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Final Master's Portfolio

Samantha Dalrymple
sndalry@bgsu.edu

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Final Master's Portfolio

Samantha Dalrymple
sdalry@bgsu.edu

A Final Portfolio
Submitted to the English Department of Bowling Green
State University in fulfillment of
the requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts in the field of English
with a Specialization in English Teaching

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Dr. Erin Labbie, First Reader
Dr. Lee Nickoson, Second Reader

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Analytical Narrative

My undergraduate career came to an end more quickly than I expected. How do four years of college pass by in the blink of an eye? This is the question I was asking myself in the Spring of my senior year as I avoided an even more daunting question: what next? I had fallen in love with my major, but the overwhelming avenues an English degree presents made me question who I wanted to be and what I wanted to do after graduation. Countless hours spent with my peers and professors working on creative writing, research, and assistant teaching courses produced a solution: what about teaching? My work as a teaching assistant taught me more about myself than any of my previous courses: my communication skills are strong, and I am quick to detect a disconnect in learning and navigate how to best bridge the gap to reach understanding. These traits combined with my love for my major made a career of teaching English seem like the perfect fit. I spoke with a Creative Writing professor who oversaw my senior thesis and lucky for me, this professor is a former teacher and alumni of Bowling Green State University. He pointed me toward the English with a specialization to teach program at Bowling Green State University and I knew it was the right master's program for me.

While teaching English has been my goal and graduate study has been a step toward attaining said goal, it was not feasible for me to continue my education without working. For this reason, I pursued the online English program through BGSU, so I could work full time while obtaining my degree. Over the course of two years, I have pursued two very different avenues an English degree can present someone: education *and* content marketing. I have enjoyed both of these differing experiences and had the pleasure of taking courses throughout this program to prepare me for a career in education or professional writing, whichever I may choose. I have learned diverse skills that can be used in the classroom and in the professional world, including

grammar, effective editing, communication, research, and diversity and inclusion. My beliefs and ideas about education and learning have been challenged and I have learned more from my courses, peers, and professors that I ever could have imagined. My personal teaching pedagogy has transformed, not only impacting how I plan to teach students but also how I approach the professional sphere.

Through the courses I have taken during my graduate studies, I developed a particular interest in diversity and inclusion. This has impacted my teaching pedagogy, centering around the inclusion of diverse texts that represent diverse characters, the understanding that there is no such thing as “correct English,” only an institutionalized Standard English that can be alienating to students, and taking on a sensitive pedagogy that considers the individual students in the classroom and how they may be impacted by different discourse and sensitive materials that come up during the classes they are in. I have come to believe that the only *right way* to teach an English is authentically, in a way that is sensitive to contemporary society and problems, by acknowledging barriers and actively working through them alongside students. These are lessons that not only inform how I plan to lead a classroom, but also inform how I practice leadership in a professional environment. Just like in a classroom, colleagues will not respect nor learn from you if you teach in a belittling manner. There is no room for seclusion or berating in my approach to helping lead and teach others, whether that is happening in a classroom or in a professional workplace.

After thoughtfully reflecting on the work I have completed during my time at Bowling Green State University, I have selected three pieces that showcase my intellectual exploration that has ultimately informed my personal beliefs and approach to teaching. The first two within

this portfolio are analytical essays that required substantiative research, along with the third: a teaching-based project.

The first analytical essay I selected for this portfolio examines Alison Bechdel's graphic memoir *Fun Home: A Family Tragicomic*. This piece was originally developed during the course "Theory/Methods of Literary Criticism." My essay attempts to navigate themes of trauma and empathy in Bechdel's memoir, through the scope of authorial choices in the creation of the graphic novel. The goal of this essay is to explain Bechdel's creative choices and the function of the graphic novel as a medium in the expression of trauma and the connection to the reader through empathy. Bechdel, as a lesbian woman, uses *Fun home* to recount her experience of a traumatic childhood and young-adult life after the death of her father, Bruce. The experiences in the novel are not isolated to only Alison; many readers can understand the various struggles and traumas presented in the novel because they too have similar traumas. I focused on this novel and these themes because it exemplifies the power of the graphic novel as a literary medium, while simultaneously navigating difficult topics and themes.

I believe it is important to examine literature outside of the literary canon that presents atypical main characters, like Alison who is an unfeminine lesbian and Bruce who is a closeted gay man. These characters, especially when taught in a classroom, present the opportunity for readers who are unlike said characters to gain an understanding of others who are different from them and part of diverse communities, while simultaneously acting as mirrors for people within the communities to which the characters belong. Reading and examining diverse literature is important, in my opinion, for anyone to become sympathetic or empathetic towards those who face situations different from their own. I have included this analytical essay to specifically

showcase my dedication to reading diverse literature and gaining a better understanding of diverse communities to which I do not belong.

While I did spend an ample amount of time reading, researching, and thinking analytically in preparation for this paper, revisiting it allowed me to see what was missing in the piece and how it could be improved to better suit the paper's argument. One major change I made to this paper was editing grammar and sentence structure to ensure active voice was being used throughout. Some of my sentences were run-on and there were several instances of over-use of commas, after rewriting several sentences and paragraphs, I felt as though the paper was grammatically sound. Another area I struggled with this paper was organization: while revising the paper, I found that researching and examining complex themes, like empathy and trauma, and tying these themes to artistic authorial choices, like hand-drawn images and use of color, can be difficult to navigate. The paper needed to be reorganized in a way that presented my argument in a progressive order, improving clarity for the reader. After reworking many of the sentences and reorganizing the paper, I felt as though there were "gaps" in my argument. This drove my choice to add more context to the paper, use more examples from the text, and create a stronger conclusion to leave the reader feeling satisfied at the end of the argument. While I am certain I could come back to this paper again in another year and find more ways to revise it, as any writer does, I feel as though it has been greatly improved through my own revisions and the suggestions made by my professor.

The second analytical essay included in my portfolio required substantive research and focuses on another novel that represents characters within a diverse community. This paper was originally written to fulfill a requirement for "Literary Outsiders: Young Adult Literature and Adolescence," a course focusing on the complicated position of YA literature in the American

literary landscape. This paper considers the value of teaching YA literature, specifically Angie Thomas's *The Hate U Give*, with a focus on non-standard English. Thomas's novel was influenced by the contemporary climate surrounding racism and law enforcement and tells the story of a young black man being shot and killed by a white police officer during a routine traffic stop. The novel challenges ideas about race, community, and what it means to be black through the eyes of black teenager Starr, who is in the car when her friend is murdered. Given the current political and racial climate happening in the United States, I find it especially important, as a white woman, to engage in discourse and read literature where possible to better understand the experiences, racism, and oppression the black community faces in this country. In this paper, I focus on the importance of not only reading these types of literature, but also teaching them in the classroom.

The argument of my analytical essay on *THUG* centers on the use of non-standard English in the novel and teaching the value of diverse dialects and vernaculars in writing. As in any novel that focuses on diverse communities, there is the opportunity for students to recognize themselves in characters within the novel. In a traditional English classroom, students are taught what "correct grammar" is and how to apply it in their own writing. The idea of standard English is pushed across the board, teaching students that there is a right and wrong way to speak and write. In *THUG* Starr's use of code-switching is a result of this need to use different types of English within different situations. I examined this novel for this paper for two reasons. First, *THUG* presents a good example of how non-standard English can be used in literature to tell a story *better* than the story could be told in standard English. The second, because Starr represents a diverse character who must engage in adjusting her use of standard English and non-standard English in school versus at home, to best fit in with her community. In teaching a novel like

THUG, students and teachers can engage in discourse on the use of standard versus non-standard English in the classroom. This presents the opportunity to teach the value of diversity and culture, which I find to be very important both in and out of the classroom.

I felt responsible for ensuring this essay be well represented, backed up with research, and written in a way that is engaging and persuasive. The goal of this essay is not to convince students of the value of diverse texts and English, but instead teachers. It can be difficult as an English or Literature teacher to move away from traditional ideas about English, especially when it comes to grammar and writing. I wanted to ensure there was enough insight and examples to convince those who teach this area to reconsider how they approach non-standard English in their own classroom. During the revision process, I felt as though the examples used in the literature review were not detailed enough, nor were there enough altogether to create a persuasive argument. With the help of my professor, I worked to layer in more examples from *THUG* to improve my argument within the literature review. In addition, I reworked several sentences for clarity and conciseness and worked to improve grammar throughout the piece. I also made some formatting changes to the document to better align with the rest of the portfolio. Through this revision, I was able to reflect more about my time spent at BGSU and why I find diversity, especially linguistic diversity, to be important to teach and support. I believe I have created a strong piece that will support and provoke the teaching of both standard and non-standard English in the classroom.

For the third and final piece of my portfolio, I include a unit for teaching Jane Austen through thematic lenses. This project was originally developed for “Teaching of Literature,” a course focusing on how contemporary theory informs the teaching of literature. This project fulfills the teaching requirement of my portfolio as I develop a course proposal, overview,

syllabus, and specific lesson plan to teach Austen's *Emma* through a social class thematic lens. The proposal for the Austen course within my project focuses on my personal pedagogy surrounding my approach to a sensitive topic like social class in my classroom. While Austen's work is within the literary canon and does *not* feature diverse characters or communities the way the other projects within this portfolio do, topics like social class and class separation would be relevant, as these are still modern political problems surrounding these themes. I use this opportunity in the project to explain why I believe Sensitive Pedagogy is important in this context to avoid classism and the alienation of students participating in my unit. In line with my beliefs surrounding diversity and inclusion, I would never lead a course that ignorantly subjects students to embarrassment or harassment. My goal in developing this teaching unit is to engage students in thoughtful, inclusive discussion around texts commonly taught in the classroom. This teaching unit seemed like the right piece to wrap up and connect all my beliefs about teaching and practicing writing with diversity and inclusivity at the front of my approach.

The revision process for this last piece involved a lot of reformatting and rearranging to make the unit easy to read and present like a standard course. After this first phase of edits, I felt as though I needed to build out more aspects of the unit, including the in-class activity, PowerPoint presentation, and final project for the course. These are examples of materials that would be expected to be presented, and I felt that they were necessary to understand how the individual lesson plan for one section fit into the rest of the course unit. I spoke with past professors and used past course resources to determine where there were gaps in my own unit and what I needed to do to help students understand the expectations of the course. This unit was particularly difficult for me because I have never been a teacher developing a lesson plan or unit to use in a classroom. What I quickly learned during the revision process was even though I am

not a teacher, I have been a student in these types of courses for a long time and I am quick to pick up what is confusing or where there is a gap in information. I honed these skills to create a teaching unit that is clear and informative.

In reflecting on the work I have completed during my time at Bowling Green State University, especially during this process of revision, I have come to see my passions for writing, English literature, diversity, inclusion, and teaching all come together. I am lucky to have spent my time in a diverse online community that supported my individual interests and shaped my beliefs about both writing and teaching. I have learned so much more about English literature and writing beyond good grammar, sentence structure, critical theories, and teaching instruction. I have learned how to approach sensitive topics, why it is better to support diversity in the classroom, rather than stifle it, how students will latch onto ideas and concepts that you teach, and how the way we edit a paper can either improve writing or stop writing altogether. My learning at BGSU has taught me a lot, but most importantly it has shown me how there is always more to learn. I look forward to my future and the many opportunities for continued learning and leading that my Masters in English from Bowling Green State University will present to me.

Empathy & the Graphic Novel: How Alison Bechdel Evokes Empathy and Understanding in *Fun Home: A Family Tragicomic*

Abstract

I argue it is not until Alison Bechdel writes her memoir that she fully comes to terms with her childhood and early young adult years around her family. The content of the graphic novel is tragic and the way in which Bechdel recounts and comes to understand the tragedies she has endured through the medium of her graphic novel is a type of trauma response. I argue, through the lens of critical trauma theory, that Bechdel's memoir is one of a traumatic experience and the memoir itself is a type of coping mechanism that allows Bechdel to come to terms with her father's suicide, his pedophilia, and the home life that prevented her from understanding and accepting her own sexuality. All Bechdel's traumas mentioned *are* complex traumatic experiences, which I explain and argue through the context of trauma, lesbian theory, and compulsory heterosexuality. Readers of this graphic novel embark on a journey alongside Bechdel, experiencing and understanding this trauma with her. Due to this shared experience with the author, the reader can empathize with these difficult, traumatic experiences. I argue through critical empathy theory that the reader can understand Bechdel's trauma and life through Bechdel's ability to tell her own story. While the content of Bechdel's life is enough to evoke feelings of empathy, it is the medium of the graphic novel working as a vehicle to reenact this memoir that allows the reader to fully experience Bechdel's life and empathize with her experiences. Bechdel's choice in making her memoir a graphic novel is imperative to the readers' ability to empathize with her narrative. Without the

implications of the images, the physical space created in the gutters, and the emotions expressed through the graphic style and color, *Fun Home* would not evoke emotion from the reader in the same way. Creating this memoir in the form of a graphic novel is imperative to Bechdel's success in understanding and coping with her trauma, along with readers' ability to empathize with her story.

It is important to indicate before beginning this argument that the novel I am examining is written by Alison Bechdel who is also the protagonist of the novel. Due to the potential for confusion, I will be referring to Alison Bechdel, the author of the novel, as Bechdel, while I will refer to her character in the novel as Alison. This distinction is important for clarity and for the reader to follow the arguments within "Empathy & the Graphic Novel: How Alison Bechdel Evokes Empathy and Understanding in *Fun Home: A Family Tragicomic*."

Alison Bechdel's *Fun Home: A Family Tragicomic* is a memoir of her life told through the medium of the graphic novel. In this empathetic recount of youth trauma, Bechdel uses *Fun Home* as a vehicle to relive her past to help her accept the death of her father, Bruce, his homosexuality and affairs with underage boys, and her own lesbianism.

Fun Home portrays Alison's struggle growing up in a home without typical familial affection, living a life where everything feels like a lie (Bechdel 22). Soon after Alison leaves for college she starts to discover herself and her sexuality, only for these discoveries to quickly be overcast by the death of her father. Bruce's death is a traumatic experience for Bechdel, one that she copes with in the creation of her memoir. In writing *Fun Home*, Bechdel opens her traumatic experiences to the world, not just telling but *showing* readers what she has gone through.

Bechdel uses her novel to rediscover her traumas through her visual storytelling, allowing the reader to join her in a journey of discovery. The use of the graphic form is necessary to engage the reader, to successfully evoke emotions of empathy to bridge the divide between a story and communal experience.

Alison's Trauma

In her essay “Loss, Revision, Translation: Remembering the Father’s Fragmented Self in Alison Bechdel’s Graphic Memoir *Fun Home: A Family Tragicomic*,” Helene Tison discusses Bechdel’s need to write *Fun Home*. She says, “Alison Bechdel has explained that *Fun Home* was created out of a need to get to grips with what is described in chapter 3 as an ‘abrupt and wholesale revision of my history’” (Tison 346). Tison recounts how Bechdel needed to look back on her history; she needed to relive it to come to terms with her trauma. In *Fun Home*, Alison identifies her need to use the graphic novel medium to explore her history when she shows the reader how she used “The Adam’s Family” Comic as a child to make sense of her family and her identity (see figures 1-2). This is the same strategy she uses in her later years to make sense of her lesbianism, showing that she uses the graphic medium as a processing tool (see figure 3). Bechdel suffers trauma from her experiences as a young adult, and the way she processes this trauma and comes to terms with it is through literary trauma writing: reliving her trauma through literature.

The death of a parent is a difficult experience for anyone, but especially when the death comes unexpectedly and happens in a tragic way. For Alison, the death of her father is traumatic; the nature of his death is sudden, mysterious, and comes at a time when Alison is beginning to discover herself. Bruce’s death is legally an accident, but Alison suspects he committed suicide, knowingly stepping in front of the racing truck. Alison is just past twenty-years-old when Bruce

dies; she is in college and for the first time in her life, she is finally feeling comfortable in her own identity. The combination of her father's troubling death and the way it shatters Alison's newfound sense of identity creates a traumatic experience that follows Bechdel throughout her memoir.

Bruce's death is something with which Alison struggles to cope. She describes his death as unreasonable saying, "It could be argued that death is inherently absurd, and that grinning is not necessarily an inappropriate response. I mean absurd in the sense of ridiculous, unreasonable. One second a person is there, the next they're not" (Bechdel 52). This quote comes from a scene where Alison and her younger brother are laughing together soon after the news of their father's death (see figure 4). Alison acknowledges that her reaction may not be *normal*, but she makes excuses for it through Camus' definition of the absurd, to rationalize how she is feeling. After the death of her father, to suggest, "...the universe is irrational and human life meaningless" (Bechdel 52) indicates a traumatic response.

Bechdel is dissociating from the reality of her father's death. While feeling mixed or extreme emotions in reaction to an individual's death may be normal, Madi Horowitz, in her study "Post-traumatic Stress Disorders: Psychological Aspects of the Diagnosis," identifies the difference between a normal response to death—as normal as any response to death can be—and what she calls pathological intensifications (traumatic responses). A normal response to death would be an "Outcry of emotions with news of the death and turning for help to others or isolating self with self-succoring" (Horowitz 32). In contrast, a pathological intensification in response to death would include, "Panic; dissociative reactions; reactive psychoses" (Horowitz 32). By having these reactions in response to her father's death, Alison shows signs of disassociating herself from Bruce's death. Alison eventually disassociates from her father's death

so much that she brings up his death during dates years later to see if she can feel any type of emotion from other peoples' reaction to her father's death (see figure 5). At this point, Alison has removed herself so far from the trauma that she cannot feel the emotions of mourning that would be typical.

Identifying any type of mental ailment often comes down to symptoms and patterns shown in a patient, while Bechdel never directly says that Alison is experiencing trauma in the wake of Bruce's death, the symptoms and patterns of trauma can be identified in the novel. Alison is not the only one showing signs of trauma in *Fun Home*, Bechdel herself shows that this trauma is shared in her real life through the storytelling in and creation of this graphic novel.

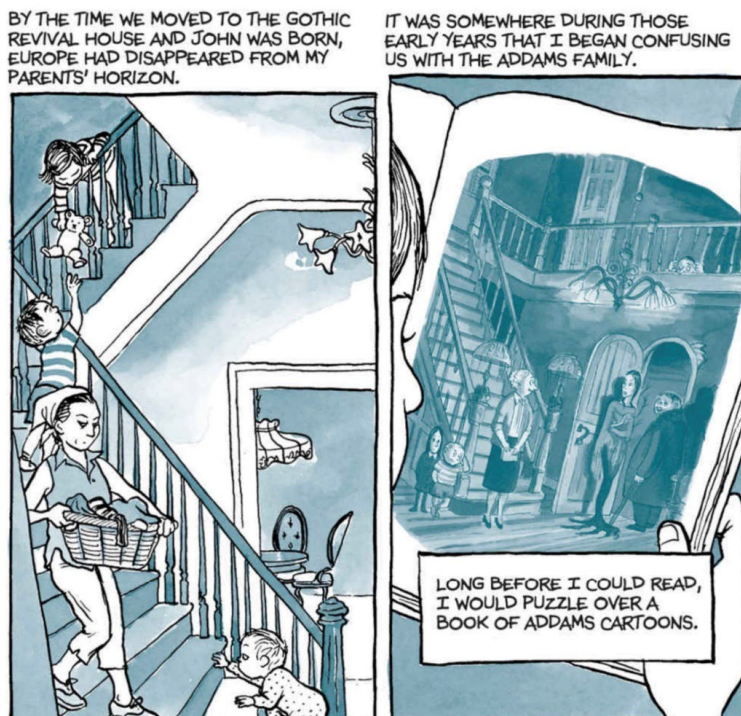


Figure 1, Bechdel 39

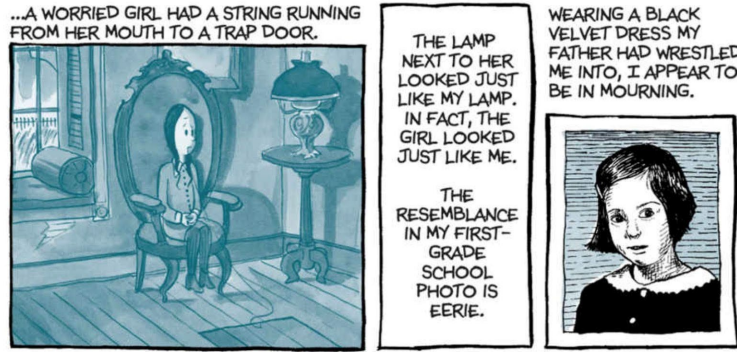


Figure 2, Bechdel 40

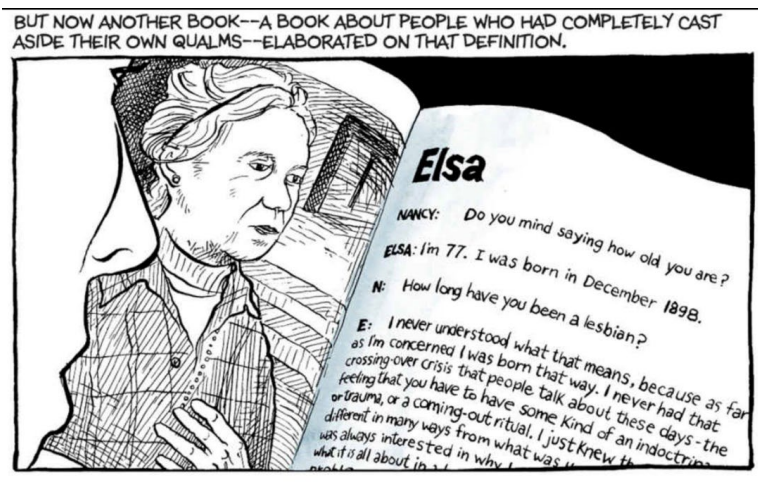


Figure 3, Bechdel 79

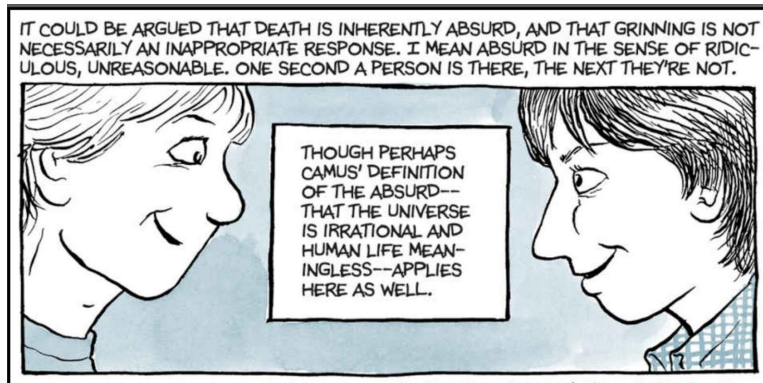


Figure 4, Bechdel 52

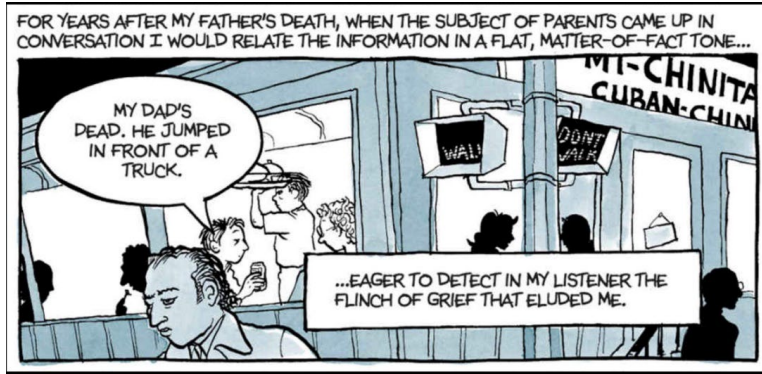


Figure 5, Bechdel 50

Repetition and Trauma in *Fun Home*

In *Graphic Women: Life Narrative and Contemporary Comics* Hillary L. Chute discusses ideas of trauma present in *Fun Home*. Chute suggests that Bechdel not only suffers from trauma, but that she is using this memoir as a way of coping and healing from the trauma of losing her father tragically and finding out he was a closeted homosexual having affairs while married to her mother.

An indication that someone has experienced trauma will often appear as a type of coping mechanism. A common symptom that appears this way in survivors of trauma is the act of repetition, that is, doing the same thing multiple times. Lisa Hinrichsen, in “Trauma Studies and the Literature of the South,” echoes this point of repetition as a result of trauma when she explains, “The modern understanding of trauma can be traced to the work of the British physician John Erichsen, who during the 1860s identified signs of trauma (somatic symptoms, repetitive behaviors) in victims suffering from the emotional aftershocks of railway accidents; the Berlin neurologist Paul Oppenheim subsequently gave this state the name ‘traumatic neurosis’” (637). Hinrichsen points this out as a long-understood sign of trauma, one which Chute agrees with in her novel and identifies as one of Bechdel’s own symptoms:

In *Fun Home*, I treat Bechdel's drawing and, in some cases, redrawing of archival materials as an embodied repetition. By embodied I mean not simply *concrete*, but that everything Bechdel represents—from letters to diaries to photographs—is drawn by hand. Nothing was scanned for *Fun Home*; instead, documents were repeated—imitated—by Bechdel's own hand in the production of the book (183).

Not only does this comment highlight that Bechdel repeats herself in *Fun Home* by bringing up scenes multiple times throughout the timeline (see figures 6 & 7) it *also* identifies Bechdel's process in creating *Fun Home* as repetitive. Bechdel hand-drew every image in the book, even images that are of the same scene were redrawn, rather than scanned and copied.

The scenes most often repeated in the novel are the experiences rooted in what appear to be Bechdel's most impactful moments: when she tells her parents she is a lesbian, when her mother tells her Bruce is gay, and when she finds out that her father is dead. All these moments are crucial pieces that fit into Bechdel's trauma, which explains why they are repeated throughout the story. This repetition indicates Bechdel is reliving these important moments over and over as a way of trying to process these events. As Chute notes, "She inhabits the past not only, in a general way, by giving it visual form, but further by the embodied process of reinscribing archival documents" (183). This novel is not just filled with her experiences or important moments, this is Bechdel's archive of how she felt in her best and worst moments, an archive that she can go back to and experience repeatedly, every time she reads *Fun Home*.

It is unfair to assume that Bechdel has not recovered from her trauma, this analysis is not meant to suggest that Bechdel actively suffers from the trauma of her childhood and young adult years. Instead, the argument is that Bechdel used *Fun Home* as an outlet to come to terms with and understand the trauma she experienced as a young adult.

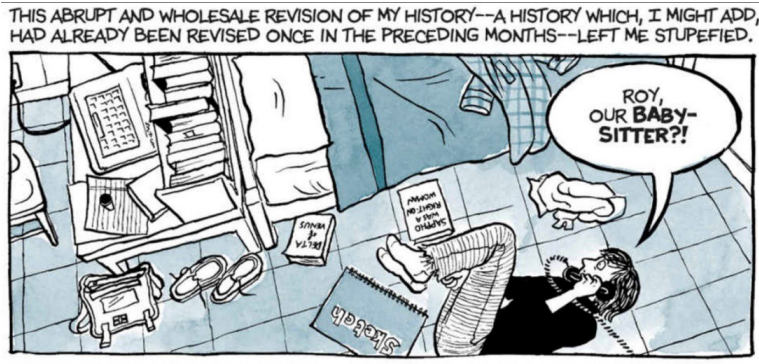


Figure 6, Bechdel 84



Figure 7, Bechdel 215

Empathy and *Fun Home*

What is empathy? According to Suzanne Keane's "Narrative Empathy" and within the field of empathy theory, "*Empathy*, a vicarious, spontaneous sharing of affect, can be provoked by witnessing another's emotional state, by hearing about another's condition, or even by reading" (1285). Essentially, empathy is the emotion of understanding, the feeling

of sympathy for another that is usually caused by a level of understanding. It is important to note that, while sympathy is adequate verbiage to describe empathy, there are some differences between the two:

Empathy:

I feel what you feel.

I feel your

pain.

Sympathy:

I feel supportive emotion about your feelings.

I feel pity for your pain.

(Keane1285-6)

Understanding that empathy is the feeling of being in someone else's shoes is essential to this argument, because Bechdel successfully evokes feelings of empathy in *Fun Home*, not to be mistaken with feelings of sympathy.

Fun Home shares Alison's trauma with the reader in a way that invites the reader to engage with the story and truly feel like they are experiencing it alongside Bechdel. Chute eloquently explains this, stating, "*Fun Home's* engagement with trauma is powerful precisely because it neither makes insufficient claims to fully represent trauma, nor does it wrap itself in an ethic of the inconsolable, the unrepresentable" (182). This is never an exclusive experience that only Bechdel shares with Alison, it is one that is powerful enough to draw in readers, but not scare them away. Instead, the book becomes a place of community for the reader that truly allows them to relive Bechdel's life. Bechdel is successful in her engaging narrative, but ultimately evokes these feelings of empathy from the reader through the medium of the graphic novel.

The graphic medium is essential to the empathy felt by the readers of this novel. While Bechdel is successful in how she writes engaging content, the graphic medium is what visually pulls readers into the experiences. Bechdel's image panels show the reader the physical world in which this takes place. Not only can the reader see characters' emotions without having to read them, but they can also see the details in the house Bruce slaves over, how much marriage has aged Alison's mother, the awkward encounters, fear, and everything else that never has to be spoken. These are details that would be missed in a purely text novel. These are details that are essential to the novel's success in evoking feelings of empathy. This medium not only allows readers to engage with Bechdel's written story, but also pulls at their emotions through different, specific elements of the graphic medium: the color and space.

Use of Color

In his analysis of color theory "Coming to Terms with Color," William Johnson discusses how colors evoke emotional responses from viewers, because of the associations people have historically made and continue to make with color. He explains, "...red is felt to be warm and blue to be cool because of the associations with fire and blood on the one hand, water and ice on the other" (Johnson 6). When humans see a specific color, it can impact their mood and perception of a thing without being outwardly apparent. Blue is a color that is not only associated with cold, but also with sadness. To complicate how blue is perceived, it is often thought to be a boy's color, but simultaneously, blue is the "feminine" color in opposition to the "masculine" red (Hiler 213). Ultimately, humans associate a lot of different feelings and ideas with color, especially blue.

Bechdel uses the same color throughout the illustrations in her graphic novel: blue. The blue Bechdel uses is not a bright nor deep. Hilaire Hiler, in "Some Associative Aspects of Color" explains the terminology necessary to understand the appearance of a color. She explains that there

are only two terms truly needed: shade and tone. She says, "...shade, for a hue dulled by the addition of both black and white, and tone, for a hue which has been darkened by the addition of neutral black" (210). These terms are important to understand to know what *type* of blue is being used in Bechdel's *Fun Home* and what associations are connected to the colors. While there are different shades of blue in *Fun Home*, the hue is consistent throughout the novel.

Hiler discusses how these different hues and shades impact the psychological atmosphere of blue, stating:

The ambivalent "blue" color of coldness and of the firmament, the "true blue" of hope, constancy and fidelity, serenity, blue-bloodedness, generosity, truth and intelligence, changes its associations, perhaps on "blue Mondays," to symbolize melancholy and depressed spirits. The well-known "Navy" (a tone) carries an aquatic atmosphere of quite another sort than the one evoked when more green content is present (213).

The shades used throughout *Fun Home* are greyed out; in a sense, they are almost lifeless. Not only does the blue feel like the "ambivalent blue" Hiler describes, but it also evokes those feelings of melancholy and depression. The blue shades used in *Fun Home* were specifically chosen by Bechdel to create a somber tone which represents the overall tone of this time in Alison's life.

These feelings are not only representative of a somber period for Alison, but they are also psychologically experienced by the reader. The way in which color impacts an individual based on social and personal associations happens to the reader when experiencing *Fun Home*. With the reader's subconscious mood impacted by the colors of the novel, it is safe to assume that this impacts how they empathize with Bechdel's story. Remember, empathy is a shared experience; as the readers' mood starts to shift because of the colors used in the novel, they begin to *feel* what Alison is feeling, creating a shared experience.

The use of blue in the novel impacts not only how the reader feels and empathizes with Bechdel's feelings, but it also impacts how they read and understand different scenes. Johnson explains how color acts and works in images, stating, "...red is generally considered an "advancing" color and blue a "Receding" color, the physical reason being that these wavelengths of light are refracted differently by the eye's lens and do not focus on the same point; but some scientists believe that a bright color 'advances' more than a dim one irrespective of hue" (Johnson 6). According to Johnson, when looking at an image, colors like blue fade into the background, while colors like red move to the forefront. Blue does not stand out when against other shades and hues, implying that the entirety of Bechdel's novel is the "background" and what stands out is what she illuminates with her use of blacks and whites.

There are moments in *Fun Home* where Bechdel uses white (commonly considered to represent good) and black (commonly considered to represent bad) to create implications in the novel. Readers subconsciously pick up on these moments and read them as some variation of "dark and looming" versus "bright and hopeful." This is important to recognize and note because without saying it directly, Bechdel tells the readers the difference between the good and bad points in her life. An example of this is when she visits her father's grave and accepts the fact that Bruce really is dead and in the ground. The panel is split down the middle with color, while her father's headstone is white, surrounded by a somber blue. Alison is not filled in with any color at all: she is dominantly black and the background behind her is as well (see figure 8). The reader feels, not the blue in this image, but all of the black that comes forward off the page. This strikes the reader with a sense of doom, as the darkness looms over Alison in a moment of hopelessness, the reader experiences this moment alongside her.

There are several instances throughout the graphic novel where Bechdel uses color in these different ways to make the reader *experience* what Alison is feeling. If the novel were not written in the graphic form, these are experiences the reader would miss out on, so while they would likely have feelings of sympathy for Alison, it is unlikely that they would feel empathy for the situation.

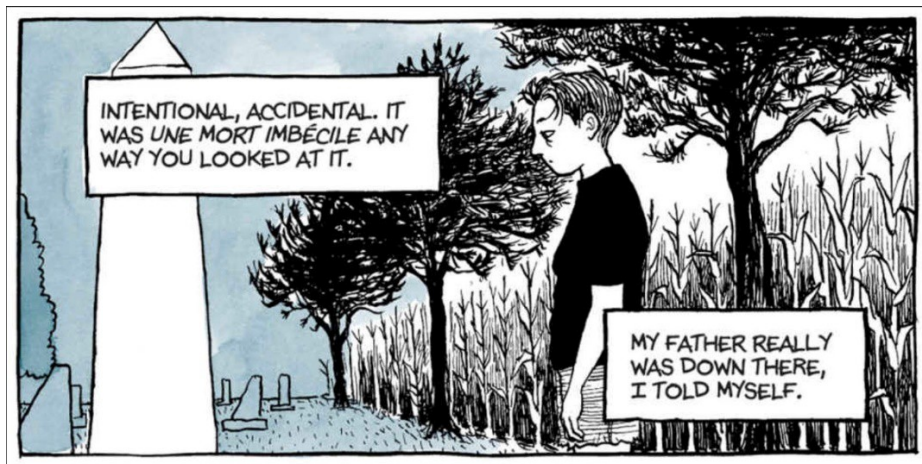


Figure 8, Bechdel 59

Use of Space and the Gutter

The form of the graphic novel allows readers to experience a story through both written and visual mediums. While what is being said and shown on paper is impactful and necessary for the reader to fully emerge themselves in the experience of the story, what is not happening on page is just as important to their experience.

Space and the gutter in graphic novels are the white parts of the page, the space between the panels. This space represents the implied story: it might appear empty, but that does not mean that nothing is happening in it. Specifically, in Bechdel's novel, she uses the gutters as, "spatial and semantic gaps, which express a critical unknowability or undecidability—as well as a quality of time that confuses categories like past and present" (Chute 182). As Bechdel jumps around in a non-chronological timeline, what the reader comes to see is that what is happening between certain panels often appears in another panel at a different point in the novel.

Bechdel uses the gutter, in the unknowability and confusion of past and present to bring readers along on this chaotic experience. At points, the reader might be confused as to how Bechdel jumps from one point to another, only to later recognize a panel and placing it as a gutter scene. Bechdel sets up her timeline in a chaotic, somewhat confusing way that reflects a manic memory. She jumps around to different memories, switches between past and present, and leaves the reader wondering what happened between these phases, only to discover these moments later. This use of the gutter and white space takes the reader on a journey that Bechdel endures while recalling of her trauma. Hinrichsen quotes Caruth in her discussion of trauma, explaining that trauma is, “‘not known in the first instance’ and ‘not locatable in the simple violent or original event in an individual’s past, but rather in the way that its very unassimilated nature – the way it was precisely *not known* in the first instance – returns to haunt the survivor later on’” (638). This unknown instance of trauma is what leads to Bechdel’s “hopping around” in *Fun Home*. The timeline is structured in away that is chaotic and manic because it is attempting to pinpoint where, in all the space of this graphic novel, the trauma occurs.

While this use of the gutter and space is often confusing to readers, it allows them to experience the trauma discovery Bechdel is venturing through. Creating this experience is what evokes feelings of empathy: readers feel the pain of revisiting tragic and traumatic memories repeatedly alongside Bechdel. They feel the confusion of jumping between memories and forgetting what happens between, only to remember them later in the novel. Bechdel’s use of space and the gutter is essential in this novel for the reader to achieve this experience.

Conclusion

Bechdel’s adolescent and young adult life was filled with tragedy and trauma, which is made clear through the eyes of Alison in *Fun Home*. Her recount of these experiences through her memoir

is a vehicle that Bechdel uses for coping with this trauma through repetition and understanding.

Alison spends many years of her life turning to books, specifically graphic novels, to make sense of her life. It only makes sense that Bechdel would use the graphic form in her memoir to make sense of her history, her trauma. The journey Bechdel embarks on in *Fun Home* is one that invites the reader to join. Using engaging text, detailed graphic panels, associative colors, and space in this novel, the reader can understand what Alison goes through in a way that creates an immersive experience alongside Bechdel. Regardless of the readers' personal background, they can *feel* these experiences and empathize with Bechdel's trauma. Bechdel's ability to cope with and understand her trauma and create a shared empathetic experience with the reader is explicitly due to the emotional content of the memoir, combined with the medium of the graphic novel. This medium brings Bechdel and the reader together in an experience of processing trauma.

While it is nearly impossible to know whether Bechdel's trauma is fully resolved by the end of her memoir, the conclusion of the novel suggests Alison is in a place of recovery and healing. Although the death of her father is still mysterious and whether it was a suicide is unconfirmed, in the last few panels of the novel, Alison is shown coming to terms with what has happened. Bechdel references the story of Icarus, comparing Alison as a child, diving into a pool to Icarus' flight (see figures 9-10). When she leaps, her father is there to catch her. By the end, there is some reconciliation between Alison and Bruce, as the panel frames the moving truck juxtaposed to Alison's leap. While these two things are very different, Bechdel suggests in this framework that Alison has a level of understanding and acceptance of her father's death. The journey Bechdel shares with the reader comes to an end and although uncertainty resonates, the floral images that make up the final pages suggest growth and life, which the reader feels and can empathize with in the end (see figures 11-12). There is not a happy ending to Bechdel's story, but there never was going to be as this graphic novel

is a recount of trauma and a journey of discovery that Bechdel and the reader embark on together to process and ultimately accept Alison's complicated history.

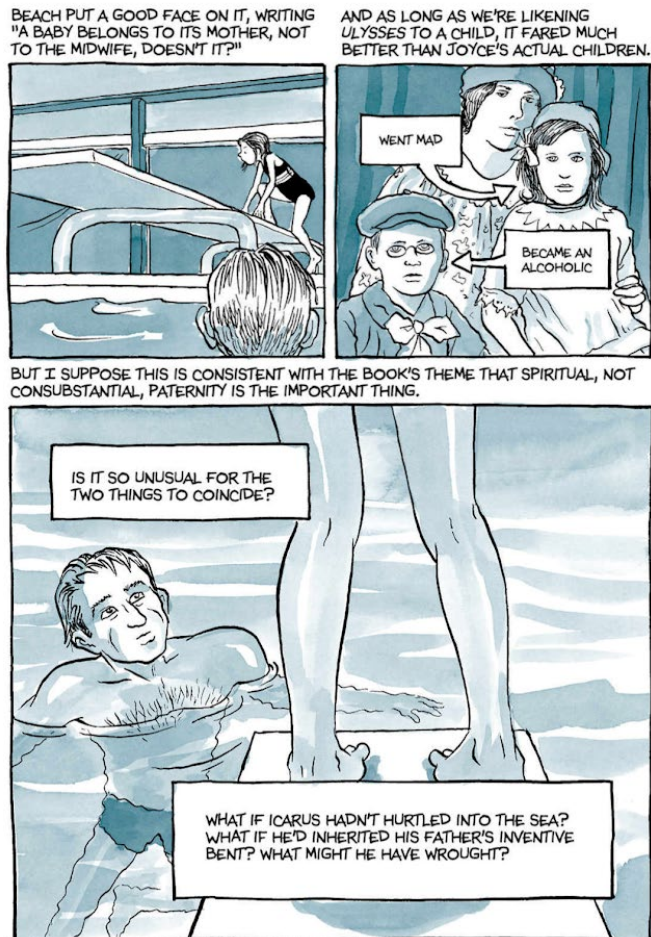


Figure 9, Bechdel 235

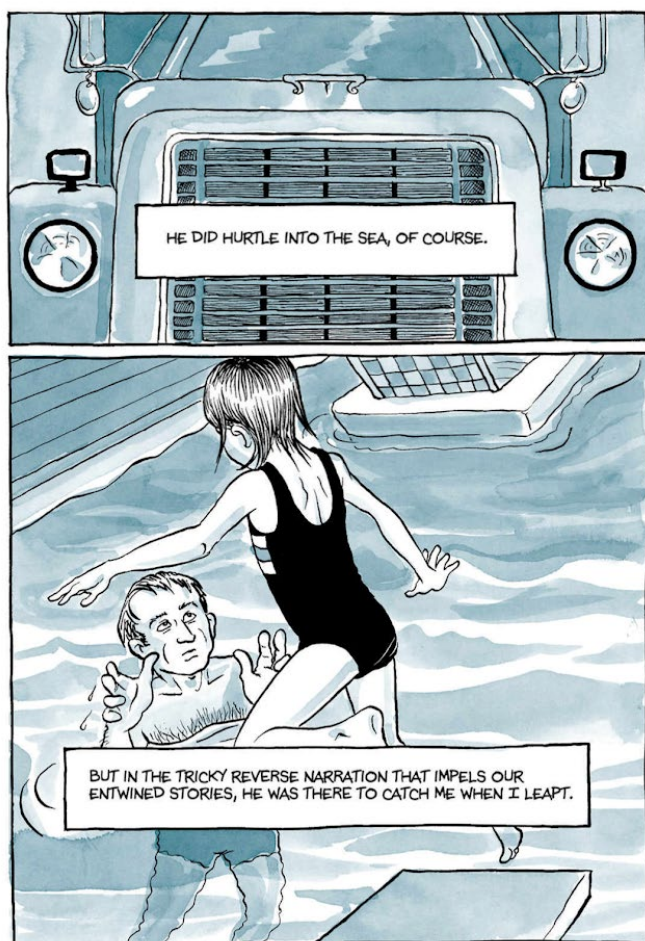


Figure 10, Bechdel 236



Figure 11, Bechdel 238



Figure 12, Bechdel 239

Vernacular Theory: Teaching the Value of Diverse Linguistic Patterns Through “The Hate U Give”

Abstract

This paper attempts to identify a literary theory that is rooted in the value of diverse linguistic patterns that form and shape communication and literary tradition across diverse communities and peoples. These are communities and peoples from which I do not descend and of which I do not claim to be a part. I, myself, am presenting this argument as an advocate and ally to diverse communities and people within those communities. I recognize my privilege as a white, educated female who has not had to face or struggle with biases against my own linguistic patterns. This paper, in and of itself, is an attempt to create cross-cultural discourse between communities to push teaching literature that is rich in diverse linguistic patterns in the classroom. My desire and hope are that the argument presented in this paper will bring to light Vernacular Theory, a theory developing alongside diverse literature and will present the value of vernaculars and of teaching young adult literature containing diverse linguistic patterns.

Language Ideology and Literary Theory

The Perception of Standard Language Ideologies as Correct and Superior

Historically, language, both written and spoken, has been a key indicator of power and success. Language has been a liberator and an oppressor, and it continues to function this way in the modern classroom.

Language ideologies, broadly speaking, can be described as how people understand and view common languages, typically to the point that the languages are naturalized and often invisible (Davila 128). Language ideologies include common dialects, vernaculars, and

other diverse linguistic patterns that may not be apparent in spoken language but become increasingly apparent in written language. Standard language ideologies, especially Standard English, are often centered on beliefs of superiority and correctness (Davila 128). Standard language ideologies are most often pushed onto written language, especially in writing and literature classes, and are often defined by strict grammar rules that, while rarely applied to spoken language, dictate the quality of written language.

More specifically, Standard English has become the dominant language ideology applied in classrooms. This ideology dictates the use of specific grammar rules and constructs in student writing. When teaching composition and writing courses with a standard language ideology, students are typically taught that there is an obvious correct and incorrect way to use language in writing.

Bethany Davila in her “The Inevitability of ‘Standard’ English: Discursive Constructions of Standard Language Ideologies” challenges the position of Standard English—which she coins as standard edited American English (SEAE)—as the pervasive, dominant form of English used in teaching writing and literature. Why is Standard English the language ideology dominantly taught and studied in the classroom? Common misconceptions may disagree, but it isn’t because one standard language variety is *actually* better than another, instead, it’s that using Standard English is perceived to be better for everyone involved in literature.

Davila explains that standard language varieties must be perceived as unaffiliated: It must be the perception that *all* groups stand to benefit from using the standard language variety, and no group has more access than any other to the standard language (129). This positioning hides standard languages’ deceptive role in hegemony: the truth is that the

common understandings of and about SEAE not only benefit those who have power but also shield those in power—as well as SEAE—from critique (Davila 129).

This perception creates assumptions about the power of Standard English, as Davila says, “This assumption [that SEAE will always be taught in writing classrooms] both relies on and perpetuates standard language ideologies that advance beliefs about one, stable, correct language variety that is a superior and, therefore, commonsense dialect for school, business, and public settings” (Davila 128). Perception has lifted Standard English to the highest rank of literature and perception protects its place there. If this perception is widely accepted across cultures, the silent expectation that Standard English is taught in writing and literature courses will continue.

Perceptions must be broken, but this doesn’t mean standard language ideologies must be entirely abandoned. Megan M. Weaver grapples with this idea in her “I Still Think There’s a Need for Proper, Academic, Standard English: Examining a Teacher’s Negotiation of Multiple Language Ideologies.” The essay lands on the idea that teachers need to change their perceptions of standard language ideologies with a course of action, by taking classes and workshops on vernaculars and critical language awareness to help shift an acceptance toward diverse language ideologies in the classroom (Weaver 50). Standard English can and should exist in the classroom as a type of diverse linguistic pattern, so long as it is balanced and executed as equal to and *not* superior to other variations and dialects of English. This, as Weaver and Davila both agree, is where Students’ Right to Their Own Language (SRTOL) becomes relevant and applicable in the classroom.

SRTOL is the concept that students should be allowed to write in and express themselves using their own language in the classroom. The Executive Committee of the

Conference on College Composition and Communication (CCCC) passed the resolution which developed into SRTOL in 1972, as amended in 2003, and reaffirmed in 2014, stating:

We affirm the students' right to their own patterns and varieties of language -- the dialects of their nurture or whatever dialects in which they find their own identity and style.

Language scholars long ago denied that the myth of a standard American dialect has any validity. The claim that any one dialect is unacceptable amounts to an attempt of one social group to exert its dominance over another. Such a claim leads to false advice for speakers and writers, and immoral advice for humans. A nation proud of its diverse heritage and its cultural and racial variety will preserve its heritage of dialects.

We affirm strongly that teachers must have the experiences and training that will enable them to respect diversity and uphold the right of students to their own language (1).

This resolution strongly reaffirms that students should have the right to use diverse linguistic patterns in composition and writing courses, yet it is often echoed this is not the case and students' perceptions of vernaculars and dialects reflect that SRTOL is often *not* in practice in the classroom.

I question why this is the case: why has the concept upheld by SRTOL been in motion since 1974, yet nearly half of a century later, Standard English is still being taught as the dominant language ideology? The answer I've come to lies somewhere between a lack in teacher and student awareness. I propose, in agreement with Weaver's call to action (50) that teachers take the necessary steps to understand diverse language ideologies, learn the value they hold for students, and educate students using young adult literature containing diverse

linguistic patterns, and examine the use of these diverse linguistic patterns through the scope of Vernacular Theory.

The Formation of Vernacular Theory

Although since the Middle Ages, authors like Dante and Chaucer have worked to write in the vernacular, Vernacular Theory is a developing field that is only as new as the recognition and validation of diverse language ideologies *as written language*. It's important to note, as vernaculars become more widely accepted and taught in the classroom, the way Vernacular Theory is used to examine and understand diverse literature will likely change.

Vernacular is a term that encompasses the variations in language or dialect that reflect upon the region or group from which the language or dialect stems. Vernaculars are the dialects, accents, slang, lingo, and other language variations that deviate from what is widely considered to be standard language. Many definitions claim that the vernacular applies to the spoken word and not typically to written language, but in this understanding of the vernacular within Vernacular Theory, the variation in language applies to both spoken and written language.

The CCCC unwittingly describes vernaculars and how a vernacular is characterized in a statement that explains, "A dialect is a variety of a language used by some definable group. Everyone has a personal version of language, an idiolect, which is unique, and closely related groups of idiolects make up dialects. By custom, some dialects are spoken. Others are written. Some are shared by the community at large" (Conference on College Composition and Communication 5). This definition of a dialect, for the sake of this paper and the use of Vernacular Theory within this paper, serves to also define vernaculars and explain the wide

use of diverse linguistic patterns. The CCCC soon after goes into a more detailed explanation, stating, “A dialect is the variety of language used by a group whose linguistic habit patterns both reflect and are determined by shared regional, social, or cultural perspectives. The user of a specific dialect employs the phonological (pronunciation), lexical (vocabulary), and syntactic patterns (word arrangement) and variations of the given “community” (Conference on College Composition and Communication 5). This definition from the CCCC further supports the idea that a vernacular is any linguistic pattern that diverges from standard language patterns, no matter who is speaking or writing in the vernacular language.

While the use of Vernacular Theory in this paper represents all vernaculars across cultures and communities, Katherine Bassard in “The Significance of Signifying: Vernacular Theory and the Creation of Early African American Literary Study” presents African American Vernacular English (AVVE) within Vernacular Theory from her understanding of Gates’s theory in *The Signifying Monkey*. She says, “Gates’s vernacular theory as an organizing principle within which to sketch—sometimes more successfully than others—an Afro/African American literary *tradition* reconfigured black texts away from biographical and sociological contexts to a consideration of the formal properties of African American intertextuality” (Bassard 850). Bassard’s understanding of Gates’s Vernacular Theory presents the basis upon which I build my own understanding of Vernacular Theory. Vernacular Theory has been and should continue to be used to organize principles in which to frame diverse literary tradition by focusing on the formal qualities of diverse literature, like deliberate use of language. From this point on, I have come to understand and believe that Vernacular Theory is the lens through which everyone can examine linguistic patterns within a piece of literature

and determine the value, intent, and implications of the specific use of language.

In the classroom, this lens can be used to examine young adult (YA) literature to change and influence students' perceptions of diverse linguistic patterns and their strategic function as a type of literary device.

Literature Review

"The Hate U Give" by Angie Thomas

Angie Thomas's *The Hate U Give* (*THUG*) tells the fictional story of 16-year-old Starr, an African American girl living in Garden Heights, an inner-city neighborhood in the southern part of the United States. This neighborhood is known for gang violence and high crime rates, both of which Starr's father, Maverick, has been involved with in the past. Starr lives in this neighborhood, but attends a predominately white and wealthy private high school, Williamson Prep. The novel is about her character witnessing the death of her childhood friend, Khalil, who is unarmed and shot by a white police officer during a traffic stop. This event sets the novel into motion as the reader sees Starr's struggles with her identity, relationships, and family.

From the first chapter, Starr's character is split between two different worlds, and as a response, Starr is forced to create two versions of herself: Garden Heights Starr and Williamson Starr. Like many other young African American students, Starr feels pressured to balance these two worlds and her identities within them to fit in. She explains: "As long as I play it cool and keep to myself, I should be fine. The ironic thing is though, at Williamson I don't have to 'play it cool' — I'm cool by default because I'm one of the only black kids there. I have to earn coolness in Garden Heights, and that's more difficult than buying retro Jordans on release day" (Thomas 45). Williamson Starr and Garden Heights Starr are very different

people. At Williamson, Starr doesn't have to pretend to be cool, she is perceived that way. However, she *does* have to watch her temper and language in order to fit in and be accepted at her predominantly white school. Starr describes what it takes to be "Williamson Star," saying:

I just have to be normal Starr at normal Williamson and have a normal day. That means flipping the switch in my brain so I'm Williamson Starr. Williamson Starr doesn't use slang—if a rapper would say it, she doesn't say it, even if her white friends do. Slang makes them cool. Slang makes her "hood." Williamson Starr holds her tongue when people piss her off so nobody will think she's the "angry black girl." Williamson Starr is approachable. No stank-eyes, side-eyes, none of that. Williamson Starr is nonconfrontational. Basically, Williamson Starr doesn't give anyone a reason to call her ghetto (Thomas 69).

This quote shows how, at Williamson, Starr uses code switching and suppresses her blackness to better fit into the community. Starr is conscious of everything she says and the way she acts, even in the smallest reactions: "'Eww,' I say, instead of my usual 'Ill'" (Thomas 72). She can't stand herself for doing it, still, she feels it is necessary to change her vernacular at Williamson Prep to better fit into the community (Thomas 69). When she is in Garden Heights, the personality change and code-switching doesn't stop. The novel opens with Starr attending a party in Garden Heights, one she claims she doesn't *belong* at (Thomas 3). Specifically, Starr explains, "There are just some places where it's not enough to be me. Big D's spring break party is one of those places" (Thomas 3). When out at parties and with peers in Garden Heights, Starr doesn't feel as if she is "black enough" to fit in with her community, her peers often make her feel as though she is an outcast or better than they are because she goes to a white-kid school (Thomas 9).

A focus on Starr's use of language and code-switching represents much more than her trying to fit in or be someone she isn't, it goes *beyond* an identity struggle. Her use of Standard English at Williamson Prep showcases her ability to communicate with peers and teachers. She understands that she won't be taken seriously if she were to use a vernacular in this environment, so she adjusts her use of language as a reflection of the situation she is in. The same goes for her use of language at Garden Heights; if Starr were to use Standard English around her family or friends, she wouldn't be taken seriously and may not be able to effectively communicate with those around her. Starr explains that even though she has practice navigating these two different worlds, it isn't *easy*: "I should be used to my two worlds colliding, but I never know which Starr I should be. I can use some slang, but not too much slang, some attitude, but not too much attitude, so I'm not a 'sassy black girl.' I have to watch what I say and how I say it, but I can't sound 'white'" (Thomas 357). Within different communities and cultures, different language ideologies are favored above others, meaning Starr is intelligent enough to read the situation and choose the dialect that will serve her best. Still, it is a taxing struggle for her to balance who she is supposed to be and when she is supposed to be that person. Many students do this daily in class, in real life, no matter the communities or culture they belong to; they use code-switching effectively as determined by the situation they are engaged with in order to better fit in, just like Starr.

Christina Marie Ashwin and Sara Studebaker in "Unpacking Linguistic and Racial Ideologies in *The Hate U Give*" echo that Starr is living between two worlds where she is forced to speak, dress, and act certain ways in each one, in order to fit in (147). Ashwin and Studebaker suggest ways to study the use of language in *THUG*, the first being to create definitions for terms that may deviate from Standard English. In the classroom, definitions are

created, then students share their own understandings and experiences with these specific terms to begin a conversation about the deeper implications of language choice in the novel (147). Not only does the use of language in the novel reflect Starr's code-switching, but it also reflects racism and problems within society. *Why does Starr feel that she has to use Standard English at her predominantly white private school?* Starr understands the implications of her code-switching and feels the conflict that comes with it: "Funny how it works with white kids though. It's dope to be black until it's hard to be black" (Thomas 45). For Starr, it's hard to be black and to conform to language standards that are deeply rooted in racism and classism, both at her predominantly white school *and* within her black community.

Using Ashwin and Studebaker's article as a guide for teaching, *THUG* can present teachers with an opportunity to study a piece of Young Adult literature through Vernacular Theory. As classes become more diverse, underrepresented groups of students will look for mirrors in literature, while students who are dominantly represented will need windows into literature that represents the reality of communities that they are not a part of (Bishop 1). As curriculums include more literature with representation for the underrepresented, it is even more important to change commonly held biases about non-Standard English and its use in literature.

Perceptions and Changing Perceptions

Take a moment, think about common perceptions of people who speak with a vernacular or dialect. When reading a novel, what are typical assumptions about characters that are inflated, who speak with a diverse linguistic pattern? What about novels that aren't written in Standard English, is the author often praised or discredited? Maybe they are denied publishing repeatedly because of the use of non-Standard English. There are many responses

that can be made to a piece of literature that utilizes diverse linguistic patterns: all too often, these responses come from negative connotations with the use of vernaculars in literature.

In her Ph.D. dissertation “Investigating Students’ Responses to Vernacular English Usages in Children’s and Young Adult Literature” Carolyn R. Doolittle examines student perceptions and assumptions about vernacular English in literature. This study investigates, based on region, ethnicity, culture, and community, how students generally think about vernaculars or dialects and people who use them.

When interviewing a group of eighth-grade students, Doolittle asks about dialects; what they are; how they are perceived; who uses dialects. Students’ responses range, but some that stand out include the following: dialects are different; people who speak in a dialect are different; dialects can show people how smart a person is; speaking in a dialect can mean you have bad grammar; people think that if you speak in a dialect, you have bad English (Doolittle 387). These responses are echoed throughout the dissertation by most students who agree that dialects and vernaculars can indicate that a person is different, uneducated, or speaks “bad English.” When students develop these stereotypes about vernaculars, they often apply these stereotypes to people and characters who speak in non-Standard English.

When interviewing a teacher from an inner-city school, Doolittle asks for reactions to pieces of young adult literature that use dialects. The teacher (Callie) states that she doesn’t really like the novel and it frustrates her, specifically saying, “...the slang [the author] uses, she’s trying to capture the culture, but it drives me nuts, ‘cause we spend so much time, trying to teach [students] how to talk properly, that it drove me nuts in the book, that it reinforces the slang talk” (Doolittle 294). This perception is one that several other teachers throughout the interviews hold. The problem then is that students believe dialects are incorrect or wrong and

this perception is reinforced by teachers' perceptions of dialects in literature. Doolittle's solution to this problem? She echoes Weaver and Davila, recommending that teachers attend diversity training frequently.

With more diversity training, teachers will have the opportunity to study the value of diverse linguistic patterns. With the proper knowledge, teachers are better equipped to utilize Vernacular Theory and teach diverse literature in the classroom. Doolittle notes, the more effective professional development at the preservice and in-service levels of teaching, the lower the risk of failure of diverse students in the classroom (242-3). With more literary activities that are of interest to diverse students and with teachers who are prepared to offer accomplished instruction of these activities, diverse students will likely have more interest and success in literature and composition courses (Doolittle 242-3).

Conclusion

As Vernacular Theory develops and becomes more commonly implemented by scholars, it will be important for students to be aware of the theory and given the proper literature to apply it to. This calls for more diverse literature in the classroom, along with better equipped teachers to create and execute inclusive lessons that are valuable to all students. With more diverse literature and new ways of reading and valuing diverse linguistic patterns, students will begin to perceive vernaculars as an integral part of society, rather than just "bad English."

Social Class in *Emma*: A Lesson Plan for Teaching *Emma* Through a Thematic Lens

Social class is a dominant theme seen in many of Jane Austen's novels, as it held, and still holds, a significant presence in society. Particularly in *Emma*, Austen creates a social construct in which she initially appears to be breaking barriers and defying social conventions of class by allowing characters of different classes to interact freely with one another. Of course, as Mark Parker in "The End of *Emma*: Drawing the Boundaries of Class in Austen" recognizes, these characters are not interacting to break class boundaries, but instead, to reinforce them (344-5).

Because this lesson focuses on social class which is set in a time period unfamiliar to most students, I find it appropriate to begin the unit on *Emma* with a historical and contemporary discussion of social class. Looking all the way back to the Xiongnu State, we can see social classes began to form nearly 2,000 years ago (Honeychurch 29). For this reason, I want to start with the "beginning" of social classes and bring students to date so we can understand how social classes historically and currently function. The goal of this is to give the class a deeper understanding of social classes and how they function in Austen's *Emma*.

My lesson plan proposal is rooted in several pedagogies that have developed my personal approach to teaching including, mainly on putting the students first in an engaged discussion, rather than just a lecture and taking a sensitive and open-minded approach to how the materials might impact different students. Specifically, when teaching *Emma* sensitive themes will be the focus of the unit, which will lead me to focus on following a Sensitive Pedagogy when driving discussions around class and classism. The goal of following this pedagogy is to foster a safe and accepting learning environment that will not alienate any students during or after classroom discussions surrounding class status. To sensitively focus on class structures in *Emma*, I have

adopted specific techniques from Jones and Vagle's "Living Contradictions and Working for Change: Toward a Theory of Social Class-Sensitive Pedagogy." In their article, Jones and Vagle argue:

...persistent upward mobility discourses sediment the notion that certain workers and work are only worthy of very low wages while others are rewarded with wages up to four hundred times as much. The social class ladder metaphor aligns, then, with the idea that those on the bottom rungs earn less in wages, status, and overall perceived value and therefore, in order to be recognized as valuable to society either through measures of salary or prestige, must work relentlessly to climb the ladder (129).

This specific point, along with the rest of their argument within the pedagogical article, brings to light the problem of teaching in a way that promotes classism. If we are not sensitive to social class, especially in discussions of contemporary social class and in modernizing examples of social spheres in *Emma*, students can feel alienated by the course.

When teaching Austen's *Emma* with a focus on social class, I want to ensure that I practice Sensitive Pedagogy. In my lesson plan, I will follow four principles to guide class-sensitive work and discussion: I will attempt to (1) analyze educators' and students' experience of class within broad social and political contexts, (2) locate and disrupt social classed hierarchies in schools and communities within classroom discussions, (3) integrate social class and marginalized perspectives into the curriculum, and (4) change broader classroom policies and practices to reflect an anti-classist and antipoverty commitment (Jones and Vagle 130). By applying these principles to teaching class in *Emma*, I hope to avoid discussions that reinforce classism and challenge stereotypes about class that may lead to the alienation of students.

To effectively commit myself and my class to these principles I find it important to be transparent in this effort to avoid classism and embrace these principles. When examining *Emma*, discussions of class will not be comparative to students, teachers, school or community hierarchies and constructs, or any group of peoples defined by gender, race, ethnicity, sexuality, etc. Using examples relevant to students in the class is a good way to drive engagement, but these discussions will not be centered around comparative examples such as: Emma is like Stacy M. because she is the most popular in the high school which makes her of the highest class. Instead, students will engage in what contemporary class separation looks like and why without focusing on specific or personal identities. Melissa R. Sanders and Ramaswami Mahalingam in “Under the Radar: The Role of Invisible Discourse in Understanding Class-Based Privilege” discuss the implications of not talking about class and what key indicators of class separation are. For contemporary conversations, it’s important not to ignore the role of race and stereotypes in class separation, as this can lead to even vaguer definitions and discourses surrounding class (Sanders and Mahalingam 1). While we won’t be focusing on individuals or making the conversation personal in a way that may alienate students, I do agree with Sanders and Mahalingam that it is important to discuss historic class separation of groups of people by their gender, race, ethnicity, sexuality, etc. and how historic prejudice and injustice against people within these groups has impacted their contemporary lives and placement in social constructs.

Discussions can often stray away from the intended lesson, but I’d like to be clear that isn’t intended to turn into a privilege studies reading of *Emma*, I find it important in discussions and definitions surrounding contemporary class to be fully aware of our own privileges within the conversation. Since this course is being formatted for young adults, I believe that these conversations are necessary and appropriate for students of this age. I plan to have these

conversations in the introductory stages of teaching *Emma* in order to lay the framework of what is appropriate when participating in discussions of class and to hopefully encourage students to think outside of their own perspective during these conversations.

In an attempt to avoid belittlement of any characters in the book who may draw mirrors or windows for students withing the class (or allow them to be overshadowed by characters of a higher class), I propose selecting characters of the lower class and doing deep readings of their decisions and storylines. Richard Cronin and Dorothy McMillan do this well in their “Harriet Smith’s Reading” notes and queries when they write, “If Harriet had known her place, and recognized that she should look for her own reflection not in the heroine of a novel but in one of its humbler minor characters, she would indeed have seen her own story” (450). This seems like a harsh perspective at first, but it is a way to engage in a discussion of class and the value of every class, opposed to the misconception that everyone should be trying to climb the class ladder or trying to be “better” because social classes and stories that reinforce social classes, create the misconception that social classes are important to identity. This is the type of discussion and careful perspective I plan to use to maintain a sensitive pedagogy while examining social class in *Emma*.

In addition to being sensitive to each class group, I hope to present the idea that being in a higher-class bracket doesn’t necessarily indicate that one person is better than another. Using the novel as an example, it takes Emma the entire book to realize her own happiness, because she is preoccupied with others’ expectations of her and her own expectations of herself. Emma isn’t sure of what she really wants for herself the entire novel, while Harriet knows *exactly* who will make her happy, that is, until Emma intervenes. As a member of the upper-class, Emma would be expected to be happy and “have it figured out,” because of her class status. This would be an

opportunity in the novel to compare Emma and Harriet's class statuses and actions in the novel and examine what is expected versus is reality in the novel. With a focus on social class status and examining the characters within their social spheres in the novel, I hope to break down misconceptions and ideas about social class that persist today amongst students by discovering the realities and falsehoods as examined through Austen's *Emma*.

For my teaching plan, I have outlined a syllabus, detailed lesson plan, and PowerPoint for studying *Emma* through a Social Class thematic lens. The syllabus introduces the class format, goals, and gives an overview of the *Emma* section for the semester. Additionally, the syllabus introduces the target demographic for this lesson plan: first and second-year undergraduate students, meeting in a face-to-face classroom. The assignment and reading decisions were made based off on an article from Rice University, authored by Elizabeth Barre, called "How Much Should We Assign? Estimating Out of Class Workload." The article grapples with the amount of time college students should spend on reading, outside of the classroom, eventually landing on the theory that students should read a minimum of 40 pages per week, per class. I feel that based on this reading and my personal experience reading *Emma* in a college classroom that I have assigned a fair workload for this section. The lesson plan and PowerPoint cover the in-class discourse I hope to prompt with this lesson.

Course Syllabus Spring 2021: 16 Week Semester (Jan 11-May 7)

ENG 204: Studying an Author through Thematic Lenses: Jane Austen

Meets In-Person: T,Th 10:00am-11:15am

Course Description:

This course is designed for first- and second-year undergraduate students, both majors and non-majors are welcome. Over the course, we will cover Jane Austen as a novelist, examining a selection of her most famous work through a different thematic lens for each novel. We will look at Austen's texts along with scholarly and theoretically grounded journals to examine and better understand how major themes function within each book. The core texts covered in this course will include Austen's *Persuasion*, *Emma*, and *Pride and Prejudice*. The course is limited to only three pieces of work so we can fully cover and appreciate each text along with the corresponding journals that detail the thematic lenses we will be utilizing. This course will function equally as a lecture and discussion, so active participation and attendance is required.

Course Objectives:

- Students will investigate the history and life of Jane Austen, exploring how her experiences and life are reflected in her work.
- Students will critically examine Austen's novels and evaluate them based on prominent, consistent themes.
- Students will form their own opinions on the use of theme and how the novels function within the sphere of the themes present.
- Students will come to understand the choices Austen makes in her novels and use secondary sources to form opinions on whether these choices are accidental or purposeful.

Required Texts:

Jane Austen, *Persuasion*

Jane Austen, *Pride and Prejudice*

Jane Austen, *Emma*

*Mark Parker, "The End of Emma: Drawing the Boundaries of Class in Austen"

* Michael B. Katz, "Social Class in North American Urban History"

*William Honeychurch, "The State and Social Stratification among Ancient Nomads of Mongolia"

****Journals and Peer Reviewed Essays will be available to you digitally through Canvas.***

Course Requirements:

1. Read each assigned reading in its entirety before the beginning of class on the day that the reading is due. This reading will typically consist of multiple chapters from the novel or journal entries, you will *not* be assigned journals and chapters together. At random, there will be reading quizzes at the beginning of class that will account for 10% of your final grade.
2. Active and frequent participation in classroom discussions; plan to bring one or two questions or thoughts to class each day about the reading. This accounts for 25% of your final grade.
3. Thematic journals must be kept and written in weekly for each book we read. This accounts for 25% of your final grade and will be turned in at the end of each section. See more details on this assignment below.
4. Final paper that considers any theme discussed throughout the semester and examines it within one of Austen's novels. This will be due at the end of the semester and will account for 40% of your final grade. See more details on this assignment below.

Note: there is not a separate grade for attendance, but attendance does factor into your participation grade. Understand that if you have an unexcused absence and miss a quiz, it will result in a 0 for the quiz.

Thematic Journals

You will keep and take notes in a journal (either digitally or in a physical notebook) for each novel we read. The theme of each journal will correlate with the theme we are examining for each text. For example, when we read *Emma*, we will be using a Social Class thematic lens to examine how class functions and drives the story within *Emma*. Use this journal to note anecdotes about characters, how you see class functioning, who you believe belongs in each class, how social class acts as a bridge or barrier between characters, etc. You have creative freedom with this, but your journal must reflect your active investigation into the themes we explore for each book. These will be turned in at the end of class on our final discussion day for each novel. You will see these dates reflected on the course calendar and will be notified of any due date changes. We will go over any questions about this on the first day of class.

Note: You do not have to keep a journal for any of the scholarly or theoretically grounded papers we read this semester, but it may be helpful to keep note of specific pages you find interesting to help with your final paper.

Final Paper

At the end of the semester, you will be required to turn in a 15-page critical research paper. For this paper, you must pick a theme that can be found in Austen's novels. You will use this theme to examine any one of Austen's books. You can choose a novel that is discussed in class or that we do not cover. However, you *cannot* use the same thematic lens to examine a novel that we discuss in this course through that thematic lens. For example, we will be examining *Emma*

through a social class thematical lens. You cannot use social class as your theme to examine *Emma* for your final paper. However, you could apply the theme of social class to *Persuasion* since we will be using a different theme to examine *Persuasion* as a class. You will submit a final paper proposal and annotated bibliography for this paper at the end of week 14 and the final paper will be due during finals week in place of a final exam. You can find the full rubric for your final paper under the “Files” section in Canvas. We will discuss this in more detail toward the middle of the semester.

Reading Jane Austen

Please understand that this course focuses on the literary analysis of Jane Austen novels. These novels were written in the early 1800s, so these are texts that you may not normally choose for your own leisurely reading. Expect these texts to take more time to read, as the language and syntax of the novel is different than what is used in contemporary literature. While these books may be difficult to get used to, in my experience, the more regularly you read the text, the easier Austen novels become to read. That said, do not wait until the morning of class to try to read multiple chapters. I highly recommend you space out the coursework and read a few chapters a day. One of our goals is to understand common themes as driving forces in Austen’s novels and determine whether these themes act as social commentary or reinforcement, that is, does Austen disagree or agree with the social norms that they represent. It is important that you read each text in its entirety to understand how these themes function within across Austen novels. If you have already read a piece of text present on the syllabus for this course, please be sure that you are actively rereading it, so that you are fully engaged in specific course discussions. If you are worried about the pace of this class or your ability to navigate these novels, please reach out to me at the beginning of the semester so we can work together to find a solution.

Course Calendar

Note: Homework listed on the left-hand side is assigned for and due on the day it is listed. So, if the chart says “Read Emma Vol. 1, Chapters 1-10” for Thursday, I expect you to have the content read and ready to discuss for the Thursday it is assigned to.

Section 1: Romance and Marriage (<i>Pride and Prejudice</i>) <u>Week 1 (Jan 11-17)</u> Tuesday: Come to class having read the Syllabus and with any questions you may have.	
<u>Week 2 (Jan 18-24)</u>	
<u>Week 3 (Jan 25-31)</u>	
<u>Week 4 (Feb 1-7)</u>	
Section 2: Social Class (<i>Emma</i>) <u>Week 5 (Feb 8-14)</u> Tuesday: Read chapter 2 from Honeychurch and article from Katz (available on Canvas). Thursday: Read <i>Emma</i> (Vol. 1, chpt. 1-10)	Introduction to the history of status and social class and discussion on contemporary class. Begin Reading <i>Emma</i> .
<u>Week 6 (Feb 15-21)</u> Tuesday: Read <i>Emma</i> (Vol. 1 chpt. 11-Vol. 2 chpt. 4) Thursday: Read <i>Emma</i> (Vol. 2 chpt. 5-13)	Discussion of character status and class divisions in <i>Emma</i> and charting characters. Initial character thoughts. Who do you like/dislike? What predictions have you formed so far?

<u>Week 7 (Feb 22-28)</u> Tuesday: Read <i>Emma</i> (Vol. 2 chpt. 14-Vol. 3 chpt. 10) Thursday: Read <i>Emma</i> (Vol. 3 chpt. 11-19)	Discussion of Emma and her role in the novel. Is Emma disrupting or reinforcing ideas about class and status? Discussion of the ending. Were you surprised?
<u>Week 8 (March 1-7)</u> Tuesday: Read the article from Parker, available on Canvas. Thursday: Read through Final Paper Assignment on Canvas, Journals for <i>Emma</i> due.	Discussion of Status and Social Class in <i>Emma</i> . Discussion of implications of Austen's choices. Final thoughts on <i>Emma</i> . Journal for <i>Emma</i> due.
Week 9 (March 8-14) Spring Break	Spring Break!
Section 3: Gender Inequality (<i>Persuasion</i>) <u>Week 10 (March 15-21)</u>	
<u>Week 11 (March 22-28)</u>	
<u>Week 12 (March 29-April 4)</u>	
<u>Week 13 (April 5-11)</u> Tuesday: Final Paper Proposal due in Canvas Thursday: Peer Review Discussion Board opens	
Section 4: Austen in Film <u>Week 14 (April 12-18)</u> Tuesday: Thursday: Annotated bibliography due in Canvas	
<u>Week 15 (April 19-25)</u>	
Week 16 (April 26-May 2) Finals Week Wednesday: Final Paper due in Canvas	Final Paper Due

Lesson Plan for **Section 2** – First- and Second-Year Undergraduate Students
(ENG Majors & Non-majors)

Class 1	<p>Section 2: Social Class (<i>Emma</i>)</p> <p>Reading to Discuss: Honeychurch, Chapter 2: Thinking Political Communities “The State and Social Stratification among Ancient Nomads of Mongolia” Katz “Social Class in North American Urban History”</p>
Objective	<p>Discuss the history of status and social class as presented in Honeychurch’s chapter. Evaluate how the social classes have developed and changed. Define what classes exist today and who exists in each class. Bring up important implications and biases surrounding class (classism) and attempt to remove those biases and ideas, to support class sensitive pedagogy.</p>
Active Engagement and Discussion	<p>Begin with a 9-minute Crash Course video on social class which explains how social class impacts our contemporary lives.</p> <p>When the video is over, students will be able to express their thoughts on the video and will be prompted to make connections between the readings and the video.</p> <p>From here, students will be asked to name different types of classes, which will then be written on the board. Once the different class levels are identified, they will be defined by the class.</p> <p>At this point, students will be prompted to share their biases and perceptions of each class, and these will be added under each list. From here, a discussion will open about how people view classes differently and why.</p> <p>Next, I will shift the conversation toward classism by defining what classism is and explaining how it reinforces misconceptions about classes of people.</p> <p>Several of these misconceptions will likely be on the board, prompting students to reflect on their own biases.</p> <p>To end the class, I will encourage students to challenge their own perceptions of class and be aware of them when reading the first chapter of <i>Emma</i>.</p>
Assignment for next class	<p>Reflects reading assignment in the syllabus. Write notes/thoughts on the reading in journals.</p>

Materials Needed	<p>Video for class: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0a21mndoORE</p> <p>Computer connected to the internet and a projector will be required to play the video for the class.</p> <p>Whiteboard/smartboard to write lists on. Annotated articles.</p>
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Class 2	<p>Section 2: Social Class (<i>Emma</i>)</p> <p>Reading to Discuss: <i>Emma</i> (Vol. 1, chpt. 1-10)</p>
Objective	Have students share their initial thoughts on <i>Emma</i> . Discuss initial impressions of social class as seen in the first 10 chapters. Have students share their overall likes/dislikes about the novel; style, character, tone, narration, etc.
Active Engagement and Discussion	<p>Start the class with a 5-minute reflection prompt. Ask students to think about what we discussed at the end of last class (challenging personal perceptions and biases about people of different social classes) and write a short reflection of how they viewed people of different classes so far, what surprised them about the class structures, what confuses them?</p> <p>After students write their reflections ask them to share aloud what they wrote and see where there is overlap. Use this as an opportunity to bridge the class discussion toward the assigned reading.</p> <p>Ask the class what they like and dislike about the novel itself. What do students struggle with the most? Are there any character relationships that are confusing? Are there any social class categorizations that are confusing?</p> <p>Use these questions to bridge students to the next assignment and ask them to track character relationships and social classes in the novel for the next class.</p>
Assignment for next class	Reflects reading assignment in the syllabus. Track character relationships and class divisions in journals while reading.
Materials Needed	<i>Emma</i>

Class 3	<p>Section 2: Social Class (<i>Emma</i>)</p> <p>Reading to Discuss: <i>Emma</i> (Vol. 1 chpt. 11-Vol. 2 chpt. 4)</p>
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Objective	Use this class as an opportunity to create detailed charts that show character relationships in the story and which status/social class each character belongs to.
Active Engagement and Discussion	<p>Begin the class by asking students to share which characters are most straight-forward and which are the most confusing. Discuss who these characters in more detail.</p> <p>Show PowerPoint presentation that charts the characters and their relationships/class status.</p> <p>Discuss why different characters are in each class and what different perceptions are. What do you notice about reality versus perception so far? Are there any social classes or character statuses that are perceived differently than they are? How about relationships between characters?</p>
Assignment for next class	<p>Reflects reading in the syllabus. Use journals to note opinions about characters. Who do you like and dislike most? Why?</p> <p>Keep thinking about reality versus perception while you read and note anything interesting that you find. A lot of social status and class is about being perceived a certain way, keep track of what you notice in the next set of chapters.</p>
Materials Needed	<p>Computer connected to the internet and a projector will be required to present the PowerPoint to the class.</p> <p><i>Emma</i></p>

Class 4	<p>Section 2: Social Class (<i>Emma</i>)</p> <p>Reading to Discuss: <i>Emma</i> (Vol. 2 chpt. 5-13)</p>
Objective	Have students discuss their current opinions regarding characters so far. Discuss how status and social class is driving this novel forward or halting certain aspects of the novel, specifically discuss predictions for different characters and their possible social class movement.
Active Engagement and Discussion	<p>Begin class with a list of the main characters on the board.</p> <p>Ask students to share what they noted in their journals about their favorite and least favorite character.</p> <p>Make a checkmark next to each character who is liked and an X next to each character who is disliked according to what students share.</p>

	<p>Ask students to note this in their journals for future reflection on how their opinions of characters might change.</p> <p>Push the discussion toward social class; ask students how they feel that their favorite/least favorite characters are navigating their social classes.</p> <p>Do you feel that their social status is shifting or will change? How so?</p> <p>What do you predict their social status will be at the end of the novel? Why?</p> <p>How do you see these characters interacting with other characters of different social classes?</p> <p>At this point, shift the discussion to characters' ability to interact with other characters of different social class. Who can do this and why?</p> <p>Hand out "social spheres" activity and ask students to hand it in by the end of class. They can work in groups.</p> <p>Close class by asking students to consider how characters of different social classes are interacting as they continue reading.</p>
Assignment for next class	Reflects reading assignment in the syllabus. Use journals to note how you see characters with different social statuses interacting with one another.
Materials Needed	<p>Whiteboard/smartboard to write lists on</p> <p>Social spheres activity</p> <p><i>Emma</i></p>

Class 5	<p>Section 2: Social Class (<i>Emma</i>)</p> <p>Reading to Discuss: <i>Emma</i> (Vol. 2 chpt. 14-Vol. 3 chpt. 10)</p>
Objective	Engage the class in a discussion on the Box Hill scene. Discuss what the implications of status and social class are in the chapters surrounding this scene. Explore what Austen might be trying to do with this scene and get thoughts and ideas about Austen's intent from the class.
Active Engagement and	Begin the class by asking students to reflect on the Box Hill scene with a 5-minute writing assignment. In their journals, ask them to

Discussion	<p>write a short summary of what happened at Box Hill and what their reactions to this scene are.</p> <p>Ask students to share what they wrote with the class and use this as an opportunity to bridge the class into a deeper discussion.</p> <p>Project a list of questions on the screen to drive discussion, ask for volunteers to answer these questions, and open discussion about others' ideas for each.</p> <p>What does the Box Hill scene reflect on Emma and the other characters?</p> <p>What does this scene tell us about status and social class in <i>Emma</i>?</p> <p>How do characters react after this scene and why? What does this tell us about status and social class?</p> <p>How do you think Austen feels about status and social class based on this scene? What do you think she is trying to say about it?</p> <p>End class by asking students to think about how Austen feels about class and what she is trying to demonstrate with this novel. Suggest to students that they should read the next chapter closely and take plenty of notes when reading, to prepare for the next class (hint at quiz).</p>
Assignment for next class	Reflects reading assignment in the syllabus. Use journals to take close notes on reading and start thinking about how Austen feels about class and how it is reflected in the novel.
Materials Needed	<i>Emma</i>

Class 6	<p>Section 2: Social Class (<i>Emma</i>)</p> <p>Reading to Discuss: <i>Emma</i> (Vol. 3 chpt. 11-end)</p>
Objective	Quiz students on their understanding and interpretations of the reading. Discuss the ending of the novel.
Active Engagement and Discussion	<p>Open class with a quiz on the reading, half of quiz is specific to the last section of reading, half is regarding the entire novel. Allow 20-25 minutes for students to take the quiz.</p> <p>Use 10 minutes to discuss the quiz and answer any questions that students may have from the quiz or the reading.</p>

	<p>Open the discussion to thoughts on the ending of <i>Emma</i>.</p> <p>Are you surprised by the ending? If so, why?</p> <p>Does the ending of this novel reinforce ideas about class?</p> <p>How do you interpret the ending regarding Emma and Harriet's relationship? Are you surprised by Austen's ending for these characters?</p> <p>What does the ending of this novel tell you about Austen's ideas about status and social class? Based on the answers, is Austen Classist? Why or why not?</p>
Assignment for next class	Reflects reading assignment in the syllabus. Use journals to form opinions on how you think Austen feels about class and how this is reflected in the novel.
Materials Needed	Quiz, <i>Emma</i>

Class 7	<p>Section 2: Social Class (<i>Emma</i>)</p> <p>Reading to Discuss: Mark Parker, "The End of <i>Emma</i>: Drawing the Boundaries of Class in Austen"</p>
Objective	Bring the discussion of Class in Austen full circle: draw on ideas from the previous week, discuss ideas mentioned in the Parker article, and ponder on what the novel would have been like in a world without social classes.
Active Engagement and Discussion	<p>Begin class by bringing up original social status charts from previous classes, ask students to make annotations on the chart to show any characters that have moved in status and explain the movement.²</p> <p>Use this activity to move into discussion of Parker's article. Lead discussion with questions about class in <i>Emma</i> and how Austen views class.</p> <p>What does Parker's article say about Austen's view of class in <i>Emma</i>?</p> <p>What do the different relationships at the end of the novel represent, according to Parker? Do you agree with these suggestions? Why or why not?</p> <p>Reflecting upon the entire novel and Parker's argument, how do you think Austen views social class constructs? Is she for or against them?</p>

	<p>Why do you think this?</p> <p>To bring the discussion full circle and highlight the true importance of status and class in <i>Emma</i>, end class with an in-class writing prompt about how the novel would have been without any statuses or social classes:</p> <p>Which characters would have gotten along?</p> <p>What would Emma be like? Why?</p> <p>Would the ending have been different? How and why?</p> <p>Ask students to share what they wrote.</p> <p>Final thoughts:</p> <p>Share with the class how status and structure doesn't mean that someone doesn't get what they want/have happiness. Stress Harriet's ending and her story versus Emma's. They both ended with a "happily ever after," but Harriet knew what her happy ending was all along, while Emma didn't. What does this say about status and social class?</p>
Assignment for next class	<p>Completed journals for <i>Emma</i> are due next class: no additional reading.</p> <p>Next class period will be an opportunity to discuss final paper guidelines and instructions so that you can get started on ideas over spring break. Please read through the Final Paper Assignment on Canvas under "Files."</p>
Materials Needed	<i>Emma</i> , Parker article.

Class 8	<p>Section 2: Social Class (<i>Emma</i>)</p> <p>Reading to Discuss: No reading, final thoughts?</p> <p>Discuss Final Paper</p>
Objective	<p>Any final thoughts on <i>Emma</i>, social class, Austen?</p> <p>Turn in <i>Emma</i> journals, go over final paper.</p>
Active Engagement and Discussion	Ask for any comments or thoughts anyone had about Emma, social classes, or Austen as they were finishing up journals.

	Turn in <i>Emma</i> journals. Hand out Final Paper assignment and discuss expectations, timeline, and ask for any questions.
Assignment for next class	Enjoy Spring Break! Read articles assigned for Persuasion as shown on Calendar.
Materials Needed	Final paper handout and grading rubric

Name: _____ Date: _____

ENG 204: Studying an Author through Thematic Lenses: Jane Austen

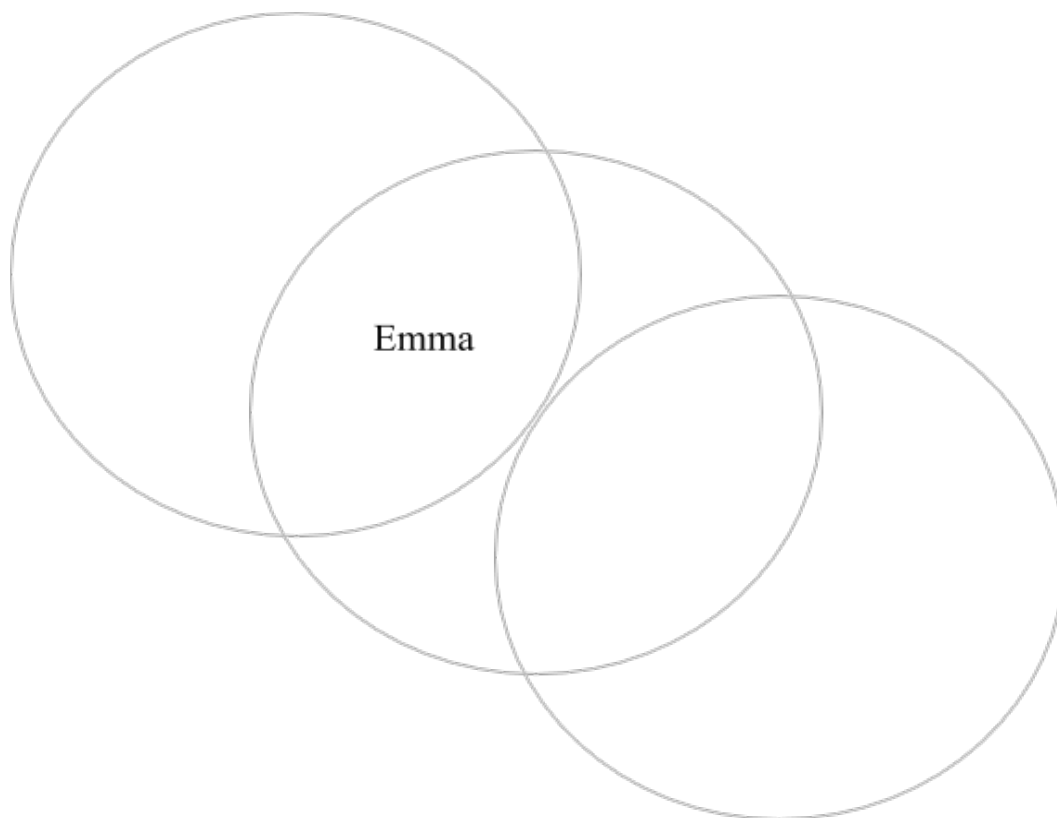
Social Spheres In-Class Activity

Social Spheres in *Emma*

Social spheres can be found throughout this novel. The way characters interact is entirely dictated by social class and which circles they belong to and can engage with. Emma is a constant across many different groups of characters, many with different statuses from her own.

Activity 1:

Below is a set of literal “social spheres,” I’ve already placed Emma’s name within the circles. Using your best judgment, fill in the rest of the circles to show where other characters fit within the social spheres. Think of this like a Ven Diagram activity, where overlapping sections of circles mean that people are within multiple social spheres. You don’t have to place every character in the reading, but place at least one character in each sphere. When you’re done, flip to the back side of this to complete the assignment.



ENG 204: Studying an Author through Thematic Lenses: Jane Austen

Social Spheres In-Class Activity

Activity 2:

Once you have completed Activity 1, use this space to explain define each of the social spheres you placed characters in and your rational behind where you placed each character.

Name: _____ Date: _____

ENG 204: Studying an Author: Jane Austen

Emma Quiz

Directions:

Please answer each question fully and to your best ability. Each question is worth 1 point. The first half of these questions are specific to the assigned reading due for today's class, the rest are general questions from the entire novel.

1. Name at least two characters (and their partners) who ended up married at the end of the novel.
2. Describe Emma's ending, what happened to her?
3. Describe Harriet's ending, what happened to her?
4. Who does Frank fall in love with at the end of the novel? What is the trouble with him marrying this person?
5. What happens to Mr. and Mrs. Weston at the end of the novel?
6. How does Emma feel about Jane for most of the novel? Why?
7. Who does Emma believe Mr. Knightley is in love with?
8. How does Mr. Woodhouse react to his daughter's engagement?
9. Why doesn't Emma like Mr. Elton?
10. Who does Emma paint a portrait of?

Bonus (+1 point): What gender is Miss Taylor's baby?

Final Paper

Assignment Description & Rationale

For the final paper for this class, you will be required to write a 15-page critical research paper that examines one of Jane Austen's novels through a thematic lens. You will pick a theme, one that we have discussed during the semester or one that you find particularly interesting and use it as a tool to create an argument about how and why Jane Austen uses it in the novel. You can pick any of Austen's work, whether we have read it in class or not. The only stipulation is that you cannot pair a theme and novel that we have already discussed as a class. For example, we will be examining *Emma* through a social class thematic lens. For your final paper, you cannot use social class as your theme to examine *Emma* for your final paper. However, you could apply the theme of social class to *Persuasion* since we will be using a different theme to examine this text as a class.

You must use examples to support your argument on the thematic lens you choose from the book you are examining and external sources. Please plan to include examples from at least (3) peer reviewed journals, articles, and/or books in your argument.

Helpful Hint:

We will be practicing examining Austen's novels through a thematic lens, looking at outside sources that make arguments about the themes in these novels, and developing our own opinions and ideas about the use of them throughout the course both in class and in our thematic journals. Utilize this practice to your best advantage in this paper: annotate journals and essays we read and keep track of interesting ideas surrounding theme in your journals as you read Austen.

Once you have selected the thematic lens and novel you want to examine for this paper, you will be on track to begin the different assignments that will culminate in your Final Paper: the Final Paper Proposal, Annotated Bibliography, and the final submission of your paper.

For more information on the Final Paper Proposal and Annotated Bibliography, please see these respective pages within the "Files" section in Canvas.

Deliverables & Peer Review

After you have submitted your Final Paper Proposal to me and received approval, you will be eligible to begin drafting your Final Paper. I've outlined important dates below for this project, but just remember, if you have an idea earlier in the semester and want to get started, you are welcome to send me your Final Paper Proposal for review before these dates.

Peer review is not required for your final paper, but it is encouraged. After everyone has received approval to begin writing their papers, I will open a discussion board in Canvas for you to participate in the peer review process. If you opt to partake in peer review and you follow the instructions on the discussion board, I will reward you with 5 bonus points added onto your final grade.

Summary of Due Dates for Assignment

Here is an overview of important dates to keep in mind as you are completing this assignment:

Tuesday, April 6, 11:59 pm ET: Final Paper Proposal due in Canvas

Thursday, April 8, 12:00 pm ET: Peer review discussion board opens (bonus points for participating)

Thursday, April 15, 11:59 pm ET: Annotated bibliography due in Canvas

Friday, April 23, 11:59 pm ET: Peer review discussion board closes (bonus points for participating)

Wednesday, April 28, 3:00 pm ET: Final project due in Canvas

Grading

This paper will be counted as your final for the course, and it will make up 40% of your total grade. Here is how your Final Paper grade will be split:

30% - Final Paper

5% - Final Paper Proposal

5% - Annotated bibliography

Meeting the full requirements listed out for this assignment, turning in the project on time, having few-to-no grammatical mistakes, and properly citing all sources in-text and on a work cited page will result in an A. If you are concerned about your grade on this project, reach out to me so we can work to come up with a solution.

Work Cited

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