recognize their own American identity through literature. This project was created while I was teaching an intro to literature college prep course

for the first time. It allowed me to look critically at how I had set up this course and how I could improve. Through this new critical perspective, I was forced to look closely at my expectations for students, how those were expressed, and what the best grading methods were. And every time I debated a change, students were encouraged to discuss and reflect on how these changes would or would not benefit them. By being open about how the class was formed and the reasoning for those decisions, students took ownership of not only how the classroom ran but also their own learning experiences. It was no longer my class or my syllabus; it was ours.

I definitely did the most intense revision to this piece out of all the others. Dr. Dickinson's feedback forced me to see my unrealistic expectations when initially creating a four week course plan, but there was still potential for those four weeks to be expanded. So, from initially being a four week unit plan from the course, I developed the American Identity course fully. I have taught first year composition courses for the past couple years and was used to scheduling out those larger writing assignments, but planning out reading realistically was not a strength of mine in the first draft. I had to come down to earth and realize my expectations for students were out of this world. With the revised piece, it has become a course of study that I could and hope to implement in future courses.

This project helped me to grow in my literary focused teaching and also my self-evaluation skills. When teaching a unit or even an entire course, we like to believe, or at least hope, that when the class falters it must be something we could not control. With the time we initially spend planning and writing units and syllabi, having to evaluate and reflect on its potential is exhausting. But this revision process forced me to see the need for thorough and realistic reflection. My students grow from this because as we discuss changes to the syllabi, they are able to understand the choices made to ensure their successful learning. Students want to



know “why are we doing this,” and “how does this actually help me.” They grow in their learning when we are open about our planning and we are open to changing our planning.

#### **Project 4 – Substantial Research**

My final project is also my substantially researched piece. For this, I chose my final project from Dr. Wood’s “Convincing Women” course: “Evolving and Adapting Rhetoric and Theory: Indigenous Theory Writing Back.” In this project, I not only utilize research on the history of indigenous voices, but I also discuss rhetorical theory in alignment with indigenous texts. As support for a new approach to viewing rhetoric, I analyze pieces written by indigenous authors.

My revision focused on adding power and draw to the argument for not only my intended audience of indigenous readers, but for people coming from a range of cultural backgrounds. This allowed for a wide range of readers to connect with the piece and feel the motivation to write for their own stories and cultures. Why I chose to revise this piece is because the topic of research is one that I have connected with and was consistently present in a lot of the projects in other courses. Early on during the graduate program, I connected with the idea of studying how storytelling is squelched in traditional academic practices, and how this standard encourages the severing of cultural ties in writers, researchers, academics, and educators. I have focused specifically on my own cultural experiences as Appalachian and Shawnee. This piece is the final one where I take all that I learned throughout my program to argue for change and to illustrate how people can write back at the rigid standards of academia through their stories.

This project has been one of the most influential for me. Through the research of this topic, I have taken on the role as the storyteller of my family. My family's connection to our

Appalachian and Shawnee cultural roots died with the passing of my grandmother, but I have reawakened those stories. And through stories we are being reborn into our past, our values, our culture, and our traditions. If I had not dived into the indigenous and Appalachian voices surrounding academia, I would never have gained back my own voice.

And of course, through my personal awakening, my classroom evolved. I looked closely at how the rhetoric I taught, the assignments I expected, and the readings I required, were not celebrating the cultures within my own classroom walls. Because of this project and the past projects that inspired it, I now focus on students expanding and developing their culture through stories and writing. My students are encouraged to take ownership of their stories and celebrate them through our writing, reading, and research. We explore different cultures through their stories, and students then write and continue their own cultural traditions and beliefs. Out of all the projects I have completed and of all the pedagogical growth, this piece has spurred the most important developments and changes.

With the completion of these projects and this program, I do not know if a doctoral program is in my future, but I have definitely committed myself to actively pursuing knowledge; I have gained and perfected the skills to be a successful life-long learner. I will of course continue to teach College Credit Plus courses, and have plans to add more course offerings for students. There is also the potential for adjunct work at local community colleges. And while moving up in the world of education will always be a back burner goal for me, the ability to continually develop and reflect on pedagogical approaches and their real life application to students' lives is one of the most important takeaway from this program. Part of that growth as an educator means I must also carry my role as storyteller with me wherever I go. For my students, the stories I tell will help them excel as learners and feel supported as they connect with

their own cultures. For my family, the stories I tell allows our culture to live and grow for future generations. And now the next step is to spread these stories and their power to more people. For Appalachia, Shawnee, and all silenced cultures, storytellers must step up and speak back on those oppressive constraints. And it is with this program that I found the means and the courage to begin speaking and writing back.

Megan Looney

Dr. Piya Lapinski

ENG 6800

27 June 2018

A Murderous Moral Tale: Depictions of the Ideal Victorian and her Behavior in Wilkie Collins'

*Jezebel's Daughter*

Across time, authors have utilized the power of literature to do more than entertain readers. Writing has been a means of informing and educating audiences, even though that education may be tainted by the authors' agendas. Authors of Victorian sensation novels are no different in their mission to provide insight into the popular and simultaneously troubling politics and social reform of their time. The sensation novel of the time provided a format to illustrate the dangers of foreign influence, abundant power, and social class movement while also drawing in audiences with murder and mystery. Wilkie Collins' three primary female characters in *Jezebel's Daughter* are not merely pawns and players in the mystery of murder and intrigue, but represent larger lessons aimed at Victorian women. Through Madame Fontaine, Mrs. Wagner, and Minna, female readers are taught both to shun the behavior of the infamous female poisoners of their time, but they are also shown the dangers of seeking upward mobility within social and class stations.

The class systems of Victorian England and other European countries were undergoing significant changes from the previous monarchy-based systems. Under a strict monarchy, people were born into their stations, and only through strategic marriages could a person move into a higher status. Even these marriages were reserved for the middle and upper-middle stations of

people, and movement could never happen more than one caste above current standing. With the addition of democratic political proceedings taking precedence above the monarchy, a new caste system developed. Ellen Jordan details this new social system in her novel, *The Women's Movement and Women's Employment in Nineteenth Century Britain*:

During the early nineteenth century, however, increasing industrialism was causing a change in the manner in which income-producing work was carried out, a change which transformed the three ranks of the preindustrial period into four classes, upper, upper-middle, lower-middle and working classes. (27)

The integration of this new class system supplied a new method of defining status: money. While most careers were still seen as lacking if they sought to earn income instead of managing or maintaining money, this still allowed people of the working or lower-middle class to become educated in a high-grossing career and make the necessary means to move up in class. The addition of income into the class systems was able to open doors, but, at the same time, women were no longer able to assist the growth of their families' income: "It would seem that in the upper middle class, ... the family economy had been replaced by a male breadwinner economy. But it was apparently not because they were wives but because they were female that women remained in the home" (Jordan 30). To be seen as worthy of the higher social statuses, women could not work or gain income. Men were deemed the sole "breadwinner," and women were now shunned as working agents to maintain upper-middle and upper class lifestyles. This class system shift still provided firm lines to keep people out, which Wilkie Collins supports in *Jezebel's Daughter*.

While birthrights were no longer the sole method of placement within a social class, the upper classes still presented barriers for people wanting to move up. The largest obstacle

preventing upward movement were job titles; “a barrier separating the wealthier section of the old middle ranks from those below (Clark 1962: 252–74; Davidoff and Hall 1987: 24–5). Above the line now included merchants, manufacturers, and a group of occupations – attorney, surgeon, apothecary, engineer – which had previously been seen as roughly on a level with carpenter, barber, watchmaker, tailor and the like” (Jordan 32). Many of the careers that were now seen as able to move within the upper-middle class had previously been deemed unworthy. Even through the new mobility, many upper and upper-middle class people would still see them as less than. But this also meant that the title of surgeon, that now might allot a place as upper-middle, had to also be maintained by a high income and lack of female income presence. Later on, this becomes one of the many downfalls for femme fatale Madame Fontaine.

Just as the infamous Madame Fontaine attempts in *Jezebel's Daughter*, there was one other method of upward social mobility: marriage. “[The middle class] increasingly found themselves incorporated into the new upper middle class by relationship and marriage” (Jordan 34). The one role that women could play in developing her families’ status and income was through the contract of marriage. These marriages were strategic and usually done with the full understanding of the benefits the lower-status-party would reap. But just as job title and income could only move status so much, marriage acted in the same manner. The status mobility would not be accepted if the marriage was between two families of too despairingly different classes. And to the chagrin of Madame Fontaine, the marriage agreement, arrangements, and the behavior of the women involved was required to fulfill Victorian models of behavior.

As the social status of a family was determined by wealth, birth, and money, women played a key role in the family maintaining that status. The Victorian ideal of the model female was strict and acted as its own requirement for social acceptance: “The status of a family was judged by the

amount of leisure available to the women” (Jordan 31). Families wanted women to be angels of the house to both symbolize their wealth and status while also illustrating that they had such an abundance of wealth, the women did not need to work. Even with a surplus of political reforms granting women more freedoms and rights within marriages, much of society still opposed the idea of women working. “When [Bessie Rayner Parke] and other members of the Women’s Movement began in the 1860s to suggest that young middle-class women should train for occupations, they encountered strong resistance, the most obvious basis for which was a belief that their families would ‘lose caste’” (Jordan 31). Preserving the glamour of social status was seen as far more important than gaining income at the expense of allowing women to work. Wilkie Collins criticizes women working through the guilt and punishment suffered by Madame Fontaine. While she did not maintain a job, she deviously worked to obtain a marriage agreement for her daughter and works as nurse for Mr. Keller. This is not the only way that Madame Fontaine breaks feminine social standards as there were strict regulations on all aspects of a woman’s life.

Since the ideal woman was not allowed to work and add to the income of the family, their role became that of entertainer. “[Women were] committed to ‘aping the life of the aristocracy’ (Parkes 1865: 156), paying morning calls, giving dinner parties, and joining with the wives of squires and clergymen in visiting the poor, running clothing clubs for them, and teaching in the Sunday School” (Jordan 35). In everything a woman did, she must show compassion and be altruistic in her motives. And in all of these duties, not only does she show her caring feminine nature, she must also remain lethargic. None of these activities would require a woman to truly exert herself and the majority of the actual work would be completed by servants. In this

behavior, the angel of the house became a symbol of wealth and status. Though these tight constraints that women had to meet could cause the angel to fall.

The requirements that women had to maintain for their families social statuses was one of the core reasons many women sought to rebel or fell under the curse of hysteria. Feminist theorists, Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar, outline why Victorian women could fall victim to the angel of the house in their novel *Madwoman in the Attic*; “Not only do these precursors incarnate patriarchal authority ... , they attempt to enclose her in definitions of her person and her potential which, by reducing her to extreme stereotypes (angel, monster) drastically conflict with her own sense of her self - that is, of her subjectivity, her autonomy, her creativity” (Gilbert and Gubar 1929). By acting as the angel, the Victorian woman had to leave behind her sense of self; she could not think on her own, and her body and mind were always subject to maintaining the image of angel. There were only so many opportunities to throw a dinner party, and once the entertaining stopped, they were left with nothing. While some women fell to the rebelling acts seen throughout the poison trials, most women felt the crushing reality of hysteria and lived in a constant state of frailty and ailment. Wilkie Collins takes a critical look at women who break the mold of angel, but also illustrates how women can gain some agency through the character Mrs. Wagner.

Neither Madame Fontaine nor Mrs. Wagner acted as the ideal Victorian angel of the house entertaining and relying on men to provide for them. Madame Fontaine and Mrs. Wagner both seek freedom in the behavior of what Helene Cixous terms as the New Woman and fight for female representation. In her call to action, “The Laugh of the Medusa,” Helene Cixous provides urgent instructions for women seeking to gain agency:



To write. An act which will not only 'realize' the decensored relation of woman to her sexuality, to her womanly being, giving her access to her native strength; it will give her back her goods, her pleasures, her organs, her immense bodily territories which have been kept under seal; it will tear her away from the superegoized structure in which she has always occupied the place reserved for the guilty. (Cixous 1947)

Through her voice, and specifically through writing as feminine not mimicking the masculine predecessors, woman can gain her body and agency back from the patriarch that has taken it away from her. In the past she has been made to feel guilty for her attempts or want to gain her body back, but the New Woman is not to feel guilt but only pleasure at her arrival. Neither Madame Fontaine nor Mrs. Wagner ever present themselves as guilty for the steps they take towards representing their goals and ideas.

Both women made attempts to behave as New Woman and seek freedom through the power of writing. Fontaine and Wagner have the education and artistic talent to write for themselves and for other women, but Gilbert and Gubar highlight the difficulty for women, especially Victorian women, to begin writing: "Where does a woman writer 'fit in' to the overwhelmingly and essentially male literary history ...? - we find we have to answer that a woman writer does not 'fit in.' At first glance, indeed, she seems to be anomalous, indefinable, alienated, a freakish outsider" (Gilbert and Gubar 1928). Madame Fontaine's letters, her own writing, is used against her as evidence of her demonic nature and ability to plot against others. Also, her letter to Mr. Keller detailing why her daughter should be given a chance to marry is seen as unworthy and not deserving of his time. Her voice does not fit within the patriarchal Victorian system or even with the upper-middle-class system that Mr. Keller inhabits. Mrs. Wagner finds more ease in finding acceptance of her voice due to her already secure place as

upper-middle-class, but her writing is constantly questioned and critiqued before ever receiving recognition. Her lawyer, business partner, and even nephew constantly question her abilities and attempt to squelch her ideas. But Mrs. Wagner, as true New Woman, never once allows herself to be written upon by the men around her. “Write, let no one hold you back, ... [Men] don’t like the true texts of women - female-sexed texts. That kind scares them” (Cixous 1944). Even though she scares all of the men around her with her liberal ideas of hiring women and rehabilitating Jack Straw, she continues to write and continues to use her voice to gain her body and agency back from the system that took it.

Alongside the power of writing, the New Woman must use her power of speech to fight for woman against the patriarchy, although, only one of Collins’ two femme fatales was successful in gaining and maintaining her power. Cixous determines that a woman’s power to convey and persuade with her voice is just as important as the words that flow from her pen; “An act [the transformation of the New Woman] that will also be marked by woman’s seizing the occasion to speak” (Cixous 1947). Again, both of Collins’ femme fatales “seiz[e] the occasion to speak” against the men surrounding them to support their own agendas (Cixous 1947). Madame Fontaine regularly defends herself to David as narrator and staunchly defends her social status and background to Mr. Keller to show him the errors of his own perception. Mrs. Wagner must also defend her movement to house and care for Jack Straw as means of proving her method of moral treatment correct and viable. She speaks to support and defend her motives to her nephew and her lawyer. Even though her speech does not always convince, she still stands and speaks up. “Every woman has known the torment of getting up to speak. ... her words fall almost always upon the deaf male ear, which hears in language only that which speaks in the masculine” (Cixous 1947). Mrs. Wagner is never able to convince her lawyer to agree with her endeavor into

asylum medicine, but she does not back down in response either. She proves all others wrong, and she stands as righteous by the end. Despite the fact that both women seek to become the true New Woman, only Mrs. Wagner exhibits Collins' idea of how the New Woman should behave and use her power. Madame Fontaine becomes the symbol of failure and persecution for Collins.

Even though Madame Fontaine had the ability to gain power within the patriarchal system, Collins sets her up as a scapegoat; she represents everything that a Victorian woman should not be. Not only does she shirk every requirement of her sex, but she also fails as a New Woman. The New Woman, yes, must write for herself, but in her ability to write she must also speak for those who are unable. "Woman must write herself: must write about women and bring women to writing, from which they have been driven away as violently as from their bodies" (Cixous 1942). With so few women being able to write and gain voice amongst the reigning patriarchy, those New Women must write for others and not act selfishly as Madame Fontaine does. In Madame Fontaine's letters, her selfish nature becomes clear. "Power – oh, if I had the power to make the fury that consumes me felt! The curse of our sex is its helplessness (Collins 74). Fontaine aptly understands the plight of Victorian women, but she does not use her ability to write to help others. Her ultimate goal is to better her own conditions and status, not to provide insight for other women. She becomes obsessed with her power as New Woman, and this obsession, and eventual descent into madness, is her downfall that Collins uses as an example to avoid. Victorian women should not abuse the power they have gained, and they should be compassionate in the use of that power to aid other women.

Not only was Madame Fontaine a symbol of the failed New Woman, but she also represented the infamous Victorian female poisoners. The female poisoners of the time were truly in opposition to the ideal angel of the house, and Madame Fontaine's physical appearance

and behavior put her in stark contrast to the pure angel. The part-time narrator, David Glenney describes Madame Fontaine; “Those dark, steady, heavy-lidded eyes of hers seemed to be looking straight into my heart, and surprising all my secrets. ... How that influence was exerted – whether it was through her eyes, or through her manner, or, to speak the jargon of these latter days, through some ‘magnetic emanation’ from her, which invisibly overpowered me” (Collins 45). Her dark eyes suggest menace with a darkness lurking behind them. And her power is strong enough that David is able to feel it just through her physical appearance. The angel of the house is meek and mild, not menacing, plotting, and powerful. The female poisoners’ of the time were also described in opposition to the angel through the title of ‘fastness.’ Madame Fontaine is put on the same level as the infamous poisoner, Madeleine Smith, as a fast girl.

The women’s magazines of the fifties spoke with growing alarm about the new generation of ‘fast young ladies.’ ‘Fastness’ covered a wide range of behavior, but it generally designated a woman who was thought brash, self-assertive, and flirtatious. Like the ‘Girl of the Period’ of the sixties, the ‘fast’ young woman of the fifties was a caricature; but she reflected the ... distinguishable group of leisured young women in search of diversion. (Hartman 389)

Madeleine and Fontaine both sought diversion and rebellion to distract them from the stagnant Victorian life. Fontaine actually acted upon her rebellion and married someone below her stature and then goes on to murder to gain back her social standing. Even though Madeleine murders, it is a murder to hide the rebellion she was dreaming of yet never acted on by actually marrying her tryst. Madame Fontaine becomes a female poisoner that is unable to be deemed a victim as Madeleine Smith was. Fontaine must hold her guilt and stand as the lesson against female poisoners through her death.

The female poisoners, and Madame Fontaine as symbol, were also seen as guilty because of their artistic and writing abilities. Madeleine Smith, before being seen as a victim of foreign influence and the low social status of her lover, was guilty solely through her ability to artistically write. “Madeleine’s highly artistic writing style, moreover, was consistent with the public’s image of her as a poisoner: it suggested a woman capable of plotting” (Helfield 165-166). If artistic writing is seen as the ability to plot, then David Glenney should have seen Madame Fontaine as guilty without question the moment he read her letters. “Artfulness was not compatible with Victorian notions of innocence. Nor was it compatible with Victorian notions of femininity” (Helfield 166). Just as her appearance pits her in opposition to the angel, Fontaine’s artistic tendencies allow Collins to portray her as demon or monster filled with guilt. For Collins, Fontaine represents the ultimate evil within female poisoners that were filling the newspapers and courthouses of his time. By having her guilt not only discovered, but by also punishing Madame Fontaine in death, he illustrates what should and could happen to any woman who attempts such an atrocity.

Madame Fontaine continues to condemn herself by attempting to forcefully move upward to a higher social class through deceit. As Ellen Jordan detailed in *The Women’s Movement and Women’s Employment in Nineteenth Century Britain*, the higher social classes were fighting to maintain their boundaries against lower classes. In her letters, Madame Fontaine details her intentions; “I shall leave no stone unturned, my dear, to push my husband forward. And when he is made a Baron, we shall see what my father will say to us then” (Collins 73). Fontaine is willing to push her husband, and herself by association, above their current station at all costs. But when her husband decides his academics are more important than income, Madame Fontaine takes it into her own hands to gain her intended status. Through debt, lies, poison, and murder,

she goes against everything that a Victorian woman should be within the social class that she seeks to be part of. If not for her accidental poisoning, she would have finally reached her goal through Minna's marriage to Fritz. But since Fontaine is Collins' scapegoat for all detrimental Victorian behavior, she must suffer for her crimes.

While Madame Fontaine is meant to be seen as demon and to be avoided, Mrs. Wagner is Collins's representation of how a Victorian woman could gain and use power while still maintaining Victorian feminine ideals. While Madame Fontaine abuses her power, Mrs. Wagner uses her power to act for others. "Women, it would seem, could if required act heroically in the public sphere, their womanly sympathies could triumph over their equally feminine timidity, but only if they had prepared themselves for such a contingency through living the life of continual selflessness and self-abnegation dictated by the Angel in the House myth" (Jordan 53). Even though the angel of the house was not meant to act out, if she was acting out of compassion and maintained her feminine identity, she would not be persecuted for her agency. Mrs. Wagner also maintains a level-head in the face of opposition; "she differs from Madame Fontaine in keeping her cool and providing her critics wrong" (Hall xx). Instead of yelling at her lawyer when he initially refuses to attend the asylum with her, she asks him to think over his options and take his time making his decision. With this calm reaction, her lawyer ends up doing as she intends and visits the asylum with her. Her composed and passionate responses in the face of adversity allow her to maintain status as an angel, an angel with agency.

Even though she technically never poisons anyone, society is still able to see Mrs. Wagner as a victim instead of persecuting her for her masculinity and push for power against the patriarchy as a New Woman. Unlike Madame Fontaine, Mrs. Wagner is a true English woman, and one of Madeliene Smith's defenses for her innocence was her identification as English.

“[Smith’s] defense drew on the stereotype that moral poison could never flow from a British woman’s pen” (Helfield 167). The agency that Mrs. Wagner acts through her writing and speech cannot be immoral or capable of heinous acts for the simple fact that she is British. Mrs. Wagner is also able to maintain innocence as a New Woman as victim. “It seems that the best defense of the sensational woman writer was to transform her into the helpless subject of masculine prose” (Helfield 177). Wagner is victim to the prose and ideas of her deceased husband. The idea to hire women and practice moral treatment in her home were not her original ideas; she was given these goals by her husband, who was not naturally English but instead from Frankfort. His foreign prose, submitted through his will and other writings, are the true fault for Mrs. Wagner’s behavior, and therefore she is not at fault. She is a victim of her deceased husband. Again, Collins is able to illustrate her ability to succeed as a woman of power by using tactics seen in the Victorian court houses and newspapers. She is ideal for supporting her husband, and at the same time victim for the same actions, and through this, Collins is able to support her behavior and portray her as a model woman.

Mrs. Wagner is not the only representation of the ideal Victorian Woman; through Minna, Collins is able to illustrate how women of lower social statuses should behave. While Mrs. Wagner is an altered and powerful angel of the house, Minna is a true angel of the house. “Minna’s sweet face looked lovelier than ever, glowing with the heavenly light of true and generous feeling. ‘Oh, Mr. Keller!’ ... ‘do you really suppose I am cold-hearted enough to want time to think of it’” (Collins 170). Minna acts and speaks for the benefit of the men around her. She is there to support them and represent the ideal woman of compassion sought after by all upper-middle families. Even her appearance is depicted as heavenly; her inner behavior is seen upon her face. Collins uses both Mrs. Wagner and Minna to show how the angel of the house can

change between social classes. Mrs. Wagner, as a member of the upper-middle class, is able to act heroically and exert agency to the benefit of her family and other women. But Minna is from the lower-middle class and therefore does not have the status that allows Mrs. Wagner freedom and power.

Although Minna does behave as the quintessential Victorian angel, she typically would have been guilty by association with her mother due to the times anxieties surrounding nursing infants. Victorian society was increasingly concerned with the mother's and wet nurses' ability to pass along behavior through breast milk. Jill Matus explains these anxieties surrounding maternal connections in "Maternal Deviance"; "...who could through her milk pass on her temperament to the child; proven lack of self-control in nursing mothers could be life-threatening for the infant. 'A burst of rage, passion of grief, a sudden emotion that passes off like a shadow from the mother'" (Matus 161). Therefore, Minna has the capability to possess the same crimes and behaviors as her mother before her. Madame Fontaine is even aware of and fears this maternal guilt being passed to Minna. In her diary, Madame Fontaine describes how she must stop herself from hugging and kissing her own daughter. She must refrain because through touch, her daughter may gain her mother's guilt (Collins 251). Before her imminent death, Madame Fontaine would treat her daughter as child and have her sit upon her lap and at every opportunity find reason to be within close proximity of her. For many Victorians, this would mean that Minna is subject to her mother's "social and economic position, and psychologically in relation to the formation of subjectivity" (Matus 191). Not only is she subject to the crimes of her mother, but she is meant to be stuck within her current social status with no opportunity for movement. If these anxieties were so prevalent, then why does Collins release Minna from guilt and allow her with a privileged marriage to Fritz?



Collins is able to save Minna from persecution and punishment by portraying her as the victim, a common and powerful tactic used within the poisoner trials. The doctor that determines Madame Fontaine's guilt is the one to save Minna from that same guilt. "Mrs. Wagner's future life must not be darkened by a horrible recollection. That sweet girl must enjoy the happy years that are in store for her, unembittered by the knowledge of her mother's guilt" (Collins 249). Mr. Keller and David eagerly agree to these terms. Since all three men have seen Minna's angelic nature, it can be assumed that she has proven herself free from guilt and, that through saving her, they are supporting her behavior as angel of the house. But the most promising savior from guilt comes from Mrs. Wagner, the ideal Victorian New Woman and Angel combined; "Minna's second mother, standing by Minna's side, on the greatest day of her life" (Collins 253). If Mrs. Wagner takes maternal possession of Minna, she can be saved and disassociated from the corruptions of her birth mother. Minna became the victim of her mother's foreign influence, since she had become the ideal English angel, and in desperate need of saving from the moral and social standings of Mrs. Wagner. Through Minna, Collins is not only able to illustrate how the lower-middle-class angel should behave, but he is also able to again support his depiction of Mrs. Wagner.

With the abundant social and moral lessons that Collins is attempting to implore Victorian women to accept, the sensation novel stands out as the best genre to portray these crucial ideals. The sensation novel was rapidly gaining popularity which allowed for a larger audience; "sensation-hungry readers ... numbers were growing daily as literacy rates rose and the cost of printed matter fell" (Hall vii). With so many women obsessing over the poison trials taking place, the sensation novel aligned with the level of drama and intrigue and gained the readership of those same women. It was those women that Collins would want to educate on the

dangers of poison, murder, and social expectations. Collins also drew in his readers by not yelling at them, but by drawing them in with mystery and intrigue. “But rather than striking forthright blows in favor of divorce law reform and greater sexual freedom, sensation novels usually tend merely to exploit public interest in these issues” (Brantlinger 6). By using the topics and fears already present in newspapers around the country, Collins could guarantee his readers would be interested and therefore have the potential to learn from his femme fatale demon and femme fatale angel.

Even though *Jezebel's Daughter* presents a conservative moral tale, the sensation novel as a genre was under scrutiny and literally under trial. “Partly because of its generally exploitative approach to controversial issues like bigamy and adultery, the sensation novel was felt to be disreputable by most contemporary reviewers” (Brantlinger 6). Collins took a more conservative stand and punishes the masculine femme fatale in his novel to be more approachable and get his message across. In Fontaine’s death, he is able to punish all of the behavior that put sensation fiction on trial in the first place. Along with Madame Fontaine as degenerate, his decidedly male choice in narrator helped to support a patriarchal and therefore more acceptable telling of the tale. “David Glenney, who does not appear in the [original] play at all, becomes principal compiler-cum-narrator of the novel” (Hall xi). Having David narrate helps Collins’ poisoner novel become more acceptable to his English audience. With the generally negative view of the sensation genre, Collins made strategic choices in plot, character punishment, and writing style to ensure his work would survive and grow in popularity for his audience to consume and mimic his lessons.

Madame Fontaine is more than a murderer. Minna is more than a wife. Mrs. Wagner is more than a victim of poison. These three characters provide the idyllic representation that all

Victorian women should model. In a time where social status, female political representation, and femininity were revolutionizing, Collins provides an entertaining how-to-behave moral tale that Victorian women would assuredly find interesting. While Collins' primary interpretation of women's place in society was conservative, he does allow the freedom and agency of Mrs. Wagner as New Woman. Does the sensation novel then provide a stepping stone for women to begin their work within feminine writing? Or is Collins's depiction of New Woman tainted by his masculine perspective?

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Megan Looney

English 6090

Dr. Phil Dickinson

February 13, 2017

### Critical Thinking and Counseling Through the Power of Literature

I sit huddled in a corner, crying into my crossed arms. The phone is still clutched in my hand as the conversation rings in my head. My mother is in the hospital again for a third overdose. As I struggle to stay above the waves of pain, my English teacher finds me and hands me a copy of Victor Hugo's *Les Miserable*. She says nothing other than that I need to immerse myself, and immerse myself I do.

The pain and struggles of the characters in the novel forced me to critically analyze how I was dealing with my own life events. Reading became both a therapy and an ever-present teacher; I was able to learn both how to cope and provided an outlet. The teaching of literature is also the teaching of critical thinking, both of academic and emotional or deeper topics. Learning how to analyze and connect to literature prepares students to emotionally interact with the world around them. Not only does literature help students learn how to work through tragic events in their lives, it also helps them to develop personal values and beliefs; compared to other course subjects or even pop culture, literature provides the depth and philosophical analysis necessary to work through both emotions and values. When asked why we teach literature, the primary reasoning must be the connectivity it provides for our students between a world of emotions they are still learning to navigate.

Literature courses stand out as the medium to discuss and break apart tragic events. “Literature both seems irrelevant in tragedy and crucial in its power to console and illuminate” (Showalter 133). During times of strife, whether on a national scale or more personal, our first reaction is not to turn to literature, but to turn away. It is human nature to feel as if nothing could ever touch or understand the pain, therefore literature or any other medium (television or film) is at first ignored and even avoided. It is when a person or group of people is ready to confront the source and reasoning behind the strife that literature becomes crucial.

One of the primary reasons people turn towards literature before other mediums is due to the myth of why we read in the first place. David Richter explains “that in our Edenic childhoods we grew up enchanted by the pleasures and powers of literature” (Richter 15). The nostalgia of reading and the stories that taught us our values and beliefs as children, are those same stories we turn to when life does not make sense. For those members of society that grew up loving to read and feeling the power of stories early, literature as therapy seems natural.

The study of literature also has the ability to bring together the experiences of people from different cultures, classes, and backgrounds. Richter expounds on Matthew Arnold’s idea of literature as closing the class gap; “that is, a common literary culture could provide the glue to hold this increasingly secular society together by promoting the mutual sympathy of people within antagonistic classes” (Richter 18). Even though the ideas Richter discusses were meant to be a method of appeasing a class of people upset with the power struggles of the time, literature still provides a common experience that people across society can connect with. Readers will not relate to the text in the same manner, but the connection as a shared experiential sense is still there. It is during dark or troubling times that readers and teachers turn to literature for the glue it can provide to bring together our broken psyche’s and understandings of the world around us.

This past fall I had to find a way to use literature to bring all of my students together after a tragic house fire took the lives of two of our elementary students. By happenstance my students were at the end of reading *The Hobbit* as Bilbo was mourning the loss of Thorin and working through the tragedy of war. Many of my students had never suffered such emotional turmoil and did not understand the need to mourn or how to even begin the process. The day after the event, I posted an entrance ticket on my board; “How does Bilbo mourn and work through the tragedy of war and the death of Thorin? Make personal connections.” Through the discussion of my question, Bilbo became the glue that held my students together and also the glue that held their battered psyches together. Some of them had experienced death before, some had not; some came from a higher socioeconomic status and had no idea what it meant to have nothing, while others could relate to the total loss home and belongings the family has suffered. But across their experiences, literature bridged that gap and helped them answer the questions: why they suffered and how to mourn loss.

One of the reasons that my discussion of *The Hobbit* worked was because I allowed my students to see my emotion. To feel comfortable sharing and expressing emotion in the classroom, students must see that ability and empathy in their teachers first. In “Teaching Literature in Dark Times,” Showalter expands on this idea; “Rosenblatt believes that the teacher of literature should not ‘assume a mask of unemotional objectivity or impartial omniscience’” (132). Many teachers attempt to maintain a professional and academic relationship with their students by developing the “[assumed] mask of unemotional objectivity” (Showalter 132). While it is important to maintain the professional atmosphere of the classroom, with literature it is also important to show the emotional connection with the texts we teach, and therefore, not be afraid



to bring our own emotions into the classroom. From day one in my classroom I am forthright with students on how I emotionally approach literature.

If a story makes me cry or reminds me of time spent with loved ones, I state it. Every time we read or mention *Wuthering Heights*, I openly tell my students the frustration I feel towards both protagonists and their actions; Heathcliff and Catherine's inability to truly see each other for who they are and how both of their actions destroys the other will always burn me. My personal reactions allow the students to feel safe when voicing their own emotional connections. Many of the students have even told me that they did not know they were allowed to be emotional about literature. It is this open environment I established on day one that reassured my students to feel safe voicing emotions on the morning of the recent school shooting at West Liberty-Salem.

West Liberty-Salem schools are only 40 minutes away from where I teach, and many of my students compete with their sports teams or are close friends with other students there. The morning that the shooting took place was a chaotic, life-altering event for many of my students. As I was preparing for a discussion of character motivation in *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest*, my students were thinking about how to function in the next five minutes. So in a rushed and emotionally driven decision, I started out my second period class with a news report on the shooting in progress.

I allowed the students time to process what they were seeing on the news in a town that many of them were significantly familiar with. After the news clip, I asked them to take a minute and think about what motivates the rash actions of our main characters in *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest*, then analyze what would motivate the rash actions of the shooter. Once they had written their responses on motivation, I had them also think and write about why it is important

and even helpful at times to understand the motivations behind such confusing actions; how could it be helpful for them? After they had written their reactions, we were able to discuss them as a class. My students felt safe and comfortable enough to share those reactions with me and the entire class because of my previous open emotional responses. They were also able to use the literary text to springboard into the more difficult discussion of the too-close-to-home shooter. This experience reiterates literature's ability to offer wisdom, solace, and at the minimum a doorway to the discussion of how we as humans are compelled to behave and react to tragedy.

My method of questioning and connecting to the novel during the shooting would not have worked if I had not developed rapport and a relationship with my students from the start of class. Peter Filene argues the necessity of establishing rapport with students outside of class in his novel *The Joy of Teaching*. "Even if a conversation stays chatty, though, the gulf between teacher and student will have narrowed; the relationship will have thickened. As a result, students will feel more trusting, speak up more often in class, and be more likely to revisit your office hours. You, in turn, will feel that much more connected to the class" (Filene 118). As college professors and high school teachers of literature, conversation is the cornerstone of our subject, and many of our students will come to us outside of class expecting us to be able to meet their need for conversation, whether it is about literature or not. By allowing for or seeking out these extracurricular opportunities, as Filene has termed them, we as teachers can establish and maintain necessary rapport. Without this rapport, conversations about dark or troubled times could never happen in the classroom; students would not participate or totally check out.

Along with the extracurricular conversations, I feel that rapport building conversations can happen during a whole-class discussion. Whenever I teach indigenous American creation and trickster tales, I talk about my own personal experience going to powwows with my

grandmother, and how the death of my grandmother creates new meaning for me in these stories. This conversation opens up the window to discussions on literature's ability to change for the reader and also established that crucial connection with my students.

As teachers, we always hope for the absence of national or personal misfortunes but we must also expect the unexpected. Although we must prepare for all situations, Peter Filene's call for teachers to establish these powerful relationships is crucial for the classroom whether or not tragedies occur. "The most powerful teaching takes place outside those venues: on a campus bench, or in your office, or across the table of a coffee house, or after class without you but nonetheless because of you. This aspect of the teaching/learning dialogic is unscripted, more personalize, and governed by looser rules" (Filene 116). Filene's approach to rapport is also where Showalter's argument for literature as the answer to how dark times should be approached becomes blurry. Showalter asks, "Does teaching literature, rather than economics or physics, demand that we rise to these occasions?" (131). When considering literature's ability to open up emotional avenues of discussion, the immediate answer should be "yes." But considering Filene's demand that all teachers develop extracurricular relationships with their students means that all teachers, no matter the subject, should feel obligated to rise to the occasion of tragedy.

It is then necessary to ask ourselves, why is it necessary to teach literature alongside the moments of tragedy, and not just have all teachers offer counseling sessions? Elaine Showalter expounds on this very question; "[We must] show our students that academic development is as much about sympathy, empathy, and insight as it is about reason, hypothesis, and deduction. (Showalter 136). The reason many students struggle with critical thinking and analysis skills in literature is because they do not sympathize or empathize with the texts. I do not know if this is a mindset established in high school or earlier years, but it is clear that we as proponents of

literature need to teach and model for our students how to develop personal and empathic insights into literary texts. It is these personal insights and ability to delve mind and soul into a piece of fiction that literature stands out as the optimum medium when approaching troubling events.

Teachers in literature classrooms are not islands meant to be seen from afar. We must teach as if we are a unit with our students. It is the intermingling of ideas and experiences with our students that create the deepest discussions of the literature we choose, and it is also these discussions that help us establish necessary relationships with our students. If we expect to instill the love of literature that we have in our students, we must be prepared to have honest and open conversations with our students on a regular basis. Rising to the occasion of troubling times also encourages us as literature teachers to help our students learn how to process the unwelcome events of their lives. I will always turn to *Les Miserable* during my dark times, not because I fell in love with its literary merit, but because my English teacher took the time to use literature as a means of counseling me through my life struggles.

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Megan Looney

Dr. Phil Dickinson

ENG 6090

16 April 2017

## Developing an American Identity: Syllabus and Assignment Plan

### Statement of Learning / Objectives

By the end of this course, students will be able to answer and debate the question, “What is an American Literary identity?” Students will identify, evaluate, analyze, and compare the literary techniques of past and contemporary American authors in an attempt to define what American Literature represents to the world of literature. Students will perform close-readings of poems, short stories, one drama, and three novels. As a class, we will compare how each medium answers our unit’s ultimate question. Students will also compare how film adaptations of texts have altered or added to readings of texts. For all texts, students will form and defend critical evaluations of the texts based on the literary techniques and how well or poorly the piece adds to the established American Literary identity. Texts have also been chosen to allow students to analyze how different cultures perceive and treat the American Dream, therefore, allowing students to assess how the American Literary identity may or may not change depending on the authors’ different experiences. Students will illustrate their completion of these objectives through class discussions, a reading journal, in-class performance of pieces, small in-class writings, a summative essay, and a final multimodal visual argument.

### Narrative Description of Methods

Successful learning will be achieved through focused lectures on author and historical background, literary terms, and critic reactions to text. Lectures will be brief and the primary focus of the daily class will be student-centered with small-group discussion, large-group discussion, and short writings (such as Think-Pair-Shares) to prepare students and spur on discussion. Students will be assigned specific readings to have prepared by class; except poetry, which will be read aloud in class. Students will be required to keep a reading journal (digital version shared with professor for feedback) that they must keep close-reading notes, personal reactions, and notes on the question “What is an American Literary identity?”. Students will meet rigorous writing goals through teacher modeled writing, where I will write a reading journal along with the students and use it to help facilitate discussion. By modelling journal writing along with the class, students will not only understand the expectations for the writing, but they will also see how journal writing can add deeper meaning and understanding for all levels of readers (including teachers).

Students will also complete small in-class writings (such as Think-Pair-Shares, Free Writes, Gems of an Idea, etc.) that I will be able to monitor and comment on quickly in class. These types of shorter pieces are primarily meant to help students visualize and verbalize their ideas and questions concerning the assigned readings. So, as students are discussing and writing their reactions in small groups, I will be able to attend to individual students’ needs. Students will gain personal connections and understandings of the text not only through the informal writings and in-class discussions, but also through viewing and participating in performances of an American play. Having students create their own adaptations of the play to portray their analysis and connection to the text will allow us to discuss the power of adaptations and how their own experiences alter the analysis and power of the original text.

The culmination of their analysis, close-reading, and writing skills will be illustrated through two summative projects where students must take a stance on the question, “What is an American Literary identity?” The level of critical thinking and evaluation will be modeled in class by the teacher and through the discussion; the level of writing will be gained through feedback in the reading journal, in-class writings, and also through model essay examples evaluated in class. To prepare students for the second summative assignment, I will model the creation of visual arguments twice during the course, and students will practice creating visual arguments with specific texts. This will allow them to gain feedback and practice in a fail safe environment where learning through mistakes is encouraged.

#### Methods/Teaching Philosophy Parity

There are two student goals for students to showcase their learning: the literary analysis essay and the multimodal visual argument. The critical and evaluative writing that students will be drafting for the literary analysis aligns with my teaching philosophy of students learning about self through writing. With the unit focused around the question of American identity in literature, students will also have to evaluate what their own American identity is and what literature or other media influenced the development of that identity. I will model the level of close-reading and writing that I expect in the summative essay during class discussions, lectures, and reading journal & in-class writing feedback. The class will primarily be student-centered discussion based so students can take ownership of their connections to the readings and the development of ideas presented in class.

The multimodal visual argument aligns with my teaching philosophy also. While students exhibit their ideas and connections in a formal academic essay, they should also be able to utilize Web 2.0 tools and visual rhetoric to persuade audiences. In a digital age where the traditional



essay is no longer the only option of expression, students find more success and ability in multimodal expression. By having both forms of persuasion assigned, students are able to practice both rhetorical skill sets and also analyze how each format will provide a different opportunity for persuasion and message.

### Assessments

One of the formative assessments will be the reading journal. Students will be required to create a digital journal that can be shared with me and has the capability for me and other students to make comments. At the beginning of the semester, students will be assigned a reading group that will comment on their members' journals at the beginning of the week. These comments will be used to fuel discussion throughout the week. The reading journals must have a 150-250 word response to each assigned week's reading. Comments must be a minimum of 50 words and must contain more than agreeing and positive feedback; the comments must expand on the original text. I will provide weekly feedback to these journals that will not only help students develop close-reading skills, but will primarily focus on the drafting and supporting of written ideas. Students will be split into three groups for these reading journal assignments (Groups Orange, Brown, and White [school colors]). They will not turn in a journal every week, instead, they will turn in a journal every three weeks. This allows them to choose from three weeks' worth of reading to reflect on, but also sections out how much I am assessing and commenting on every week.

Students will also be assessed through the in-class discussions. A weekly participation grade will be given for the frequency and depth of class participation. Understandably some students will struggle with texts at times, therefore questioning will be encouraged in participation, and small in-class writings will be used to help students work through and prepare

their ideas for discussion (such as Think, Pair, Shares OR Gems of an Idea). The completion of these in-class writings and group discussions will go towards their participation grades when completed. These writings will be brief reflective and brainstorm prompts that (along with the discussions) will be provided with oral feedback during class.

The week of the American play, students will also be assessed on their ability to plan and implement a 2 minute short scene or summary scene from the play that they think embodies some form of American identity. They must work with their group to adapt the scene's plot to better portray their message and make the text more relevant to a modern audience. This will work not only as an assessment of their ability to evaluate and defend what American identity in literature is, but then also allow for informal feedback and a more personal connection to the text.

The formal written assessment will be a summative 3- to 5- page literary analysis essay where students answer the question, "What is an American Literary identity?" They will be required to refer to and use at least 3 of the readings we discussed in class in their essay as support, and will be allowed to pull from one other piece of American literature that we did not address in class. This assessment is a culmination of the close-reading, evaluation, defense, critical thinking, and writing skills developed throughout the unit. This assessment is also split into two groups so I am not grading all of the students' work at once, and also so students can have more opportunity to work with me one-on-one during the drafting process.

The final exam will be a multimodal project. Students are posed the question, "What is an American Literary identity?" at the very beginning of the course, and with each reading, students delve deeper into their answer to that question. For the final exam, I will pose this question to them for the last time and ask them to present and argue their answer with a multimodal project.

The only requirements for the project is that their answer be given with text and visuals (audio elements are encouraged but not required), and they must be strategic with their rhetorical choices to answer the question. Their resources to answer the question are all of the texts we read throughout the semester. Twice during the semester, we will create and analyze visual arguments as formative assessments / discussion tools. This way students will have experienced creating multimodal arguments in a safe space where they are able to experiment and see me model how to create a rhetorically strong visual argument before being asked to do so for their final exam.

### Reflection

I have been wanting to alter my current approach to American literature and provide a more rigorous approach to close-reading and writing within my current class, and this course focus has allowed me to do so. Course planning and curriculum mapping comes easier to me than it may to others since I am required to do this as a secondary English teacher with five different classes to prepare for. A solid plan for a course is key to the success of a classroom, and with so many different classes it is important to be organized and prepared. But while the plan for the semester is made, the learning is only successful if teachers are willing to be flexible and adapt to the students' needs. So, even though I have all due dates and readings assigned, I must accept that this can and should change if those alterations benefit my students.

My struggle with this syllabus has been ensuring that I have developed a unit where collegiate rigor – not high school – is developed. At the high school level, I move slowly through short stories, and can take an entire month on one novel because I want to ensure that students are gaining the necessary skills and practice along with the basic understanding of the plot. To move towards a more collegiate rigor, I have not only tried to incorporate a quicker pace of reading, but also a much more student-centered learning and discussion process. The level of

writing, evaluation, and close-reading that would be expected in this course is also much more rigorous than would be expected in a high school classroom.

I normally focus my lessons on particular time periods, and I believe that instead focusing on a single, yet broad, analysis question for the unit will allow me to broaden my own teaching approach and student expectations. When the readings, lectures, and discussions are primarily focused on the time period, the close-reading and analysis does not easily move into student personal connections and analysis; they struggle connecting with an author and text that is only taught to them as being from a particular time period. By focusing on American Identity and not a time period, students can take ownership of their close-reading and analysis, and hopefully grow and learn about their own identities through the literature.

### Syllabus and Master Schedule

\*Begins on next page\*

**Syllabus & Master Schedule**  
**American Literature ENG 2\*\*\***  
**Spring Semester 2019**

Instructor:	Megan Looney
E-mail:	meganc@bgsu.edu
Office:	East Hall Room ****
Office Phone:	(000)111-2222
Office Hours:	4:00 pm – 5:00 pm Monday, Wednesday, Friday (and by appointment)
Mailbox:	In Main Office

**Required Course Materials:**

- *Song of Solomon* - Toni Morrison
- *Death of a Salesman* - Arthur Miller
- *American Born Chinese* - Gene Luen Yang
- *Drown* - Junot Diaz
- *Fight Club* - Chuck Palahniuk
  - Books may be purchased as physical or digital copies as long as the student is able to bring the copy with them to class
- Other readings provided on Canvas
- Notebook, post-its, or preferred method of close-reading materials
- Access to Canvas
- An open mind to not only analyze but also question the literature we will read.

**Course Description**

In this course, we will read and discuss works within a range of genres: the short story, novel, poetry, drama, graphic novel, and film. Much of the reading is difficult and substantial, and the course moves quickly. Therefore, in order to be successful in the course, you will need to allot sufficient time outside of class to do the reading and coursework, and you will need to attend, and be on time, for all lectures and discussions.

In this course, we will not only discuss the aesthetic merit of literature but also the importance of literature to the authors, the impact of the time periods in which they were written, and the relevance to modern readers. But the entire course will focus on answering our focus question. By the end of the course, you will be able to answer the following question: What is an American Literary identity?"

**Course Objectives**

- To provide a working knowledge of the characteristics of various literary genres.

- To develop analytical skills and critical thinking through reading, discussion, and written assignments.
- To broaden a student's intercultural reading experience.
- To deepen a student's awareness of the universal human concerns that are the basis for literary works.
- To stimulate a greater appreciation of language as an artistic medium and of the aesthetic principles that shape literary works.
- To understand literature as an expression of human values within an historical and social context.
- To question literature's impact on modern human values, beliefs, politics, and aesthetic preferences.
- To question how the American Literary Identity has formed, changed, and how that identity impacts readers.
- To utilize rhetoric and Web 2.0 tools to create and support literary arguments.

### **Learning Outcomes**

- Write clearly, coherently and effectively about various genres in literature
- In discussions and writing, address the culture and context of the work of literature
- Analyze literature by addressing theme, character, conflict, setting, point of view, language, tone and sound, as appropriate to the work
- Develop critical thinking skills through writing and discussions.

### **Reading Assignments**

All reading assignments are due on the dates listed on the syllabus. Do your reading before class. You can expect daily writing assignments and in-class discussions; there will be no make-ups for these. If you are absent, you will take a zero for that day's assignment unless you provide an excused absence at least 24 hours in advance.

You should always bring your readings and any annotations to class, as lectures and class discussions will focus very closely on details of the texts we read. Making marginal notes in your text as you read and during class will also help you prepare for summative projects.

### **Course Grades**

Your course grade will be calculated accordingly:

Participation: Discussions/In-Class Writings -	15%
Journals: Posts and Replies -	10%
Group Play Adaptation and Performance -	10%
Literary Analysis Essay -	30%
Multimodal Visual Argument -	35%

**Digital Journals:**

Students will be required to create a digital journal that can be shared with me (or provide the link); some suggestions to utilize are Weebly, Google Sites, Podcast, WordPress, Wix, or a different choice. As long as the method you choose allows me and other students to make comments on your journals.

The reading journals must have a 250+ word response to the readings completed prior to the due date (I suggest choosing at least 3 readings to reflect on and analyzing their combined impact on you as a reader and your understanding of the course's focus question). Comments must be a minimum of 50 words and must be more than agreeing and positive feedback; the comments must expand on the original text

Students will be split into three groups for these reading journal assignments (Groups Orange, Brown, and White). You will not turn in a journal every week, instead, you will turn in a journal every three weeks. This allows you to choose from three weeks' worth of reading to reflect on.

You will be also be assigned a group to comment on (For example, if you are in Group Orange, you may be assigned to comment on the journals of students in Group Brown). Your comments on students' posts are due the Monday after that group's journals are due. You must comment on 3 student's journals from your assigned group.

These journals will allow you to work through the readings and brainstorm areas of interest for your literary analysis essay and the final project.

**Literary Analysis Essay:**

Students are expected to provide their best work for all writing assignments. The essay assignments must be typed in MLA format with a complete works cited and in-text citations.

The essay will be turned in digitally on Canvas.

For each unit essay, you will choose 1-2 texts from the unit to close-read and develop a unique analysis / perspective on the literature. The only research or citations to be included in the essay must be texts that we have read in class during.

There will be two due dates for this essay. At the beginning of the semester, you will be placed into either Group A or Group B. Your due date corresponds with your group.

**Discussions:**

You will complete in-class discussions every week. The in-class discussions will be our chance to close-read the assigned texts together and develop a group understanding.

These discussions will allow you to ask questions and create deeper meanings of the texts with the assistance of the entire class.

**Group Play Adaptation:**

After reading our assigned drama, we will discuss the power of performed texts and utilizing modern adaptations of texts to provide deeper personal connections and relevancy to texts.

In groups, you will be asked to develop your own modern adaptation of ONE scene from the play. Groups will perform these adaptations in class, and we will use them and the choices made to discuss the modern relevance of the play and how we as an audience are able to connect and draw different meaning from a performance rather than just reading.

**Final Exam - Multimodal Visual Argument:**

You are posed the question, “What is an American Literary identity?” at the very beginning of the course, and with each reading, we delve deeper into the answer.

For the final exam, I will pose this question to the class for the last time and ask each student to present and argue your answer with a multimodal project. The only requirements for the project is that your answer be given with text and visuals (audio elements are encouraged but not required), and you must be strategic with your rhetorical choices to answer the question. The resources to answer the question are all of the texts we read throughout the semester.

**Plagiarism:**

In this course, you must be honest and truthful. Plagiarism is the use of someone else’s work, words, or ideas as if they were your own. Here are three reasons not to do it:

By far the deepest consequence to plagiarizing is the detriment to your intellectual and moral development: you won’t learn anything, and your ethics will be corrupted.

Giving credit where it’s due but adding your own reflection will get you higher grades than putting your name on someone else’s work.

Finally, plagiarism is a punishable offense. Students caught plagiarizing are subject to failing grades on the plagiarized assignment as well as the possibility of administrative consequences. Papers without a Works Cited and In-Text Citations will earn automatic Zeros.

Please refer to BGSU’s current Student Affairs Handbook found at <http://www.bgsu.edu/content/dam/BGSU/student-affairs/Student-Conduct/documents/Student-Handbook.pdf> for information regarding BGSU’s academic honesty policies. These policies and penalties apply to our class, as well as to all other classes at BGSU.

**Late Assignments:**

All work must be handed in when assigned. I will not accept late work unless you have made previous arrangements with me. Similarly, I will not accept late work in my department mailbox or via e-mail unless you have made previous arrangements with me. Please note: missing class on a day an assignment is due does not excuse you from turning in that assignment (unless we have made prior arrangements for you to do so – at least 24-48 hours in advance).



None of the due dates listed on the syllabi will ever be changed to an earlier date, but depending on weather or other school cancellations, assignment dates may be pushed to later dates. I will always inform you of these changes and adjust the dates listed on Canvas.

**Classroom Environment:**

In order to promote an inclusive and constructive learning environment, demeaning, marginalizing, and otherwise negative language and behavior will not be tolerated in the classroom. Respect and courtesy toward the instructor, classmates, and classroom guests are expected. Language and behaviors that are disruptive, abusive, or harassing may result in disciplinary action as specified by the Student Code of Conduct.

**Cell Phones:**

Cell phones are not to be out or in use during class, unless you have spoken with me about a need to use your device. Class time is meant to learn and expand our knowledge of literature and writing; cell phones can distract from our purpose and are to be in pockets or book bags and either turned off or on silent. If you are caught using your phone during discussions, or it goes off during class activities, 1% will be deducted from your final grade for every offense.

**BUT!** There is some time scheduled as work time during class for the essays and final project. During work time your phone use will not impact your grade.

This work time is your time to conference, gain additional feedback from me, and utilize your peers for feedback and study sessions.

**E-Mail:**

E-mail is a wonderful communication tool, and I welcome the chance of using it to help you with questions about your writing or about my assignments. Please note, however, that e-mail can be unreliable. Servers may be down, computers may malfunction, etc. As a result, I cannot be responsible for any e-mail messages that are lost or addressed incorrectly. If you e-mail me something, I will respond, ordinarily within 24 hours, to tell you that I have received your message. However, if you don't receive my e-mail reply, this means that I did not receive your message and that you should discuss the content of your e-mail with me personally. Similarly, if you e-mail me right before class, I probably will not be able to read your message until after class.

**Learning Commons Services**

The Learning Commons is a valuable resource that provides students with individual assistance with writing their papers – free of charge. The Learning Commons offers a variety of services, including online consultations which can be accessed through their website:  
<http://www.bgsu.edu/learning-commons/writing.html>

While the tutors at The Learning Commons can be very helpful, you will need to plan ahead. An email response may take up to 72-hours, and staff is not available on weekends to give immediate feedback.

**Attendance**

Attendance in this class is mandatory. Class time will be devoted to actively building writing skills by writing and revising, discussing, and critiquing your own writing and the writing of others. Such activities simply cannot be “made up” satisfactorily by getting the notes from a peer or by meeting with me. I realize, however, that sickness or emergencies can occur; should you need to miss class, please be sure to contact me, preferably beforehand, to discuss what might be done to assist you with getting on track.

Because there are times when absences cannot be avoided, you are allotted THREE absences that will not impact your participation grade. For every other absence, your participation grade will be reduced by 3%.

Please refer to the late policy for work assigned while absent.

**Office Hours:**

Office hours give students the opportunity to ask in-depth questions and to explore points of confusion or interest that cannot be fully addressed in class. Therefore, you should utilize my office hours whenever needed.

My office hours take place Monday, Wednesday, and Friday from 4 - 5 pm. My office door will be open this entire time; please feel free to come in for assistance, clarification, further discussion, or just to say hi!

If you are unable to see me during these hours, please email, and we will schedule a time and place that works for both of us.

**Title IX:**

I am a mandatory reporter at BGSU, which means I am not a confidential resource. Therefore, I am required to report any information that I am aware that may violate the Sexual Misconduct and Relationship Violence Policy. If you would like to speak with someone confidentially, please contact the Counseling, Psychological Services, or Falcon Health. Other resources include, The Cocoon, the Violence Prevention Center, and Unison. Otherwise, if you would like to report an incident involving a possible violation of BGSU’s Sexual Misconduct and Relationship Violence Policy, please contact our Title IX Coordinator at 419-372-8476.

**Accessibility Statement**

If students have a documented disability which requires accommodations in order to obtain equal access for learning, graduate instructors should advise these students to make their needs known, preferably during the first week of the semester. Students who request accommodations must verify their eligibility through the Office of Disability Services, 38 College Park (phone: 419372-8495; TTY: 4193729455). For further information, please visit the BGSU Disability Services web site at <http://www.bgsu.edu/disabilityservices.html>.

**University Closure Due to Bad Weather**

In most cases, the University will not close for winter conditions unless the Wood County

Sheriff's Department declares a Level 3 emergency. Closing information will be communicated through BGSU's AlertBG text system, BGSU e-mail notification, BGSU's website, and Toledo's Television stations. (Note: You can sign up for AlertBG by signing into MyBGSU and clicking on the AlertBG tab at the top of the page.)

### **Religious Holidays**

It is the policy of the University to make every reasonable effort to allow students to observe their religious holidays without academic penalty. In such cases, it is the obligation of the student to provide the instructor with reasonable notice of the dates of religious holidays on which he or she will be absent. Should you need to miss a class due to a religious holiday, you should understand that absence from classes for religious reasons does not relieve you of responsibility for completing required work. In such an event, you should consult with me well before you leave for the holiday to find out what assignments will be due while you are absent—and you subsequently should have the assignments completed and turned in to me prior to missing class.

### **Student Veteran-Friendly Campus**

BGSU educators recognize student veterans' rights when entering and exiting the university system. If you are a student veteran, please let me know if accommodations need to be made for absences due to drilling or being called to active duty.

## Master Schedule

**\*\*This is subject to change. Students will be notified of all changes on Canvas AND during class.\*\***

### Week One

#### Monday

- Lecture and discussion of focus question; “What is an American Literary identity?”

#### Wednesday

- **Assigned Readings For Class**
  - “The World on the Turtle’s Back” – Iroquois Creation Story

#### Friday

- **Assigned Readings For Class**
  - “Hunting Song / Dinni-e Sin” – Navajo Song

### Week Two

#### Monday

- **Assigned Readings For Class**
  - Passage from “The Way to Rainy Mountain” – N. Scott Momaday

#### Wednesday

- **Assigned Readings For Class**
  - “Because my father always said he was the only Indian who saw Jimi Hendrix play “The Star-Spangled Banner” at Woodstock” – Sherman Alexie

#### Friday

- **Assigned Readings For Class**
  - “A Drug Called Tradition” – Sherman Alexie

### Week Three – Journal Group Orange Due Friday

#### Monday

- **Assigned Readings For Class**
  - Passage from *Braiding Sweetgrass* – Robin Wall Kimmerer

#### Wednesday

- **Assigned Readings For Class**
  - “My Sojourn in the Land of My Ancestors” – Maya Angelou

#### Friday

- **Assigned Readings For Class**

- “Any Human to Another” – Countee Cullen

### **Week Four – Journal Group Brown Due Friday**

#### **Monday**

- **Assigned Readings For Class**
  - “The Weary Blues” – Langston Hughes

#### **Wednesday**

- **Assigned Readings for Class**
  - “American History” – Michael S. Harper

#### **Friday**

- **Assigned Readings For Class**
  - Chapters 1-7 *Song of Solomon* – Toni Morrison

### **Week Five – Journal Group White Due Friday**

#### **Monday**

- **Assigned Readings For Class**
  - Chapters 8-15 *Song of Solomon* – Toni Morrison

#### **Wednesday**

- Assign Visual Arguments of Readings Thus Far
- Time to Work in Class

#### **Friday**

- Gallery Walk and Discuss Peers’ Visual Arguments

### **Week Six – Journal Group Orange Friday**

#### **Monday**

- **Assigned Readings For Class**
  - Act I of *The Death of A Salesman* – Arthur Miller

#### **Wednesday**

- **Assigned Readings For Class**
  - Act II of *The Death of a Salesman* – Arthur Miller

#### **Friday**

- Groups and Scene assignments will be given in class. Performances will be due in class on Monday

### **Week Seven – Journal Group Brown Due Friday**

#### **Monday**

- Scene Performances in class
- Discussion of student interpretations

#### **Wednesday**

- **Assigned Readings For Class**
  - “The Yellow Wallpaper” – Charlotte Perkins Gilmore

#### **Friday**

- **Assigned Readings For Class**
  - “Virus” – Neil Gaiman

### **Week Eight**

- Spring Break!

### **Week Nine – Journal Group White Due Friday**

#### **Monday**

- **Assigned Readings For Class**
  - “Cold Colors” – Neil Gaiman

#### **Wednesday**

- **Assigned Readings For Class**
  - Passage from *The Joy Luck Club* – Amy Tan

#### **Friday**

- **Assigned Readings For Class**
  - *American Born Chinese* – Gene Luen Yang

### **Week Ten**

**\*\*If you are part of Group B for the essay, these days are not required for you to attend in class. Catch up on reading for the next week and reflect on what you learned so far. \*\***

#### **Monday**

- Group A Brainstorm Essay

#### **Wednesday**

- Group A Work and Conference on Essays

#### **Friday**

- Group A Peer Review

### **Week Eleven – Journal Group Orange Due Friday**

#### **Monday**

- **Assigned Readings For Class**
  - Chapters 1-3 from *Drown* by Junot Diaz

#### **Wednesday**

- **Assigned Readings For Class**
  - Chapters 4-6 from *Drown* by Junot Diaz

#### **Friday**

- **Assigned Readings For Class**
  - Chapters 7-10 from *Drown* by Junot Diaz

### **Week Twelve – Journal Group Brown Due Friday**

#### **Monday**

- Watch sections from John Leguizamo's *Latin History for Morons* in class
- Discuss in class

#### **Wednesday**

- **Assigned Readings For Class**
  - Chapters 1-10 from *Fight Club* by Chuck Palahniuk

#### **Friday**

- **Assigned Readings For Class**
  - Chapters 11-20 from *Fight Club* by Chuck Palahniuk

### **Week Thirteen – Journal Group White Due Friday**

#### **Monday**

- **Assigned Readings For Class**
  - Chapters 21-30 from *Fight Club* by Chuck Palahniuk

#### **Wednesday**

- Watch key scenes from film version in class – take notes for next class discussion

#### **Friday**

- Discuss Film Versus Novel

### **Week Fourteen**

**\*\*If you are part of Group A for the essay, these days are not required for you to attend in class. Reflect on what you learned so far. \*\***

**Monday**

- Group B Brainstorm Essay

**Wednesday**

- Group B Work Time and Conferences

**Friday**

- Group B Peer Review

**Week Fifteen**

**Monday**

- Assign Final Multimodal Project

**Wednesday**

- Work time and Conference Time

**Friday**

- Work time and Conference Time

**Finals Week**

- Final Exam takes place on **Wednesday** of exam week at 12:30 pm.
- During our scheduled exam slot, we will be Gallery Walking our classes Multimodal Projects



Megan Looney

Dr. Sue Carter Wood

ENG 6800: Convincing Women

12 December 2018

### Evolving and Adapting Rhetoric and Theory: Indigenous Theory Writing Back

It is typically expected that rhetoric and theory be presented formally and meet those time honored expectations: typed as an article or essay, written in 3<sup>rd</sup> person only, no fictional story as theory, and based on the formal research of other academics. But these and other expectations have squelched the formation of theory and rhetorical practices that could be gained from different indigenous tribe practices. The powwows I attended as a child with my grandmother would not be deemed as formal or researched enough to count as a presentation of theory. Even though the stories told and the songs sung illustrated the theory and knowledge of the tribe, current academic standards silences these forms and bars them from flourishing within the archives of post-secondary studies.

Changes to rhetoric and approach to theory must happen, not because we want it to but because it has to for both past and future generations. Indigenous writers and speakers have been on the defensive for too long; they need a space where they no longer have to defend their words, but their words are asked to exist with purpose. To remedy this, there is an immediate need for academia to not only accept the texts of indigenous writers: stories, speeches, articles, and oral communications which are organized to represent the tribal rhetoric of the individual writer and the community as a whole. But as the acceptance of these texts begins, their rhetoric must not be viewed as Other or an exception to current core academic and rhetorical values. Theory moves

beyond the definition that traditional academia has determined; indigenous values, and therefore theory and texts, connect culture, rhetoric, and theory together. Rhetorical theory and the locked doors of academia must begin to morph into something new; simply accepting that indigenous rhetoric exists does not change how it is perceived by those already entrenched by past and current academic standards. Incorporating indigenous texts into academic archives and theoretical approaches is the first step; the next step is to allow these texts the platform to write back on the oppressive nature of academia. They must tell the story of their silence and illustrate how their rhetorical and theoretical approaches are both equal to academic tradition and will begin to change it.

Silencing of indigenous voices began with forced assimilation through education. Both the Haskell Institute and Carlisle School approached the pedagogical objective of assimilation similarly. “Carlisle’s form of rhetorical education ... [had] two major pedagogical imperatives. First, these teachers must rid students of their ‘savage’ behaviors and teach them those ‘civilized’ bodily and social practices of dominant white society. Second, they must silence students’ tribal language and instruct them to speak English” (Enoch 74). Even though these were the goals laid down by Carlisle, the Haskell Institute and other boarding schools followed similar if not exact educational formats. One of the many ways they achieved this goal at both institutes was by forcing students to room with children from differing tribes and therefore forcing them to learn English as a means to communicate. This forced death of tribal languages has perpetuated the idea that to be truly academic and credible, the indigenous scholar must only utilize the language they were forced to accept so long ago. And it is only recently that a brave few writers have begun to incorporate the languages of their culture. How can the ideas, theories, and stories of the writer be truly understood if they must go through this historically oppressive translation?

The required English-only education not only immersed the students in the learning outcomes of the school and has continued to impact the scholars of today, but it simultaneously distanced them from their tribes' main form of cultural practice.

As these schools began the assimilation process with English-only education, they also perpetuated the creation of viewing Native Americans as a single culture instead of separate tribes with different values, beliefs, benefits, and cultural practices. To continue to weaken how indigenous people viewed themselves and how others perceived them from the outside, the government and the boarding schools developed the image of indigenous people as a singular culture. They would teach this perception of the single culture to the children attending the boarding schools. The girls at the Haskell Institute were given the opportunity to develop an anthology of Native American folklore in the school publication, *Indian Legends*. Henritta Wood realizes that, "Their use of the generic "Indians" may reflect the success of white-directed Indian education to sever cultural and social ties and this weaken tribal identification" (Wood 85). Even though each student is identified by their tribal affiliation in the book, all but one of the students wrote their entries into the anthology as if they were depicting the traditions of Native Americans in general. The pedagogical goals of the schools and the government had been met. And it is still obvious today in schools and the media, that indigenous people are perceived as a singular culture not a group of many. When researching and analyzing indigenous texts, they have always been treated as a singular type of genre or culture. To begin changing theory and rhetoric, indigenous writing must be analyzed through the lens of individual authors' tribal values and practices.

One way academia can begin the process of no longer identifying Native American as a singular culture, is to develop archives where indigenous material is organized by tribal

affiliation. These new archives can begin to fix the damage of the past by breaking down the requirements of white archives and developing practices that align with indigenous rhetoric, theory, and cultural practices. Malea Powell details her time spent researching in the traditional archive and the restrictions they place. “Access required knowledge of a very specialized type: how to find and identify the documents within catalogs and holding lists and finding guides, . . . - all of these an elaborate maze each time I visited someplace new, all designed to keep the knowledge safe, protected, away from the prying eyes of the uninitiated and uninformed” (Powell, “Dreaming” 117). These “gatekeepers” of archives are preventing the knowledge of indigenous people from spreading and from gaining entry into the archives. Authors from each tribe utilize their cultural practices within their rhetoric, and academia’s practice of hiding this rhetoric in a singular cluster of Native American genre ends up hiding a mass of new and undiscovered material. New archival practices cannot be modelled from the oppressive academic methods. It must be modelled on the rhetorical practices and common values of the different writers, stories, and tribes gifted to it.

Along with new archival practices being developed with indigenous audiences and authors in mind, it is crucial to understand that academia must perceive oral stories as theory. In "Stories Take Place: A Performance in One Act," Malea Powell, details how indigenous culture teaches and understands theory differently than white culture. “We [indigenous people] believe the proof of a thing or idea is in the doing. Doing requires some form of social interaction and thus, story, is the most persuasive and sensible way to present the accumulated thoughts and values of a people. . . . There is story in every line of theory. The difference between us [indigenous] and European scholars is that we admit this, and present theory through story” (Powell, “Stories” 384). It is not that the indigenous people have not developed theory and

rhetoric, it is that white academia has not looked in the right areas for it; they need to look to the stories. Instead of academics relying on non-fiction research articles based on theories with Aristotle or other classically accepted scholars, indigenous theory is presented in the story itself. Every story has the potential for theory. Nothing should be ignored or seen as unimportant when developing theory. The theory itself also does not have to be presented in seminar papers or other traditional methods; story again takes precedence, not the format or medium. When changing how we view rhetoric, theory, and archives, story must take precedence. Shamans, medicine men, chiefs, mothers, and grandmothers, have always held the stories of their tribes and families. So, it is not that campfire stories have simply just been entertaining, as Carlisle and white society has romanticized indigenous culture. Instead, these heads of the families and tribes were and are the theorists. They maintain, teach, and grow those tribal theories to be remembered and learned.

Native American festivals and Powwows are prime places where this type of theory is exhibited and is taking place for audiences every year. During the Oka Kapassa festival of 2013, Amy Bluemel narrates the story of the Chickasaw and the Choctaw. Her telling of their story is not merely entertainment, but provides much more for audiences. One rhetorical choice that Bluemel makes to convey theory to her audience is by integrating tribal language into her storytelling. Multiple times she uses a term in Choctaw within her story and quickly defines in for her audience. Yes, her primary language used is English. She does this as a means to ensure that her audience is able to understand her message, and of course to maintain the antiquated ideal of English as academic and professional, but the language of her tribe is important also. She is beginning to speak back to the oppression of her language and teaching the audience the power that individual words hold.

Along with integrating indigenous language, the story itself presents an acceptance of different perspectives; the search for one right answer is not the goal in her tribe's theory. Bluemel details the problem of the brothers finding a solution to what the shaking pole means, and each determines a different meaning. Instead of arguing or debating the answers, they accept the different perspectives and create two different tribes: the Chickasaw and the Choctaw. In most theoretical conversation, a singular answer is the goal. Bluemel though has laid out the theory that, for these tribes, is in opposition to this; differences are accepted, and from those differences creation is born. From this oral creation tale, the audience is able to yes, be entertained, but the rhetoric and theory from the text allows Bluemel to speak back, gain agency, and begin the process of changing what traditional academia is.

Oral texts are key to indigenous theory not only for their cultural connections and ability for the authors to speak back, but also because oral stories provide a more in-depth connection to the audiences. Gus Palmer studied and detailed how the storyteller during powwows creates a relationship with the audience to advance the message of the story. Palmer explains, "that master of ceremonies, in order to rally the lively participatory engagement of spectators, makes not only remarks about the current events of the day but also direct statements to relatives and friends about their personal behavior" (514). The audience is no longer a static character on the outside unable to influence the text at hand; the audience can respond and change the mood, tone, and pace the master lays out for the story. The master of ceremonies is also able to influence the audience and create a relationship with them as he engages them; he can make minute-by-minute decisions based on their engagement and understanding. The audience is able to help the master of ceremonies by informing him of their understanding. "Kiowas often gesture with head, arm, and hand motions when telling stories. Kiowa listeners very often respond directly to the

storyteller by uttering *hau*: ‘yes,’ coupled with the nodding of the head” (Palmer 514). The storyteller expects his audience to verbally and physically respond and participate in the process. If they were to notice the audience not participating, it would allow them to make decisions to clarify understanding or change other aspects of how the story is told. The audience has much more control in the rhetorical situation and development of the theory than in a static written piece where an author can only speculate on how the reader will respond. Oral storytelling will allow rhetorical practices to grow and influence other academic mediums.

As indigenous tribes moved beyond performing their theory for audiences of tribal members only, they sought to contribute their knowledge to academic circles, and written rhetoric was the expected medium for their knowledge. Or the stories they presented were seen as fiction instead of being treated as a multitude of genres presenting theory. These stories that teach and perpetuate theory do not have to be nonfiction historical accounts; poetry and fiction should be held in equal regard beside traditional articles and essays. “The creative realm, therefore, is essential in transforming memory by establishing an active and contemporary forum for those who have suffered and continue to suffer in silence” (Andrews 96). This forum can be created through new archival and rhetorical practices, but this forum that Andrews calls for is not just for what academics define as typical rhetorical or academic compositions; creative writing and stories must take precedence. It is in creative stories that truth can be found and rhetorical analysis can be applied. Andrews rhetorically analyzes poetry to find the truth about indigenous experience through the authors’ experiences. She illustrates the rhetorical power of poetry and places it on the same playing field as speech and journal articles, if not above. Some of the powerful rhetorical tools the Haskell and Carlisle students utilized were double-voicing, juxtaposition, omitting, and repetition. Andrews finds examples of all of these rhetorical

practices in the poems she chooses to analyze. Creative writing has the strongest connection to oral traditions of storytelling: the original medium of indigenous rhetoric.

One of the many creative indigenous texts that presents tribal theory through fiction is “The Council of Pecans” by Robin Wall Kimmerer. “The Council of Pecans” is both a narrative depicting her grandfather as a boy fishing and foraging for food and a history of her family, tribe, and indigenous people as a whole having to reconcile the double-edged land laws the U.S. government forced tribes to choose and therefore lose their land. This chapter is an epideictic rhetoric that both praises the resilience and culture of Kimmerer’s family and tribe while also blaming them for losing sight of the lessons of the pecan grove, although she returns to praise as they learn from their mistakes. The U.S. government, on the other hand, reaps what they sow of total blame for forcing the hands of the tribes.

One of the most consistent rhetorical devices throughout the piece is juxtaposition. The title itself, “The Council of Pecans” is an example of juxtaposition. It presents the western political tradition of councils that are meant to take place within confined walls, but it takes the council and instead places it amongst pecan trees: a natural setting, open to the elements and vulnerable. An area where the audience is forced to listen, not argue. The rest of the narrative juxtaposes the story itself with the tragic lesson and history of her people. The entire chapter begins with the narrative describing a day in her grandfather’s life where he is unable to catch any fish, but by luck, stumbles upon some piganeek. And even though they do not have the baskets necessary to carry them home, they quickly come up with the plan to use their pants as makeshift baskets to bring home the protein heavy bounty (Kimmerer). This narrative acts as a metaphor for values and histories of her family, tribe, and indigenous peoples as a whole throughout the rest of the chapter and she continually returns to the story. Even as she describes



the history of the “Trail of Death” and the taking of children to boarding schools she keeps referring back to the narrative of the hunt for piganek. The juxtaposition of atrocities committed on her family next to the humorous tale of her grandfather, illustrates the strength of her family and tribe.

Kimmerer’s use of the native word for nut, “Piganek,” is also crucial to her rhetoric (Kimmerer 12). She utilizes the native word for pecan and does not define it for the reader until three lines down, and even then the reader must use context clues within the narrative to understand that she is talking about pecans (Kimmerer 12). Importance is placed upon indigenous languages, and the reader is meant to work, not the author whose native language comes first. “Pigan is a nut, any nut. The hickories, black walnuts, and butternuts of our northern homelands have their own specific names. But those trees, like the homelands, were lost to my people. Our lands around Lake Michigan were wanted by settlers..., we were marched at gunpoint along what became known as the Trail of Death” (Kimmerer 12-13). The story first brings the audience in as a way to teach them indigenous cultural practices and beliefs in a light-hearted narrative; together, both Native and white audiences picture the grandfather running home in his underwear, proudly holding up his pants full of pecans, and the audiences giggle together because we are also proud of his quick thinking. But then Kimmerer quickly changes the tone, and with one simple word, Pigan, illustrates how the forced relocation of an entire people had lost not only their homes but their language and identities. This story of family resilience and warm summer days is quickly juxtaposed with the realities of a tragic history and terror. With one simple word, piganek, Kimmerer has made one of her strongest rhetorical choices and has developed the theme for the entire narrative.

Kimmerer did not make rhetorical choices at random. Similarly to another modern Native writer, Malea Powell, Kimmerer teaches specific tribal and indigenous lessons throughout her writing. “I imagine Grammy pouring nuts out to prepare them and one rolling away to a welcoming spot at the edge of the dooryard. Or maybe she paid her debt to the trees by planting a handful in her garden right then and there” (Kimmerer 14). She does not come out and state this is her culture and values, instead it becomes part of the narrative. This is also part of the tradition of storytelling. Western fairytales and folklore usually have that point at the end of the story where the narrator or the protagonist states the lesson they have learned, just in case those reading did not grasp it. Little Red Riding Hood tells us not to stray from the path and trust strangers. The three little pigs learn not to be lazy. But Sky Woman and Coyote do not pause at the end of their stories to reiterate their lessons; they have learned their lesson, and they expect those listening to the story to have listened close enough to have gained that lesson. Malea Powell does this at the beginning of all of her speeches and writings by thanking those that helped her write and by thanking her elders. In western culture, elders are respected, but for many indigenous tribes and Powell’s specifically, elders are the holders of the families’ stories and therefore are the theorists of the family. There is much more reverence held for them. She never tells her audience this outright, but she still teaches this lesson by taking the time to thank them. Kimmerer uses this same rhetorical device throughout her narrative to allow her audience to learn about her tribe’s values and practices.

While aligning with fellow indigenous writers, Kimmerer also makes specific choices to break away from traditional western rhetoric. Kimmerer writes in 1st and 2nd person throughout the entire piece. “I only make pecan pie at Thanksgiving, where there are plenty around to eat it all” (Kimmerer 13). This in itself is a strategic rhetorical choice because in academic writing 1st

and 2nd person is typically frowned upon and seen as informal. But she places her story and perspective as equal to and even more important than research and data by choosing to write in 1st and 2nd person.

Finally, in true epideictic rhetoric, Kimmerer utilizes both praise and blame. “Barely a generation after land was ‘guaranteed’ through the sacrifice of common land converted to private property, most of it was gone” (Kimmerer 19). She partially blames the tribes past decisions to split and leave the land; they allowed themselves to be separated. The trees cannot thrive separate and neither can the tribe. While she blames her tribe’s decision, the government takes the majority of the blame though. She does not end her narrative with blame though. “The Potawatomi Gathering of Nations reunites the people, an antidote to the divide-and-conquer strategy that was used to separate our people from each other and from our homelands” (Kimmerer 21). After blaming her past generation for the decision to split, she praises the current generation for keeping the grove together. They have learned from mistakes, and that is the point of stories, to learn. She has developed her own theory on the survival of tribes with this story.

Kimmerer made the strategic decision to combine both fictional storytelling and traditional essay style rhetorical explanation to ensure that her audience of academics will accept her new approach to theory. She has changed what theory can look like, but she has not totally altered it. Kimmerer is not alone in this approach; many indigenous theorists, such as the popular and pervasive Malea Powell, use similar rhetorical strategies to begin integrating indigenous rhetorical practices while also maintaining traditional academic expectations. In order to avoid the silencing of the archives, these authors have to incorporate some semblance of those criteria that theorists have come to expect. But this needs to change. “Leslie Marmon Silko offers some advice about stories: ‘They aren’t just entertainment. / Don’t be fooled. / They are all we have,

you see, / all we have to fight off illness and death'; stories are carried in the body, in the belly where they live and grow" (Powell, "Rhetorics of Survivance" 396). Theory and rhetoric can be found in a completely fictive text. Malea Powell argues that by forcing writers to choose the traditional nonfiction rhetoric, we continue to define the creative and oral indigenous practices as primitive. "The system of either/or identity-building in which liberation from the past is a central component for the construction of the myths of 'America'" (Powell, "Rhetorics of Survivance" 402). To have success in the world of American academia is to choose the writing style that has silenced indigenous theory and rhetoric for generations or to be forced to incorporate it within the indigenous voice. The indigenous voice cannot stand on its own successfully. But if rhetoric and theory begins to grow, change, and adapt, if traditional methods obtaining knowledge are questioned, then indigenous theory and styles of writing can be successful and can be equal, not Othered.

One indigenous author that has allowed her creative rhetoric to stand on its own without forcing the story to reside with traditional academic practices is Leslie Marmon Silko. In her short story, "The Man to Send Rain Clouds," she is able to teach history, cultural practices, communication theory, and entertain, while also developing new rhetorical practices for her genre. Silko is aware of her disconnect from her audience since she is writing her story down. But she makes a strong rhetorical move to maintain some connection to her audience by telling the story in 3<sup>rd</sup> person. Writing stories in 3<sup>rd</sup> person is a rhetorical move used by a plethora of authors, but for Silko it ensures that her audience is able to make connections with all of the characters and not focus on one. Every character is important so the reader can understand the final lesson, so the reader must develop a relationship with each one. And since Silko cannot

watch her audiences' reactions for understanding, writing in 3<sup>rd</sup> person will help the audience to grasp the necessary meaning.

Silko also aligns her stories detailing with traditional trickster tale storytelling practices. When masters of ceremony perform trickster tales, they focus on plot and character details far more than setting details, because it is in the characters and actions that the ideas and theory take shape. A storyteller in front of an audience is able to gauge an audience's understanding and add more detail if they feel they are able to, but since Silko has an audience disconnect in writing her story, she has reduced the setting detail. Within only four pages, the plot moves swiftly from Teofolio's death, his funeral, the priest's decision, and the final burial. The reader is forced to focus on the details they will need to gain the intended message.

Just as Kimmerer incorporated history into her narrative, so does Silko, but Silko solely relies on creative fiction for her historical lessons. Ken goes to the priest's house to ask him to put holy water on Teofolio's body before they bury him, not as a Christian burial, but because Louise does not want him to be thirsty in death. Louise believes that the holy water will keep him quenched in death because the priest has told her this at mass. In reality, this is not the purpose of holy water, and readers would understand this. By illustrating this disconnect in learning, Silko teaches the history of how the church has lied to indigenous people to force them to assimilate to Christianity and Catholicism. In the end, the priest agrees to spread holy water over Teofolio, but now the reader must question the priest's intentions. Does he do this for the benefit of Teofolio's family, or does he hope that his act of kindness will convince them to attend church and convert? Again Silko is teaching the reader the different tactics that have been used to convert indigenous people from their own religious practices. She never stops to explain this practice, but she uses the plot and characters of her story to teach this.

One very common rhetorical practice amongst indigenous authors is the integrating of lessons on tribal cultural practices. Kimmerer stops her story to explain what these practices are. Powell does not stop her writing, but her integration of thanking and praising past generations is her illustrating how it is always a community of ideas and not an individual and that the elders must always be thanked for what they have done for that community. Silko's approach is similar to Powell's. "Before they wrapped the old man, Leon took a piece of string out of his pocket and tied a small gray feather in the old man's long white hair. Ken gave him the paint. Across the brown wrinkled forehead he drew a streak of white and along the high cheekbones he drew a strip of blue paint" (Silko 49). Leon or Ken do not stop and explain why they are doing any of this, they just do it; it is a part of the story, and the reader becomes drawn into the tradition. This tactic also forces the reader to continue, to figure out why they must finish the story.

Cultural practices are not the only lessons taught through the story though; communication theory can be gained from this short story. This is where traditional academia begins to struggle; theory and larger ideas in stories is not the norm and is not where academia wants to see them. But Silko proves it can be laid out in story form. It is in the dialogue between Ken and the priest where the theory is established.

"Did you find Teofolio? [the priest] asked loudly. Leon stopped the truck. "Good morning, Father. We were just out to the sheep camp, Everything is O.K. now."

"Thank God for that. Teofolio is a very old man. You really shouldn't let allow him to stay at the camp alone."

"No, he won't do that anymore now." (Silko 49-50).

At this point, Leon and Ken have already found Teofolio's body, but are not telling the priest that he is dead. But they have also technically not lied to the priest; Teofolio will indeed not be at

the camp alone anymore. The priest represents an oppressor that is forcing change, and Silko is illustrating how to communicate with those people who refuse to accept differences. Ken and Leon never fight and they never lie, but they also do not accept the lies that the priest is attempting to force on them. Even in the end when the priest places the holy water on Teofolio, Leon is happy because the water will help Teofolio bring big thunderclouds, not that the holy water will help him into heaven. Silko presents theory that accepts when communicating with an oppressor you will not change their mind, and that to avoid confrontation, half-truths are sometimes needed. She also presents the theory of being able to adapt the oppressors' idea into indigenous theory. Holy water takes on new meaning and new practices. And not once during this did Silko adapt her story into traditional academic standards to explain this theory; she utilized storytelling methods and rhetoric to simultaneously entertain and teach.

The creation of indigenous archives and altering rhetoric and theory to allow for indigenous texts to shape expectations is more than the insertion of stories and tribes, but it is the power and the opportunity for a people to write back. "The beauty of ... the poetics is that the 'read' narratives beg to be unraveled - creating a relevant and contemporary dialog of multiple truths and multiple lies - and compel every reader to examine and question for herself" (Andrews 103). With her rhetorical analysis of indigenous poetry, Andrews highlights that the realities of stories are not finite; readers need to question the truth, but they need the opportunity to do so and the knowledge of how to do so. A reader cannot question and immerse themselves in the realities of a tribe's experience, if there is nowhere for them to access those stories and theories or if they have never been exposed to those types of texts. Malea Powell narrates her journey as she began to write back when she refused to turn away from the words that wanted to silence her. "I returned to the library each day to be excavated by the words of people who believed that me,

and mine, were worthless ... savages ... lazy ... violent ... and, quite simply, in the way - I returned because I was learning how much those words mattered, still matter” (Powell, “Dreaming” 118). An archive not of works about indigenous people written by others, but indigenous work written by indigenous writers: an archive and a rhetorical approach with the purpose of writing back would allow for students and academics like Powell to begin writing back with agency and resources. We do not expect the everyday student to learn without the necessary resources, so why do we expect our most damaged students, writers, and academics to be able to develop agency in the oppressive world of academia without resources and guidance dedicated to their needs. Powell was able to push through her wounds, find resources, and write, but that is not the story of most indigenous students and writers.

I grew up going to Powwows and learning about Shawnee culture from my grandmother. After my fifth birthday though, the small amount of land the Shawnee tribe would return to every year for a reunion Powwow was finally taken away. I still have not attended a Powwow since my fifth birthday. And with the death of my grandmother, I no longer have anyone to talk to about Shawnee traditions. But through writers like Malea Powell, Robin Wall Kimmerer, Leslie Marmon Silko, Louise Erdrich, N. Scott Momaday, and many others, I have the opportunity to continue to connect to a culture that was lost to me. For many indigenous students and academics, these cultural connections are still lost. These resources are not available or are hidden. The power to write back against the oppressor is there, but the academia must change to support that agency. This is the beginning of my story, and I must continue to tell it for others to start theirs.



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