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Challenging Dominant Ideologies in Order to Center Marginalized Voices and Enrich Learning: Theorizing Social Justice in English Studies Teaching

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A Final Portfolio

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Introduction: Toward Course Designs Grounded in the Praxis of Composition and

Rhetoric and Bound to Social Justice and Advocacy

This capstone portfolio features three different examples of my scholarly and pedagogical

research and writing submitted for the Masters in English, Specialization in English Teaching

degree program. For the past sixteen years, I have been teaching English at open enrollment and

community colleges, primarily composition and rhetoric and occasionally literature and creative

writing courses. I previously earned an MFA in creative writing and decided to pursue this

degree as professional development in order to engage with current scholarship in the field and

become a more knowledgeable and skilled instructor of composition and rhetoric.

Through my coursework in this degree program, I built on, deepened, and discovered

new academic research interests, which currently include visual rhetoric, antiracist and social

justice pedagogies, contract grading and alternative assessment methods, trauma-informed

pedagogy, and counter-narratives in the context of teaching and learning for social change. Each

of the three projects featured in this portfolio illustrates my engagement with these subjects.

More broadly speaking, these projects address my scholarly and pedagogical investment in

exploring and then challenging dominant norms in order to learn from diverse epistemologies

and rhetorical and linguistic modes and to center marginalized voices and perspectives. Such

endeavors enrich writing studies scholarship, our pedagogical practices, and most importantly,

our students' learning and growth as writers. In what follows, I introduce the three projects

featured in this portfolio, provide context for each piece's creation, discuss revisions, and offer a

rationale for selection.

The first project, "Rosie Re-invented: Feminist Intersectional Critique of a White

Feminist Icon and the Contemporary Meme as 'Critical Public Pedagogy,'" originated as a

seminar paper for Dr. Ethan Jordan's ENG 6050: Visual Rhetoric and Practices of Writing (spring 2023). The assignment called for research, analysis, and interpretation of visual images through an appropriate methodology. I chose the iconic "We Can Do It!" poster associated with Rosie the Riveter and its re-interpretations, focusing primarily on a contemporary meme titled "We All Can Do It!" Through an historicization of the original "We Can Do It!" poster, discussion of its re-appropriation by the feminist movement, and analysis of the "We All Can Do It!" meme utilizing intersectional feminist theory, meme studies, and intertextual and metonymic elements, the paper demonstrates how the "We All Can Do It!" meme critiques the narrow vision of feminism Rosie has come to represent and offers a more pluralistic, intersectional, and political call to action. The paper further shows how Rosie re-inventions have been deployed in ways that both reify and subvert dominant ideologies about gender, race, and feminism.

I approached the capstone course as an opportunity to broaden the argument and ground the paper more firmly in the fields of visual rhetoric and meme studies. More specifically, through the addition of a secondary sentence to the thesis in which I promise to "demonstrate the subversive power of the contemporary internet meme, a genre with the potential to serve not only as a contiguous discourse but also as public pedagogy"; addition of a secondary element to the title, "Contemporary Meme as 'Critical Public Pedagogy'"; and a further developed conclusion, I expanded the paper's scope, arguing that the meme genre has the potential to function as "critical public pedagogy," an implication developed through reference to Sandlin et al.'s scholarship on public pedagogy. Beyond revising the paper's scope, I also re-organized the sections so that my historicization of the "We Can Do It!" poster immediately precedes my visual analysis of it, allowing me to explicitly illustrate Rosie's appropriation as feminist propaganda from her original context as corporate propaganda. Moreover, I spent considerable time attending to

paragraph endings to ensure I had fully explained each paragraph's contribution to the argument. As a whole, my revisions of the original paper not only broaden the scope and improve its clarity, but also demonstrate my awareness of and attention to rhetoric, genre conventions, and the needs of an audience, skills I emphasize in my own classroom as a composition instructor.

I chose this piece for the portfolio because it illustrates my approach to visual rhetoric, a subject of interest to me, and serves as an example of original scholarship I produced through the program. "Rosie Re-invented" also engages social justice pedagogy, a subject considered in different ways in each of the pieces in this portfolio. Specifically, this paper explores pedagogy *in the public sphere* through the genre of the meme. "Rosie Re-invented" also illustrates my interest in counter-narratives—in this case a counter-narrative meme featuring both discursive and non-discursive elements—to offer fresh perspectives and enrich discourse. In my own teaching, I utilize counter-narratives in order to center marginalized voices and enrich student learning about themselves and the larger world. For instance, in preparation for writing a narrative argument about a personal experience related to a larger social issue, I assign Cherríe Moraga's "La Güera," a personal essay and counter-narrative that inspires students to explore their own experiences of privilege and oppression in relation to a social issue.

The second project, **"The Role of Norms in the Reproduction of Social Injustice through Classroom Writing Assessment and Re-imagining Grading Practices: A Literature Review,"** originated as a conference-length paper for Dr. Cheryl Hoy's ENG 6040 Graduate Writing (summer 2021). I wanted to better understand social justice scholars' critiques of classroom writing assessment and chose the genre of the literature review because it seemed to best fit my purpose. The final draft submitted for Dr. Hoy's class synthesized social justice pedagogues' critiques of classroom writing assessment, which I found predominantly focused on the role of

dominant norms in reproducing social injustice; the original paper also tentatively suggested further research on the intersections of assessment and trauma-informed pedagogy based on the recommendation of antiracist scholars Randall et al.

The capstone course provided the opportunity for me to deepen my research and significantly expand the paper's scope, attending to research threads I didn't have the opportunity to follow during the paper's original production. The original paper featured critiques of traditional grading from prominent antiracist, queer, feminist, decolonial, and translingual scholars. For the revision, I researched disability justice scholarship and also further expanded my discussion of the role of trauma-informed pedagogy in addressing social justice critiques of assessment. Through this research, I realized that disability justice and trauma-informed pedagogies have a number of shared commitments and that to fully develop these intersections I needed to re-frame the literature review to include consideration not only of writing assessment critiques but also of pedagogical interventions. I decided to re-frame the review as an excavation of existing research that could be built upon to achieve what social justice writing scholars Poe, Inoue, and Elliot call on the field to imagine—"assessment as a social justice project." Based on this premise, the final draft includes discussion of several alternative grading approaches and closes with examples of scholars who have incorporated both social justice and trauma-informed pedagogies into their writing assessment ecologies.

I included this project in the portfolio because it illustrates my scholarly research and analysis skills and showcases my knowledge and critical thinking on subjects important to my teaching philosophy and pedagogical practices: antiracist and social justice pedagogies, alternative assessments and grading contracts, and trauma-informed pedagogies. I am interested in—and have produced scholarship on—these subjects since my very first semester in this

program, and thus it feels fitting that I would significantly revise a project on these subjects in

this capstone portfolio. This project also reflects a theme echoed throughout the portfolio: my

commitment as an educator to seeing, hearing, and valuing all of my students' writing and

rhetoric, especially the voices and perspectives of minoritized students, because I believe we

learn more as a classroom writing community and as a society when we embrace difference and

celebrate pluralism. As an example of this pedagogy-in-action, I now introduce my composition

students to the myth of a single, standard English and to texts by and about writers composing in

"other Englishes," such as Vershawn Ashanti Young's "Should Writers Speak They Own

English?" and Amy Tan's "Mother Tongue" in order to affirm the value of and offer

opportunities to learn from different Englishes and rhetorical styles.

The third project, "The Novel as Counter-Narrative: A Unit Plan for Teaching Moshin

Hamid's *The Reluctant Fundamentalist*," originated as a final project for Dr. Begum's ENG

6090 Teaching of Literature (summer 2022). Students were asked to create a unit plan for

teaching one of the literary works examined in the course and an annotated bibliography. I

selected Moshin Hamid's novel, *The Reluctant Fundamentalist,* which narrates a coming-of-age

story from a marginalized perspective, that of a Pakistani man in the aftermath of 9/11, and

addresses social justice issues, including racism and Islamophobia. Moreover, several of the

scholarly sources I consulted characterize this novel as a counter-narrative to problematic

dominant narratives and as such the novel fits well with my interest in teaching counter-

narratives. After conducting literary and pedagogical research on teaching the novel, I developed

a plan that includes a narrative introduction; daily, interactive lesson plans and reading and

writing assignments; description of group projects that support and enhance exploration of the

novel; description of the culminating paper students write and the accompanying prompt options; a dimensions-based rubric, and an annotated bibliography.

I used the opportunity provided by the capstone course to further develop my thinking about a future Introduction to Literature course centering the counter-narrative. I created a title for the course, "Counter-Narratives in Contemporary Literature," and conducted research to develop a curated list of literary works (e.g., Cisneros, O'Brien, Packer, Rankine, Shire, Wei) for the units preceding the novel. I also significantly revised the narrative introduction so that it provides information about the course and teaching context and explains how the unit reflects my teaching philosophy. I included mention of the course's labor-based grading model and dimensions-based rubric, illustrating my engagement with alternative grading practices discussed in "The Role of Norms in Reproducing Social Injustice," and I updated language throughout the assignment materials to reflect the grading contract. Moreover, I explained my rationale for teaching the novel as counter-narrative, suggesting that the counter-narrative may serve as a useful heuristic for teaching literary analysis in an introductory course. I also developed a table of contents for the unit plan itself, including bookmarks, to make the plan easier for readers to follow. Finally, I rearranged the order of the documents so that the lesson plans are featured first and the annotated bibliography, renamed "Resources for Teaching *The Reluctant Fundamentalist,*" and now introduced with a contextualizing paragraph, closes the project.

This unit plan illustrates my pedagogy-in-action. The detailed lesson plans demonstrate key aspects of my teaching philosophy, including my emphasis on process-oriented and collaborative learning methods. For example, the group "teach-in" projects not only provide targeted opportunities for students to practice close reading, research, and literary analysis, but also encourage students to engage the class in an interactive activity (e.g., contest, talk show,

skit, character interviews, debate, etc.). In my experience, open invitations like these to "teach" the class lead to enhanced learning, community building, and plenty of delight and laughter, even when discussing a challenging text. I also wanted to include this piece in the portfolio because the research I conducted sparked the idea not only for a themed literature course but also for a themed composition course on the role of the counter-narrative in social movements, tentatively entitled, "The Counter-Narrative in Movements for Justice: Composing Social Change." This third project, then, showcases my course design skills.

Moreover, this project further demonstrates my commitment to incorporating antiracist and social justice scholarship, a pedagogical orientation that infuses all of my teaching. For example, in my composition courses, students also learn from diverse writers, rhetorical modes, and genres (e.g., Janet Mock's "Young People Get Trans Rights. It's Adults Who Don't"), creative options for engaging texts (e.g., composing a scripted dramedy between two scholars), writing projects that invite students to analyze topics related to social justice (e.g., researching a social justice issue relevant to the campus or community and conducting primary and/or secondary research to develop a proposal for change), and a flexible, labor-based grading contract designed to support equity and student well-being.

Through this degree program, I have developed new knowledge and frames for teaching reading and writing and a new commitment to designing writing courses bound to social justice issues and advocacy. My future plans include implementation of a flexible, labor-based grading contract, inspired by antiracist composition scholar Asao B. Inoue and composition and disability studies scholar Ellen Carillo; pedagogical assessment of my course designs and teaching practices through the lens of trauma-informed pedagogy (e.g., Melissa Tayles); and development of the aforementioned themed composition course for first-year writers: "The

Counter-Narrative in Movements for Justice: Composing Social Change." Through this first-year composition course, students will learn about the genre of the counter-narrative; rhetorically analyze visual, textual, and multimodal examples; compose a researched argument about an artifact of their choice; and compose their own, contextualized counter-narrative through a modality of their choice. The course design for "The Counter-Narrative in Movements for Justice," and for my composition and rhetoric courses more generally, will utilize the new knowledge and frames for teaching reading and writing I learned through this program. In particular, these course designs will reflect the insights of genre studies (e.g., Amy Devitt); visual rhetoric and multimodal composing (e.g., Rose Gillian; Joddy Murray); research on creating meaningful writing projects (Eodice, Geller, and Lerner); and writing-for-transfer, especially transfer scholars' emphasis on meta-cognitive reflection (e.g., Kara Taczak; Elizabeth Wardle).

After graduation, I am invested in ongoing engagement with the field of writing studies. I am especially interested in conversations about the post-pandemic rise in mental health issues among college students and strategies for supporting them. Our students face unprecedented challenges, e.g., planetary crisis, threats to democracy, artificial intelligence, systemic forms of oppression. Writing is an important skill with real-life, bread-and-butter outcomes, and I am committed to helping students reach their academic and career goals. But writing is also a way of learning, of interacting with the world, building relationships, being present with oneself in a world that demands our attention elsewhere. I am passionate about inviting students to discover what writing has to offer them. An unexpected pleasure or insight? A meaningful realization? A different way of relating? A new way of being in the world? The teaching of writing is my vocation. Despite the perils we face, or perhaps, especially because of the perils we face, I am looking forward—with tremendous hope—to continuing to learn and grow with my students.

Rosie Re-invented: Feminist Intersectional Critique of a White Feminist Icon

and the Contemporary Meme as "Critical Public Pedagogy"

The "We Can Do It!" poster most commonly associated with WWII's Rosie the Riveter

(fig. 1) appears today in a multitude of contexts, from social and political

discourse to artwork to merchandizing. For many Americans, this poster has

become synonymous with World War II propaganda encouraging women to

support the war effort by temporarily joining the workforce to combat a

shortage of male workers (Wade and Sharpe 82). As rhetoric scholars James

Kimble and Lester Olson point out, this poster "has become a national icon,"

ranking alongside other infamous WWII posters like the "flag-raising on Iwo-

Jima" and the "finger-pointing, authoritarian Uncle Sam" (536). While also

Figure 1. J. Howard Miller. "We Can Do It!" *National Archives Catalogue,* 1942-1943, https://catalog.archives.gov/id/535413.

widely recognized today as a "feminist icon" and "symbol of women's empowerment and

solidarity," this poster has been re-contextualized "for everything from campaigns to improve

women's lives to cleaning products" (Sharpe and Wade 82). In yet another example, Brdar et al.

document how the "We Can Do It!" poster was re-appropriated in the Covid era to educate and

mobilize the public's participation in the "war" against Covid-19. A simple Google Image search

for "Rosie the Riveter" reveals a plethora not only of remixed posters but of paraphernalia

associated with the poster, from Rosie Halloween costumes to Rosie bandanas. As Belinda du

Plooy, gender and communications scholar, argues, this poster features "a powerfully ideological

figure [Rosie], having been mobilized through nearly a century in the service of contradictory

ideological agendas" (14). Du Plooy, in her analysis, shows how the Rosie reproductions long

deployed for feminist politics, particularly for labor equality, have been re-contextualized by

neoliberal market forces and lifestyle feminisms that downplay the *political* aspects of feminism

in favor of *personal* agency. Given all of this, any analysis of the "We Can Do It!" poster

necessarily enters a complex foray of proliferating and competing recontextualizations. Many

sites of inquiry remain unexplored and could potentially yield interdisciplinary insight. This

paper focuses on the original poster's appropriation as a feminist icon and more specifically on a

remix called "We <u>All</u> Can Do It!"[1] (fig. 2), which I contend offers an

important feminist critique through engagement with feminist

discourse and use of intertextual and metonymic elements. I will also

demonstrate the subversive power of the contemporary internet

meme, a genre with the potential to serve not only as a contiguous

discourse but also as public pedagogy.

> **Please use the link provided to view the image.**
>
> **Figure 2.** "We All Can Do It" Know Your Meme. https://knowyourmeme.com/photos/642061-we-can-do-it.

Feminist Context

The feminist concepts of intersectionality and white feminism will be central to my

analysis of the "We <u>All</u> Can Do It!" image's engagement with feminist discourse. Let's begin

with intersectionality. As a theoretical framework, it has profoundly influenced not only

academic scholarship, but also, in recent years, public and popular discourses. In brief,

intersectionality demonstrates the perils of examining discrimination solely on the basis of

gender or solely on the basis of race. As feminist scholars Anna Keuchenius and Liza Mügge

explain, because racism and sexism intersect, producing barriers and forms of oppression unique

to women of color, if we do not examine the intersection of racism and sexism, we will fail to

adequately capture, and consequently, fail to adequately remedy discrimination faced by women

of color (361). Keuchenius and Mügge go on to note that intersectionality "is variously

understood [today] as a theory, a research paradigm, and a strategy to transform power relations"

and may be applied to a range of intersecting identities (361). It is so fundamental to the field of gender and women's studies that it is now part of the field's "standard curriculum" (Keuchenius and Mügge 361). In recent years, according to scholar Michelle Flood, the term has become a staple of mainstream, popular culture, and even celebrity feminisms; however, as Flood also explains, tensions abound around its use, especially within celebrity feminisms. "It is all too easy," Flood reminds us, "to claim an intersectional feminist identity but not actually live out an intersectional politic" (424). In other words, within feminism spheres, disagreements exist over employment of this term. Its roots are political, not personal, so for many feminist practitioners, use of intersectionality as an identity marker without actually participating in activist movements or working in solidarity for change undermines its purpose—and creates tension within feminist communities, tensions the "We <u>All</u> Can Do It!" image engages.

I will also use the term white feminism[3] to illustrate the "We <u>All</u> Can Do It!" image's critique. According to feminist scholar Rafia Zakaria, white feminism refers to the "history of systemic racism within feminism" and "describes a set of assumptions and behaviors which have been baked into mainstream Western feminism, rather than describing the identity of its subject" (ix). She goes on to explain that not only is the public face of feminism primarily white but that feminist policy makers and "experts" (those with the most power) too often work from white-centric perspectives that do not account for the needs of all women (5). She concludes that "[n]o movement that is unable to do justice amongst its own adherents is likely to accomplish any wider goals toward justice" (210). "We <u>All</u> Can Do It!" is in conversation with the feminist discourses of intersectionality and white feminism through both textual and visual elements.

Methodology

To demonstrate how the "We <u>All</u> Can Do It!" image (fig. 3) engages in critique of "We Can Do It!", I will utilize the language of meme theory and engage in intertextual and metonymic analysis. Scholar Richard Dawkins, known for coining the term meme in 1989, defined it

as "a unit of cultural transmission, or a unit of imitation" (qtd. in Shifman 38). Certainly, the "We Can Do It!" poster's re-emergence in the 1980s and growing recognition/association with WWII war mobilization and then with women's equality qualifies this poster as a "unit of cultural transmission, or …imitation" (37). Limor Shifman, author of *Memes in the Digital Era*, suggests three primary dimensions for analyzing the second part of Dawkins' definition of memes as "units of imitation": content, form, and stance (40). The "We <u>All</u> Can Do It!" poster I will compare to the original makes changes to all three of these dimensions (form, content, and stance) to some degree and analysis of these changes will help illuminate the image's meanings. As Shifman also discusses, memes have a long history, pre-dating the advent of the world wide web, but the internet meme, he contends, has unique characteristics. He defines the internet meme as follows: "(a) a group of digital items sharing common characteristics of content, form, and/or stance, which (b) were created with awareness of each other, and (c) were circulated, imitated, and/or transformed via the internet for many users" (41). According to Shifman's criteria, the image I will compare to the original "We Can Do It!" is an example of an internet meme, and I will hereafter refer to it as such. In my subsequent discussion of other recontextualizations of the original image, I will use similar framing and terminology.

In addition to its classification as an internet meme, "We <u>All</u> Can Do It!" depends on intertextuality and metonymy to communicate meaning. In *Visual Methodologies*, Gillian Rose

explains that intertextuality "refers to the way that the meanings of any one discursive image or text depend not only on that one text or image, but also on the meanings carried by other images and texts" (216). For example, the "We <u>All</u> Can Do It!" meme relies on familiarity with the "We Can Do It!" image and on feminist discourse for its meaning(s) to be fully legible to a viewer. Significantly, the "We <u>All</u> Can Do It!" meme also utilizes metonymy of *non-discursive* visual elements, and in my analysis of it, I focus on both discursive and non-discursive elements. Brdar et al., in their analysis of Rosie memes during the Covid-era, employ metonymy as one of their methods, considering the extent to which metonymic elements play a role in "constituting" and/or "re-contextualizing" meaning (258). In my own analysis, I use their approach as a model.

Historical Context for "Rosie"

The woman portrayed in "We Can Do It!" (fig. 4), commonly recognized in contemporary culture as "Rosie the Riveter," a fictionalized representation of women's increased participation in the labor market during WWII, was not created for the purpose of mobilizing women into the workforce. Rather, as scholars Kimble and Olson explain, it was part of a series of posters created by designer J. Herman Miller to boost morale among employees (both male and female) at a company called Westinghouse, which did not even make rivets. In other words, the poster

Figure 4. J. Howard Miller. "We Can Do It!" *National Archives Catalogue,* 1942-1943, https://catalog.archives.gov/id/535 413.

was, in fact, propaganda, but not for the war effort, nor to inspire women's participation in the workforce. After a brief two-week display on the factory floor, Miller's "We Can Do It!" wasn't seen again (or at least there's no record of display or publication) until the 1980s (Kimble and Olson 536). As the image gained notoriety in the 1980s, it was conflated with Rockefeller's

"Rosie the Riveter" (fig. 5), originally featured on the cover of the *Saturday Evening Post* in 1943 (Kimble and Olson 536). Thus, the poster now commonly dubbed "Rosie the Riveter" in popular culture and even in many historical and academic texts is, in fact, Miller's "We Can Do It!" and not a depiction of Rosie the Riveter. In a surprising twist, Miller's poster—now associated with women's empowerment—is an outlier in the series Miller produced for Westinghouse in that most of the other images depict women's place as in the home and/or objectify the women portrayed (Kimble and Olson 558). Nonetheless, it is Miller's print that is generally remembered as Rosie the Riveter and that has attained the status of feminist icon. Thus, the Rosie poster we now commonly associate with WWII and feminism, originated not as war propaganda nor as feminist propaganda, but as *corporate* propaganda.

Figure 5. Norman Rockwell. "Rosie the Riveter." *Norman Rockwell Museum,* 29 May 1943, https://www.nrm.org/rosie-the-riveter/

Miller's Rosie: Corporate Propaganda and the Making of a Feminist Icon

Let's turn now to a visual analysis of Miller's original "We Can Do It!" poster (fig. 6) in order to shed light on its appropriation as feminist icon. The image features a white woman gazing directly at the viewer while flexing a raised arm, her sleeves rolled up and the hand of her flexed arm closed to make a fist. She wears a plain blue, collared shirt resembling a company uniform, and according to Kimble and Olson, a company badge is displayed on her collar (539). With her other arm, she holds back the sleeve of her shirt, revealing what Kimble and Olson describe as "well-manicured nails" (539). She wears a white-polka dotted orange-red bandana, its ends forming what

Figure 6. J. Howard Miller. "We Can Do It!" *National Archives Catalogue*, 1942-1943, https://catalog.archives.gov/id/535413.

appears to be a bow on the top of her head. Her dark, slicked back hair is mostly hidden from the

viewer, but it does peek out in a couple places, forming a tight, rose-like curl above her right,

arched eyebrow and a smaller curl above her left ear. Both eyebrows are thin and shapely, as

well-manicured as her nails. Her long, thick eyelashes give the impression that she has applied

mascara. She also appears to be wearing lipstick that matches the orange-red shade of her

bandana. Kimble and Olson point out that the white woman featured in Miller's poster, like

many of the women in his prints, depicts unrealistic standards of beauty that could be described

as "glamorous" (560). Building on their claim, I argue that while Miller's Rosie may give the

impression of strength through her flexed elbow and fist, she also conforms to conventional

notions of white femininity: well-manicured nails, matching bandana and lipstick, shapely

eyebrows and eyelashes, high cheekbones, a long nose with thin-tipped nostrils, slicked or

moussed hair forming two tight curls escaping from her bandana, and the bandana itself, which

while less feminine (signifying her 1940s non-traditional/gender non-conforming role as a

worker in a factory rather than as a housewife) is nonetheless feminized by the bow-like shape its

tips form on top of her head. Her body language as a whole—because of the uprightness of her

posture and flexed arm—signals strength but also feminine grace. Reminiscent of Gloria

Steinem's glamorous public appeal in the 1970s, Miller's Rosie would later make an ideal

ambassador for second wave feminism: strong, confident, capable of contributing to any sector

or occupation, and yet still feminine, even "glamorous" in appearance, and thus, less threatening

to conventional norms about gender.

In regard to her body language, it is also worth noting that what modern viewers often

interpret as a sign of strength—Rosie's flexed arm and raised fist—meant something very

different in the context of its original production. Kimble and Olson explain that "raising the

hand with a clenched fist was a routine, team-building gesture that men and women alike at Westinghouse adopted for rallies and community building" (523). As Brdar et al. observe, as the image has been re-contextualized and re-interpreted, this gesture has come to be "associated with [feminist notions of] confidence and determination" (268). We have, then, yet another irony in the making of Rosie as a feminist icon.

In Miller's poster, Rosie's facial expression offers a number of possible interpretations. Her lips are pursed together, and while they don't appear to form a frown, they are also not upturned, so her mouth conveys a neutral expression. The fact that she's looking directly at the viewer suggests strength and confidence, traits more associated with masculinity, but again, this direct gaze is tempered by feminine touches and the attention the poster suggests she has paid to her appearance, her feminine "beauty" unsullied by her participation in traditionally "masculine" labor. Other than her direct gaze, the other aspect of her facial expression that appears to hold significance—or at least that contradicts an otherwise neutral expression—is her right eyebrow, which is arched in a noticeable way. A single eyebrow arch like this could signify derision, doubt, assertion of dominance, surprise, or invitation (playful or sexual). Given the original context—propaganda to mobilize and boost factory workers' morale—none of these quite fit unless we interpret her as the watchful eye of the employer (dominance). Or, it might simply be a choice of Miller's, a designer who Kimble and Olson have established tended to portray women in glamorized and at times objectified ways. In the context of re-appropriation as feminist icon, though, the single arched eyebrow could be understood—and I interpret it as—yet another reflection of strength and confidence. In Kimble and Olson's words, she looks at the viewer directly, even "challengingly" (543), and I would suggest that the arched eyebrow contributes to

the "challenging" impression of her gaze. As second-wave feminist propaganda, the possible

interpretation of her expression as "challenging" may have enhanced her appeal.

The text in this image contributes to its overall meaning, and interestingly, from a design

perspective, it could also be argued that the woman's arched eyebrow serves the function of a

vector, cuing the reader to notice the speech bubble above her head. Rosie, who in Miller's

poster ostensibly represents a fellow Westinghouse employee, proclaims, "We Can Do It!" in the

speech bubble above her bandana (Kimble and Olson 545). As Kimble and Olson explain, the

"We" in its original context likely refers to the employees (both male and female) who would

have seen the poster on the factory floor, and "It" would refer to the demands of the factory job

(545). Interpreted through its later appropriation as feminist political propaganda, the "We" could

be interpreted as referring to American women more generally and as Brdar et al. observe, as a

feminist slogan, it suggests that "women can succeed in anything if they are determined to do so"

(267). In the original image, Kimble and Olson point out that the date, company logo, and

company name are printed in the blue ribbon along the bottom of the poster (539). However, as

the image becomes a meme in the digital era, the blue ribbon along the bottom has disappeared

altogether and/or the date and company information has been removed. In her appropriation as a

second wave feminist icon, however, cues about this Rosie's employment in a traditionally

masculine field might have actually boosted her credentials. As du Plooy observes, "second wave

concerns [were] about women in the workplace and civic spaces" (3). Rosie's depiction as a

woman working in a nontraditional field and the call to action or solidarity implied by the slogan

"We Can Do It!" fits with this agenda. Recontextualized as a rallying cry for women's

participation in the workplace, "We Can Do It!" suggests not only that women "can do"

nontraditional work, but also that they can do it with a non-threatening smile.

The image's slogan is visually emphasized through design elements, underscoring its importance to the overall meaning. For example, while the reader may first see Rosie's eyes, there's a vector formed through the tail of the speech bubble, which both points to Rosie's eyes and draws the reader's attention to the speech bubble; likewise, as mentioned earlier, the tip of the bow-like assemblage on Rosie's head and her arched eyebrow seem to point to the speech bubble's tail. Even Rosie's flexed arm and fist could be read as a vector in this image; the arm forms a diagonal that ends with a fist, reminiscent of the shape of the point of an arrow, and it potentially draws one's eyes to Rosie's. Thus, while Rosie isn't looking at the speech bubble, elements of Rosie's facial features point us toward it. And yet, while design elements "point" literally or approximately toward the speech bubble, Rosie's arm points toward her eyes, reminding the viewer of her direct gaze, which as previously discussed, demonstrates strength and confidence, and could perhaps even be understood as a challenge to the viewer. In fact, Rosie's direct gaze could be interpreted as yet another gender non-conforming cue (mitigated, of course, by the feminized elements), which nonetheless, like her arched eyebrow, suggests empowerment. She does not demur to her viewer but instead makes direct eye contact. Both linguistic and visual elements contribute to this depiction of feminized confidence, strength, *and ability* (to "do" whatever we interpret "it" to mean). Once again, while originally a form of corporate propaganda, this depiction lends itself to re-interpretation emphasizing feminist values like agency and empowerment. However, as mentioned earlier, it does so without threatening to wildly upset the status quo; instead, it offers a reassuring, perhaps even placating, vision of women in the workplace and public sphere.

Miller's color choices reflect the original purpose and context while also making the image easily suitable for other purposes and its rise as a meme. Rosie's blue shirt matches the

blue background of the speech bubble and ribbon with company information at the bottom of the poster. Since the woman in Miller's original poster was likely intended to represent a Westinghouse employee, it makes sense that her attire, resembling a company uniform, would be visually "uniform" with the company's message to employees ("We Can Do It!") and the company's information at the bottom of the poster. Color choices, then, reinforce the message of unity suggested by the linguistic choice of "We" in the slogan. In a sense, the blue speech bubble and blue ribbon along the bottom edge frame the poster. In this mise en scène, Rosie with her flexed arm is the center of the frame, and she is figured against a bright yellow background. Along with blue and yellow, the color red (of the orange-reddish bandana), which literally and figurately frames Rosie's face, also stands out in the poster. It is the only part of her uniform that does not correspond to the company and thus perhaps also stands out because it appears to be an item of clothing Rosie chose, an aspect of her attire that reflects her individual style. In sum, the red bandana signifies her as a laborer while also reflecting her personal taste and given the white polka-dots and bow-like finish, this red element also reinforces Rosie's femininity despite her "masculine" labor. The prominence of bright yellow, red, and blue would certainly have contributed to the poster's visibility on the factory floor, increasing workers' chances of seeing/viewing the poster. In addition, though, these vibrant colors likely reinforce the morale-boosting text, "We Can Do It!", giving the poster a lively, exciting feel, emphasized by the exclamation mark in the slogan itself, all of which would later translate to—and work effectively as visual rhetoric within—the second wave of the women's movement. Moreover, the simplicity of the color-scheme and other aspects of her visual appearance, such as the plain blue uniform, neatly tied bandana, and tidiness of her hair and makeup, likely contributed to the ease of its replicability as a meme.

Rosie as Internet Meme: Changes to Content and Stance

As a feminist icon, Miller's Rosie symbolizes feminism for many Americans. We might say that she both reflects and perpetuates (now at lightning speed through digital memes) notions of ideal womanhood—as strength and confidence (empowerment) tempered by white feminine attributes. Moreover, I would argue that she embodies—literally and figuratively—the discourse of white feminism critiqued by women of color and white-allied feminists. As a symbol of feminism, Rosie visually illustrates what and whom feminism represents (or is perceived to represent) and whom it has excluded (or is perceived to have excluded). Put another way, she suggests a narrow and problematic vision of femininity and of feminism.

While not the primary focus of my argument, the proliferation of internet memes featuring Rosie as women of color in place of Miller's white Rosie supports my point about Rosie as a problematic and exclusive feminist icon at odds with now foundational feminist concepts like intersectionality. Before turning to my analysis of the "We <u>All</u> Can Do It!" meme, which I contend represents a powerful critique of Rosie as feminist icon, I want to briefly illustrate a few twenty-first century Rosie memes that seek to remedy her narrowness as feminist ambassador and/or reflect changing mainstream sentiments about a white feminist icon. Drawing on Shifman, these memes change *content*—Rosie's skin color and/or facial or bodily features— but keep most of the other visual and linguistic elements that make the meme recognizable as Rosie. In other words, through visual and linguistic metonymy, we know immediately that we are viewing a recontextualization of Rosie. Even though there may be subtle changes, the color scheme, bandana, foregrounding of Rosie, and her flexed arm with closed fist have not changed. What these images likely demonstrate is an interest in inclusivity, and/or depending on distribution context, a marketing decision to cash in on perceived changing perceptions of

womanhood and feminism. And yet, as I show, these women of color Rosie memes do not

significantly transform this problematic icon. For example, in an online blog, Stacy Blaylock

argues that an image by Global Coutre (fig. 5) "is an example of

intersectionality that challenges Miller's original vision of femininity."

Blaylock is certainly correct that this image disrupts conventional notions

of femininity through its representation not only of a woman of color but a

woman of color whose hair is styled as an Afro. Moreover, her hair

exceeds the previous framing of the bandana, surrounding her face almost

like a halo and taking up more space in the actual image, making her

identity as African American and choice of an African American hair

Figure 5. Tote Bag. *Global Coutre,* https://www.pinterest.com/pin/8309 14199986463900/

style even more prominent in this meme than in others that replace white Rosie with a woman of

color. At the same time, intersectionality, as articulated by legal scholar Kimberleé Crenshaw and

as applied as an academic theory and praxis, has political implications, and as a framework

promotes structural changes to sexism and racism. I would argue that versions like Global Coutre

function more as tokenism, or at most as inclusion, but not as intersectional feminist

intervention. Despite the content changes, her other features are notably feminine in the style of

Miller's Rosie, from her red lipstick to her slender nose and shapely eyebrows, one of them

arched like the original Rosie. For comparison purposes, let's also examine a recent *New Yorker*

cover (fig. 6) featuring another African American Rosie. Instead of a bandana, this Rosie is

wearing the famous "pussy hat" donned by thousands of women during the 2017 Women's

March in Washington, DC. Given the political context in which the pussy hat gained notoriety,

the exchange of a bandana for a pussy hat imbues this Rosie with more political aspirations. Notably, though, the "We Can Do It!" slogan has been replaced with the name of the magazine, the *New Yorker*, and there's no speech bubble, so this Rosie is mute by comparison, though a viewer might certainly associate this image with the iconic "We Can Do It!" slogan despite its absence. In comparison to the Global Coutre Rosie, the *New Yorker* Rosie's facial features are more clearly African American, and she has more-well-defined muscles in her arm, elements that certainly "challenge" conventional notions of white femininity. However,

Figure 6. Gray Swartz. "The March." *New Yorker*, 6 Feb. 2017, https://www.newyorker.com/culture/culture-desk/cover-story-2017-02-06

as was the case with Global Coutre's Rosie, most of the other feminized elements of her attire, body language, facial expression, and cosmetic enhancements remain unchanged. I would argue that this image illustrates inclusion and within the context of its publication shortly after the 2017 Women's March suggests a "changing face" of feminism, in line with the diversity represented and championed by march organizations themselves. While this Rosie gazes directly at the viewer, and there appears to be a slight arched eyebrow, I would not use the word "challenging" to describe her demeanor (as Kimble and Olson do for Miller's Rosie). This Rosie's lips are slightly upturned, and the arched eyebrow is not prominent enough to match the almost saucy expression of Miller's Rosie. Despite the pussy hat, which suggests a political context, I would characterize both of these women of color Rosies as non-threatening, even appeasing in tone and stance. In contrast to Miller's Rosie, Global Coutre's Rosie is smiling at us, and despite donning a pussy hat, the *New Yorker's* Rosie doesn't actually speak to us. Given the *New Yorker's* mainly white, liberal audience, an African American Rosie with an appeasing demeanor suggests a

new/diverse but also non-threatening face of feminism, an image well suited to selling magazines

to its intended audience. Recalling Shifman, I would suggest that both these images contain a

subtle shift in content and stance, not toward embracing the political, but rather, shying away

from it. As I will demonstrate, the "We All Can Do It!" meme does not shy away, but instead,

embraces the political.

Rosies in Solidarity: Critique of a Feminist Icon

Now I will turn to the "We All Can Do It!" meme (fig. 7),

which I argue makes a political critique of Rosie as feminist icon and

its associations with white feminism. The "We All Can Do It!" meme

appears digitally in many forms and contexts, from online forums and programming to products

associated with feminism or women's empowerment. Like the Global Coutre and *New Yorker*

Rosies, the meaning(s) of "We All Can Do It!" depend on intertextual and metonymic elements.

The viewers' interpretation of the meme will also be influenced by their familiarity with the

concepts of intersectionality and white feminism.

The "We All Can Do It!" meme mimics several content elements of the "We Can Do It!"

poster. Visually, it re-creates the Miller poster's mise en scène, framing, color scheme, flexed

elbow, and bandana. Linguistically, it echoes the familiar "We Can Do It!" slogan, except that the

creator of this newer meme adds the word "All" and underlines it to emphasize its importance.

The "We All Can Do It!" meme even reconstitutes the blue ribbon at the bottom of the image, a

visual element of Miller's "We Can Do It!" poster often left out in the meme's digital iterations

(as is the case in the Global Coutre and *New Yorker* Rosie). Because the image uses these

intertextual elements, if we are familiar with other Rosie memes, we'll immediately recognize it as a Rosie re-invention.

Despite these metonymies, there are significant changes to the content and stance of this Rosie rendition. Perhaps the most noticeable change is the presentation of three Rosies, all of them women of color. In contrast to the African American woman featured in the Global Coutre and *New Yorker* memes, the African American Rosie in the center of "We <u>All</u> Can Do It!" is of a much darker skin tone. In fact, two of the three women (the African American Rosie in the center and the Muslim Rosie on the right) feature darker skin tones than the previous two Rosie images discussed (Global Coutre and *New Yorker*). Another significant difference is that one of the Rosies isn't just looking directly at the viewer but also *facing* the viewer. That is, unlike previous Rosie iterations, her body is not turned at an angle in order to make eye contact with the viewer. While each Rosie wears a blue shirt, their shirts differ in material, shade, and style, and we can see that the center Rosie is wearing a belt over jeans. Given these details in combination with the lack of company badges, we can infer that none of these Rosies are wearing uniforms. Moreover, this meme doesn't contain any corporate information. In Miller's Rosie, company information appeared in the blue ribbon at the bottom; in the Global Coutre meme, the words "Global Coutre" appear in blue ribbon along the bottom; in the *New Yorker* Rosie, the words *New Yorker* appear in the thick blue ribbon at the top of the cover. The "We <u>All</u> Can Do It!" meme disrupts this pattern. Not only has the word "All" been added to the blue speech bubble, but the company information in the blue ribbon at the bottom has been replaced by a political message: "Feminism is worthless without intersectionality and inclusion." Thus, this image directly— through linguistic elements—engages feminist discourse about intersectionality. As I argue, visual elements support this engagement.

The body language, sartorial choices, facial features, and demeanor of the Rosies differ significantly from previously discussed memes. Not only, as mentioned, does the meme feature three women, each of a different culture and race or ethnicity, but their facial expressions and body language do not conform to the markers of white femininity we have come to recognize in Rosie recontextualizations. As mentioned earlier, while all three Rosies gaze directly at the viewer, one of them faces us directly, and thus adopts a more adversarial—and less conventionally feminine—stance. Moreover, none appear to have eyelashes, which may be in part a reflection of the medium (digital art), but nonetheless, it is striking in comparison to the iconic Rosie's mascara-enhanced eyelashes, which contributes to her representation of idealized white femininity. While the Hispanic Rosie (featured on the left) does appear to be wearing bright red lipstick, it is difficult to determine if the other two are as well; the differences in visibility of lipstick could be interpreted to suggest that these Rosies, unlike Miller's, are exercising more choice about cosmetic presentation. Unlike the high cheekbones and long, thin tipped nose of Miller's Rosie, there's no evidence of cheekbones at all in this meme (again, this could reflect the choice of medium). Moreover, the shape of each woman's nose is different, reflecting common differences in shape across race and ethnicity and again disrupting notions of white femininity. Each woman's eyebrows do appear to be manicured but they are thicker than Miller's Rosie, and the African American Rosie's eyebrows appear to be furrowed. One of the women has an arched eyebrow mimicking the "challenging" look of Miller's Rosie, and the others seem to stare the viewer down. Two of the women are wearing a version of the red bandana: the African American Rosie's hair is styled in an Afro, and similar to Global Coutre's Rosie, her hair will not be contained by the bandana. The Muslim Rosie is wearing a red, white polka-dotted hijab, and the Hispanic Rosie wears a small bandana of pink, blue, and white

colors. Thus, each woman dons a metonymic version of the original image's bandana. Reminiscent of the way in which each of the three Rosies' choice about lipstick differs, the variations in how each Rosie presents herself sartorially suggests a much more diverse—and agentic—vision of femininity and beauty. While some elements of femininity from Miller's poster are maintained, Miller's idealized version of white femininity has been significantly re-imagined. Moreover, the presence of three different Rosies, each representing a different race and ethnicity, in and of itself challenges the notion of normative femininity. Perhaps most striking to me is the tonal difference in this meme. If we combine the Rosies' upright posture, the furrowed eyebrows, direct eye contact from all three Rosies with one of them facing us directly, her arm not simply flexed but her fist raised in the direction of the viewer, the image gives the impression of defiance. Instead of a Rosie ready to go to work, these Rosies appear ready to fight.

The linguistic elements of this image provide important context for and contribute to the meaning of the visual elements. The three Rosies in this image are not only physically standing together, as if ready to fight, but the speech bubble's three tails indicate a chorus of women speaking together, proclaiming "We All Can Do It!" The addition of the word "All" could be interpreted as a direct critique of Miller's Rosie as feminist icon. This meme seems to suggest that the "We" in the original poster isn't sufficient, especially when the woman featured is white and conforms to idealized white femininity. "We," the meme implies, must be qualified with the word "All" and with explicit images of women of color. The word "All" and the visual image of the three Rosies—each from a different racial background and one from a minoritized religious background—combine to drive home the point that feminism as represented by Miller's image excludes key constituents. This message is explicitly reinforced and explained through linguistic

elements in the blue ribbon at the bottom of the image: "Feminism is worthless without intersectionality and inclusion." Put another way, the feminism commonly associated with and represented by Miller's "We Can Do It!" poster is "worthless." If we put this poster in conversation with feminist scholar Zakaria, we can see how this visual image offers a potent critique of white feminism. Recall, for example, Zakaria's claim that "[n]o movement that is unable to do justice amongst its own adherents is likely to accomplish any wider goals toward justice" (210). Thus, Miller's Rosie poster, as appropriated by feminist individuals and groups, represents a version of feminism doomed to fail. It's not just that white feminism excludes women of color and marginalized peoples. It's that white feminism—if not disrupted and re-imagined—will not achieve its goals. To be effective as a movement, the "We <u>All</u> Can Do It!" meme implies, feminism must embrace *and embody* intersectionality.

The combination of the reference to intersectionality and the defiant stance of the "We <u>All</u> Can Do It!" Rosies suggests that these women are ready to fight for social and political change. As discussed within feminist discourse, intersectionality is employed to examine systemic forms of racism and sexism (and other intersecting "isms") and to organize for change. Given the political implications of the reference to intersectionality, the image could also be interpreted to mean that "We <u>All</u> Can [Fight For Systemic Change]" or even "We [Should] <u>All</u> [Fight For Systemic Change]." This said, I do want to acknowledge the possibility that the meme uses the term intersectionality interchangeably with inclusion, especially since "intersectionality and inclusion" are given nearly equal weight in the final tagline. In this case, the poster's creator may be using the term in the more general sense Michelle Flood discusses in her article on celebrity feminisms, in which case the call for systemic, political change might not be the intention. At the same time, the creator included both terms, which to me suggests she was likely

aware of the difference, and again, given the defiant, ready to fight stance of the Rosies, especially the Rosie who faces the viewer directly with a raised fist, I am more inclined to read the image as informed feminist political propaganda. Regardless of the creator's intent, this meme offers an important critique of the iconic feminist image, not only re-imagining its narrow representation of femininity—and envisioning a more pluralistic vision—but also invoking the centrality of intersectionality and of the political to the feminist project.

The Contemporary Meme as "Critical Public Pedagogy"

"We <u>All</u> Can Do It!" engages feminist discourse through the contemporary genre of an internet meme. As Shifman argues, memes "diffuse from person to person but shape and reflect general social mindsets" (4). They are, in his words, "socially constructed public discourses" (Shifman 8). Within the context of feminist discourse, the many faces of Rosie have/continue to "shape and reflect" changing ideas about femininity and feminism, and the meme-critique "We <u>All</u> Can Do It!" participates in the "social construct[ion]" of "public discourses" through its rejection of white-centric feminisms and its call for more pluralistic and politically rooted feminisms. This meme also succeeds in communicating something that words alone could not convey, or at least not with the same impact. While the textual elements in "We <u>All</u> Can Do It!" play an important role in conveying its critique of a feminist icon—and by extension, critique of any claim to feminism devoid of intersectional, political commitments—the textual elements' import takes shape, and deeper meaning, through non-discursive elements. Composition scholar Joddy Murray captures the impact such non-discursive elements have on us as human beings, explaining, "Non-discursive rhetoric actually makes knowledge *livable* in that it places knowledge within the realm of the senses rather than just in the realm of increasing abstractions"

(333). In fact, for Murray, "image, not word, is the basic unit of meaning-making" (346). "We All Can Do It!" certainly illustrates Murray's point, exhibiting the power of image to create meaning and make that meaning come to life in a visceral way for a viewer. The term intersectionality may be foundational to many feminisms, but it is also an "abstract" concept, often challenging to grasp, let alone enact. The visual elements ("image") in "We All Can Do It!" not only make the concept more concrete but also engage the viewer through the "realm of the senses," palpably so, given the three Rosies' direct, defiant gaze. In this sense, the image is more than political; it is also pedagogical. As a form of pedagogical "public discourse," we might even characterize it as "public pedagogy," or perhaps more accurately, as "critical public pedagogy," which Sandlin et al., in their history of scholarship on public pedagogy, explain as a form of contestation and resistance to dominant cultural ideas within the context of popular culture. As such, the "We All Can Do It!" remix demonstrates the unique communicative features of the internet meme, and I hope, points to the need for more research on the genre of the meme as contiguous discourse and cultural artifact. For example, if the internet meme has the power to serve as "critical public pedagogy," what kinds of pedagogies does this genre afford? To what extent has the meme-as-pedagogical-tool already been deployed in social justice contexts beyond the example discussed here? We also need to know more about the limitations and risks of this genre. Given the rise of artificial intelligence, deep fakes, and the weaponization of misinformation, what risks are endemic to this unique genre? What new forms of literacy does this genre demand of us? These are questions we must also attend to in our studies of new media shaping twenty-first century life.

Notes

1. Since the artist did not wish for "We <u>All</u> Can Do It!" to be reproduced, I have provided an online link to the image throughout this paper and hope it will be available for others to view in the future. I respect the creator's decision not to allow its reproduction without permission.

2. First coined by Kimberly Crenshaw in 1989 in an academic journal about discrimination law, the term intersectionality eventually made its way into scholarly gender and women's studies discourse and mainstream feminist discourse.

3. While intersectionality is the term now commonly associated with efforts to make feminism discourse more inclusive, relevant, and effective as a tool for social change, critiques of feminism's exclusion of women of color, lesbians and queer women, working class women, and other marginalized identities date back to the early days of the second wave feminist movement, such as the now classic 1981 feminist text, *This Bridge Called My Back: Writings by Radical Women of Color* (Moraga et al.). In fact, some scholars argue that Sojourner Truth's "Ain't I a Woman?" speech should be credited as an early articulation of the theory of intersectionality. Thus, these debates have a long history within feminist discourses.

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The Role of Norms in the Reproduction of Social Injustice through Classroom Writing

Assessment and Re-imagining Grading Practices: A Literature Review

In recent years, composition scholars invested in social justice have increasingly turned

their attention to the subject of writing assessment, exploring how traditional assessment of

student writing in higher education reproduces social injustices. To date, a great deal more

scholarship has been devoted to the disparate impacts of program-level assessment and large-

scale, privately produced and administered tests than to local, everyday classroom assessment

practices, such as letter grades, rubrics, and teacher responses. This is beginning to change,

however, at least in part due to the influence of antiracist composition scholar Asao B. Inoue,

whose scholarship on classroom assessment ecologies, labor-based grading contracts, and white

language supremacy is cited across the burgeoning literature on equity in classroom grading. In

fact, the few curated collections about social justice and assessment have been curated by Inoue

in concert with fellow composition and assessment scholars Mya Poe and Norbert Elliot,[1] and

many of the works surveyed in this literature review first appeared in these collections. Most of

the composition scholars featured in this review approach the topic of classroom writing

assessment from pedagogical orientations that address specific minoritized groups. These

pedagogies include antiracist, queer, feminist, decolonial, translingual, and disability studies.

While distinctions exist across these pedagogical frameworks, nonetheless, common issues of

concern emerge. In particular, the literature reveals an overarching concern about the way in

which classroom assessment practices reflect and perpetuate dominant norms. In fact, we can see

the significance of norms to assessment in Poe et al.'s definition of social injustice, which they

describe as "ways that social systems work against entire groups of people to maintain the unequal

distribution of opportunity, wealth, and justice," adding that "[social injustice] often has no one villain,

no one person to blame" but instead "works through seemingly normalized systems … [such that] social injustice often seems natural" (3). Accordingly, this review focuses on scholarship that addresses how traditional classroom assessment ecologies, functioning as "seemingly normalized systems," perpetuate social injustices, and in the process, enact forms of structural violence against minoritized and marginalized students. The review is organized thematically around the aforementioned critical pedagogical approaches—antiracist, queer, feminist, decolonial, translingual and disability studies—in order to create the richest possible tableaux of the scholarship on this mechanism of social injustice and to identify opportunities for intervention and directions for future research. More specifically, this review responds to Poe et al.'s call for the field of writing studies to imagine "assessment as a social justice project" (37). Accordingly, this review illuminates what possibilities exist—and could be built upon through further scholarship—to remake assessment as a transformative tool for social change.

Antiracist Pedagogical Critiques

Among the contributors to social justice and assessment research, antiracist pedagogues have produced both a depth and breadth of scholarly literature, making a significant contribution to our understanding of how dominant norms function in classroom grading economies. These scholars argue that most classroom assessment practices judge student writing against an often-unexamined white norm, reproducing social injustices based on race and often, also, on class. As antiracist composition scholar Asao Inoue asserts, "[n]ormalized whiteness" is a feature of contemporary American life and not only does it "contribute … to white supremacy in the academy and society" but it has a colonizing effect ("Classroom Writing Assessment" 374). Inoue explains that because most writing instructors have been trained in white supremacist

institutions, they have internalized whiteness as normative and apply it in their judgment of student writing ("Classroom Writing Assessment" 374). Regardless of our own positionality, then, he argues that normative whiteness is endemic to the standards we use to judge student writing. Inoue points out that "[a] lot is unspoken in a standard because it assumes a primary perspective or subject position to interpret it, by default a white, middle class one" ("Classroom Writing Assessment" 392). He concludes that this dependence on the subject position of whiteness "makes most… standards-based rubrics [and other standards-based assessment practices] white supremacist" (Inoue, "Classroom Writing Assessment" 392). To counter such habits of white language supremacy, Inoue employs what he calls dimensions-based rubrics, through which he and his students analyze and respond to features in student writing but do not evaluate it ("Classroom Writing Assessment" 392). Inoue is also the architect of a labor-based grading contract model intended to address structural racism in classroom writing assessment by shifting assessment from "quality" of writing to labor,[2] a model that focuses on process over product and has been adopted by a growing number of writing teachers and programs interested in racial justice (Carillo 10).

Similar to Inoue, antiracist composition scholars Shane Wood and Randall et al. critique ways in which dominant white and middle-to-upper class norms are upheld as the standard against which student writing is judged. Wood points out that white normativity guides not only the standards by which teachers award letter grades but also how they perceive and comment on "strengths and weaknesses in student writing." Moreover, Wood frames responses to student writing as genres within classroom assessment ecologies through which biases can be reproduced without teacher awareness. As he succinctly puts it, "habits of White [capitalized in the original] language are reproduced through genre performances" (Wood). In this context, Wood proposes

de-normalizing whiteness through critical interrogation of the genre by teachers and students together, ideally in such a way that this interrogation is interwoven into the assessment ecology. Jennifer Randall, Mya Poe, and David Slomp go even further, arguing that in order to "dismantle" the practice of judging students against a dominant white norm we need to significantly shift the focus of literacy assessment. More specifically, they would like to see an end to "evaluat[ing] students based on their ability to identify a single way of speaking and writing" and instead focus on students' "ability to understand language histories, uses, and purposes" (Randall et al. 596). Thus, attempts to make visible and challenge whiteness as a normative standard against which students are judged—from rubric standards to letter grades to teacher response—is an important feature of antiracist critique. Moreover, antiracist pedagogues engage in theorizing classroom practices that de-stabilize whiteness and associated normative ideologies about language and literacy through methods that include dimensions-based, rather than evaluative, rubrics; grading contracts; writing and reflection logs; collaborative teacher-student interrogation of assessment genres; and study of the history and politics of language.

Queer Theory Pedagogical Critiques

In a similar, albeit distinct move, queer composition scholars also challenge notions of normativity in evaluation of student writing. Scholars writing from this pedagogical orientation assert that a queer approach to social justice in assessment questions normative ideologies and examines what we can learn through differences from these norms. Responding to what they call a "queer turn" in writing studies, rhetoric and queer studies pedagogues provide frameworks for "queering" writing assessment. As Caswell and Banks explain, "a queer notion of assessment might ask us to consider alternative notions of 'growth'" or what, in their gloss of Bond, they

suggest we might call "growing sideways" (360). Put another way, there are myriad ways to learn and grow as a writer, and some of these may not conform to normative paths nor to expected outcomes. Accordingly, Caswell and Banks advocate for more attention to classroom assessment design in order to welcome differences and take into consideration students'—especially LGBTQ students'—emotional well-being. Akin to antiracist pedagogue Wood, they also highlight the role of teacher response to student writing, which, if unexamined, may reproduce heteronormativity and hegemonic norms about gender. In other words, in order to give students equitable opportunities to grow as writers, teachers need to create a classroom assessment environment—from design to response—in which students feel safe bringing their "whole selves" into their writing (Caswell and Banks 374). In "Queered Writing Assessment," writing program administrator Jonathan Alexander addresses classroom grading practices in his discussion of transfer students who "weren't writing as well in upper-division WID [Writing in the Disciplines] courses as our 'homegrown' students," which led to the question of whether and how to "set them straight" (203). From a queer studies perspective, Alexander found this proposition unsettling, and in the end, he instead set out to learn more about the differences instructors were seeing in student writing and to question the premise that these students' writing needed to be "normed" (205). Alexander explains that he now focuses on "talking to faculty about how *they* can adapt to such students" and in a statement that resonates with antiracist calls for rethinking our approach to classroom assessment, he argues that teachers "need to see our students' many languages and writing differences and experiences as a powerful asset, not a deviation from the norm" (205). In short, for queer pedagogy scholars, rectifying social injustices in classroom assessment means interrogating and disrupting the reproduction of dominant norms, not only about gender and sexuality but also about students' varied paths to learning and what we

deem "quality" writing. From letter grades to assessment design to teacher responses, "queered assessment" practices aspire to empower students to utilize, rather than hide or diminish, differences.

Feminist Pedagogical Critiques

Feminist scholars also address ways in which dominant norms shape classroom assessment practices, and feminists' intersectional approach to assessment potentially illuminates nuances of other pedagogical critiques. For example, gender studies scholar Miriam Kent argues that traditional assessment standards, which too often reflect white, patriarchal values, such as objectivity and rationality, at the expense of affect and lived experience, perpetuate inequalities on the basis of race, class, gender, and sexuality (70). In other words, traits associated with whiteness and masculinity are treated as normative in traditional grading, both as ideals to strive for in judging student writing and as characteristics of "quality" writing. Kent's claim dovetails and expands Inoue's discussion of what he calls "habits of white discourse," among them "objectivity" and "rationality" ("Classroom Writing Assessment" 399). Put another way, in a quintessential feminist move, Kent utilizes an intersectional approach to bring attention to the interconnected gendered and racialized norms in classroom writing assessment. Feminist composition scholar Jennifer Mallette makes a similar, intersectional argument about the impact of white supremacist and patriarchal norms on classroom grading practices in her discussion of contract grading in the teaching of technical communication. As Mallette explains, white supremacist and patriarchal systems both emphasize "modes of achievement that use grading to rank and categorize students." For Mallette, a feminist intervention "acknowledges past experiences and knowledge they [students] bring with them to the classroom and … supports

each student's own path to learning." Thus, analogous to antiracist and queer scholars, feminist scholars also place value on students' lived experiences and emotional well-being, frame differences as resources for student learning, and advocate for recognition of varied paths to growth. Moreover, through intersectional analysis, they raise our awareness about interconnected assessment norms, like the emphasis on objectivity and rationality within both white supremacist and patriarchal systems, thereby pointing toward avenues for further research. For instance, what other intersecting normative values have yet to be identified in our assessment practices? How do students' differential subject positions across axes of privilege and power shape their experiences of traditional classroom assessment?

Decolonial Pedagogical Critiques

Decolonial pedagogy scholars have also framed assessment critiques around dominant norms. Decolonial and antiracist critiques are deeply connected, and yet, decolonial scholar-pedagogues make a unique contribution to the literature through their analysis of how traditional assessment practices reproduce colonialism. In a program profile, Lizbett Tinoco, Sonya Barrera Eddy, and Scott Gage describe how Texas A&M's English faculty set out to create an explicitly antiracist *and* decolonial composition program. Through an intensive program review, the faculty realized that their curriculum and assessment practices "imposed Eurocentric standards, often punishing students who were less able to mimic or approximate [Eurocentric] genres and rhetorical strategies" (Tinoco et al.). They concluded that their assessment practices—by favoring students who were more able to "approximate" Eurocentric standards—reinforced and upheld a legacy of colonialism, particularly problematic at Texas A&M, they argue, given that it is an Hispanic-serving institution located in an area with a history of militarized border violence

(Tinoco et al.). To begin dismantling this remnant of colonialism, they made the decision to adopt Inoue's negotiated, labor-based grading contract model and to integrate and elevate their students' local languaging and rhetorical practices, calling the old way of doing things "racialized educational violence" (Tinoco et al.). Thus, decolonial, like antiracist critiques, challenge the practice of judging student writing against white (or in this case, Eurocentric) literacy and language norms, but they also illustrate how these norms, if uninterrupted, play a role in reproducing the dynamics of colonialism, thereby perpetuating harm ("racialized educational violence"). In her discussion of a bilingual, first-year composition course she pioneered at Santa Clara University, decolonial compositionist Cruz Medina makes a similar connection between decolonial and antiracist pedagogies and the practice of colonialism. As she concisely states, "decolonial pedagogy … reveals and resists enduring colonial legacies that subjugate those marked by linguistic and racial difference" (Medina 86). Though the focus of Medina's article is not on assessment, she does address it in her conclusion, critiquing what she calls the "over-emphasizing of grammar and syntax" in teachers' responses to writing and the monolingual ideology that shapes both instruction and assessment practices (87). Medina also expands our thinking about the relationship between social justice and classroom assessment in her application of Mignolo's decolonial scholarship to the writing classroom. That is, Medina observes that academia's colonial legacy includes white/European avenues for "knowledge-making" through writing (87), or put another way, dominant culture's epistemic norms also shape students' development as writers. Echoing Randall et al., Alexander, and Tinoco et al., Medina calls for assessment practices that empower students to recognize, value, and employ "their [own] linguistic resources" and advocates for an end to assessment practices that "police … based on colonial standards that emphasize mimicry … through assimilation" (88). In brief,

decolonial composition scholars not only illustrate how classroom assessment practices reproduce social inequalities based on race, language, and culture but also illustrate the colonizing effect of monolingual ideologies and the teaching of white/European rhetorical and epistemic traditions as normative.

Translingual Pedagogical Critiques

Translingual scholar Jerry Won Lee makes a similar critique to decolonial scholars through a nuanced analysis of how normative language ideologies perpetuate social injustices through classroom assessment. In "Beyond Translingual Writing," Lee applauds composition studies' turn toward translingualism, but cautions that, without attention to how we assess classroom writing, this turn will not achieve the social justice aspirations of translingual scholars. More specifically, Lee contends that, as a field, composition studies has not yet wrestled with the thorny problem of inviting students to practice translingual writing in the classroom while at the same time evaluating students' writing against a single standard that privileges white, mainstream English (175). Echoing the critiques of his antiracist and decolonial counterparts, Lee critiques the field's seemingly intractable "monolingual orientation" and what he perceives as compositionists' "general unwillingness to account for the reality that deviation is indeed what makes language" (177). In a move that recalls the "queering of assessment," Lee proposes addressing the myth of a standard English and related ideologies through "translanguaging assessment," by which he means "de-universalizing assessment criteria so we remember that different kinds of writing have different values for different students" (185). Echoing many of the voices cited in this paper (Inoue, Poe et al., Randall et al., Tinoco et al., Wood) he calls on the field to reimagine assessment practices so that they no longer rely on dominant norms. In place of traditional

grading models, Lee proposes a more individualized approach to assessment that is tailored to students' specific educational goals (185). Lee's translanguaging approach, then, not only mirrors the field's critique of norms and norming in assessment practices but also provides insight into the fluidity of concepts that, due to normalization, may be misperceived as stable, including languages, literacies, rhetorics, learning processes, and racialized or gendered notions about what constitutes "quality" writing.

Disability Studies Pedagogical Critiques

While disability scholars have not singled out classroom writing assessment specifically for critical interrogation, discussion of Western constructions of the "normative" body and the impact of these constructions on students whose bodies—physically, mentally, emotionally, and/or neurologically—do not conform to constructions of normativity infuse the literature and have implications for this review. Composition scholar Christina Cedillo provides a helpful example of a disability justice and antiracist perspective on the role of norms in the writing classroom and on teacher evaluation of student composing. Cedillo advocates for a "critical embodiment pedagogy" that "foregrounds bodily diversity," drawing attention to the ways in which we "compose" in and through our bodies and the importance of recognizing and supporting the diverse, embodied ways in which students express themselves. Cedillo critiques academia's emphasis on logic and objectivity and its history of devaluing emotion, lived experience, and "embodied ways of knowing and communicating." As the scholars cited in this review have argued, the privileging of language and rhetorical modes associated with hetero-patriarchy, white supremacy, and Eurocentricity—like the emphasis on rationality and objectivity—in the grading of student writing reproduces structural inequalities. Cedillo's point about students' diverse, embodied epistemologies and expressive modes

expands our understanding of the role of dominant norms in perpetuating injustice by illustrating how student composing—whether through writing, verbal communication, or body language—is problematically judged against normative bodies and means of communication. As she argues, "systematic oppressions function to construe Othered [capitalized in original] ways of knowing and writing as deficiencies, as rhetorical offenses to be corrected. Individuals whose bodies are perceived as non-normative are framed as unreliable rhetors" (Cedillo). Thus, students who do not conform to ableist ideas about normativity are vulnerable to harsher critiques of their writing than their peers, and worse, their composing practices may be deemed untrustworthy or unworthy of the teacher's or other students' engagement. Even more troubling, Cedillo observes that students whose bodies and communication modes do not "meet expectations" may come to view themselves as "inadequate human beings," and that they *and* their peers may come to view "rhetorical norms as fixed and unquestionable, an assumption that further habituates hierarchical social dynamics." Thus, ableist notions of normativity contribute to the fiction—addressed also by antiracist, decolonial, and translingual scholars—of a stable, rhetorical or linguistic norm against which students' composing will be judged. As Inoue in *Antiracist Writing Assessment* and Tinoco et al. contend, attempting to assess students against such a standard is not only impossible but harmful. Cedillo's observations also echo antiracist scholar Wood's concern about the way in which implicit biases shape teacher responses to student writing and Caswell and Banks' concern about student well-being within systems permeated by dominant ideologies about gender and sexuality. In sum, then, while Cedillo doesn't focus on writing assessment per se, her argument exemplifies disability scholars' contributions to our understanding of the influence of ableist norms on student learning and welfare, and by inference, implicates these norms as operative in teachers' response to student writing.

Interestingly, composition scholars who have *explicitly* addressed disability and writing assessment have done so in order to critique antiracist composition scholar Inoue's labor-based grading contract model, which as discussed, has been adopted by a growing numbers of composition teachers invested in social justice. In composition scholar Ellen Carillo's recently published monograph, *The Hidden Inequities in Labor-Based Contract Grading,* she contends that "labor-based contract grading may help mitigate the structural injustices perpetuated on some students" but may also reproduce "ableist and neurotypical conceptions of labor" (11). She suggests that Inoue has substituted one standard (quality), for another (labor), and that the labor standard may be too onerous and/or rigid for students with disabilities, working class students, women-identified students, and students caring for children or family members. She proposes, instead, an engagement-based grading contract that allows for more flexibility in the way students learn and participate in the class. Feminist composition scholars Kathleen Kryger and Griffin Zimmerman voice similar concerns in "Neurodivergence and Intersectionality in Labor-Based Grading Contracts," pointing out that labor-based contracts "can create barriers to accessibility [especially for neurodiverse students] that force students to reject their own ways of learning, knowing, being, and languaging" (1). In contrast to Carillo, however, they remain hopeful about the possibilities of labor-based grading, explaining that they have made some changes to Inoue's model, such as building in "flexible" deadlines and weekly individualized "check-ins," but that they "see the separation of grades from feedback as fundamental to [their] approach to writing assessment" (Kryger and Zimmerman 9). In other words, they have retained Inoue's de-coupling of "grades from feedback" so that students are not being judged against a "quality" standard based on hegemonic linguistic and rhetorical norms, but at the same time, they've built in more flexibility and individual collaboration between student and teacher. These scholars' conversations about labor-based grading,

ableism, and intersecting marginalized identities speak to the fraught challenges teachers face as they seek to redress the harmful role of dominant norms in assessment practices and the need for more scholarship on grading practices that support social justice.

Role of Norms in Reproducing Structural Violence

Taken together, what has emerged across the critical pedagogy spectrum is a multi-faceted challenge to the field's reliance on dominant norms and norming methods in classroom assessment. In effect, as argued in distinct yet interconnected ways, this reliance functions to disguise the relativity, subjectivity, and temporality of the field's ideas about writing and benefits some students at the expense of others, perpetuating inequalities. Moreover, as the scholars cited in this paper also discuss in varying degrees, these norm-focused assessment practices have injurious effects— unevenly across race, class, language, culture, gender, sexuality, and ability—on student welfare. Recall Tinoco et al.'s indictment of traditional assessment as a form of "racialized educational violence," Caswell and Banks' assertion that assessment can be harmful to the emotional welfare of LGBTQ students, and Cedillo's claim that students whose bodies do not allow for "normative" composing practices may come to see themselves as "inadequate human beings." Social justice composition scholars Lederman and Warwick make a similar argument, calling traditional classroom assessment practices a form of "structural violence," a form of harm often unrecognized because there is no clear perpetrator or intent to harm (234). Drawing on Johan Galtung's theory of structural violence, Lederman and Warwick point out that "normalization" is one of two primary mechanisms for the reproduction of this violence ("representation," to be discussed in a moment, is the second), both of which they characterize as colonialist tactics for maintaining power (232). They assert that "the drive toward normalization and/or normativity, or

the rewarding of proximity to a norm and punishment of a distance from it" is "perhaps *the* archetype of a structurally violent worldview" (Lederman and Warwick 237). When applied to classroom grading practices, normalization "rewards" some students while "punishing" others (Lederman and Warwick 237). The second mechanism, "representation," refers to the power of the dominant group to name and describe others' experiences for them (Lederman and Warwick 235). In the context of assessment, this translates to teachers providing some students with positive images of themselves through writing assessment and others with negative images (Lederman and Warwick 236). The concept of structural violence, then, illustrates how, even though there may not be a clear actor with intent to harm, students who do not fit dominant norms may be subjected to injurious experiences. While they do not use the term "structural violence," antiracist scholars Randall et al. illuminate yet another critical dimension of harm that could certainly be characterized as such: the racialized trauma many African American students contend with in the classroom and the attendant "dehumanizing" effects of classroom assessment practices (597). In a devastating assessment of assessment, so to speak, Randall et al. write:

> It is through everyday assessments—rubric and checklist criteria, comments on papers, and peer reviews—where students are told that their home literacies and languages have no place in educational settings. It is through everyday assessments that they are taught they must relinquish their language and their identities if they are to succeed in life. It is through these everyday messages that they are taught they are inferior. (594-595)

Randall et al.'s description in this passage powerfully illustrates what Tinoco et al. mean by "racialized educational violence" as well as Lederman and Warwick's characterization of traditional assessment as "structural violence." Moreover, each of these scholars' work reinforces the need for significant change in classroom assessment practices.

"Assessment as a Social Justice Project" and Alternative Grading Practices

Let us return now to the question that framed this review: what might it mean to re-invent "assessment as a social justice project"? Many of the writing teacher-scholars cited in this review are already practicing nontraditional assessment methods or employing strategies that disrupt the role of dominant norms and value the diverse linguistic, rhetorical, and embodied communicative modes of their students. To re-cap, these approaches include labor-based grading contracts (Inoue, *Antiracist Writing Assessment*; Kryger and Zimmerman; Tinoco et al.); engagement-based grading contracts (Carillo); collaborative teacher-student interrogation of assessment genres (Wood); dimensions-based rather than evaluative rubrics (Inoue, "Classroom Writing Assessment"); study of the history and politics of language (Randall et al.); teacher responses attentive to the role of norms in shaping perceptions of student writing and the well-being of the student (Alexander, Caswell and Banks, Kent, Mallette); and individualized assessment plans based on student goals (Lee). Certainly, each of these writing studies pedagogies contribute to Poe et al.'s call for imagining "assessment as a social justice project" and present the field of writing studies with rich possibilities for enacting this vision.

These teacher-scholars' creative approaches to writing assessment join a growing movement of educators re-thinking classroom grading practices in the twenty-first century. For example, though approaches like contract grading can be dated back to the 1920s (Cowan 2), my own review of the scholarly literature on contract grading reveals increasing attention to these practices in the early twenty-first century. Danielewicz and Elbow's contract grading model, published in 2009, has been widely cited in the literature, and Inoue's antiracist, labor-based contract model, introduced in 2015 and expounded upon in his subsequent publications, expanded the field's interest in contract grading as an alternative to traditional forms of assessment. In recent years,

scholars like Carillo and Gomes et al. have responded with their own contract variations: engagement-based contract grading and participation- and labor-based contract grading, respectively. In a nod to the field's increasing interest in antiracism and social justice, Virginia Schwarz, in (De)Norming Classroom Merit: Grading Contracts as an Assessment Genre, characterizes contract grading as a form of "de-norming" of judgment-based grading, arguing that as educators move "toward a more radical undoing of oppressive assessment, contract grading might offer a way to open new possibilities" (80). That said, contract grading, as illustrated in this review, is but one of many alternative approaches. Anthropologist Susan Blum, editor of Ungrading, an anthology that includes challenges not only to traditional grading but that also questions the need for grades in and of themselves in higher education and K-12 schools, utilizes a combination of student-developed individualized plans, conferencing, and self-assessment through which students propose their own grades, a model for non-traditional grading that recalls translingual scholar Lee's approach. Composition scholar Jessie Stommel, whose chapter, "How to Ungrade," appears in the same anthology, uses an approach he calls "going gradeless," in which students grade themselves, albeit with built-in guidance. Connecting his approach to concerns about social justice, he asserts that it is unethical to "prepare students for a world of oppression by oppressing them" (34). While not a scholarly source, the popular "Teachers Throwing Out Grades" Facebook page attests to twenty-first century educators' investment in changing how we approach assessment in this historical and cultural moment. The aforementioned scholars and sources are only a sampling, however, of the proliferating twenty-first century literature challenging conventional grading practices. Despite this growing investment in alternative assessment methods, very little research has been conducted on their efficacy. Of these methods, contract grading has been the subject of the most critical attention, and yet only a handful of studies on student's experience of contract grading exists in the scholarly literature.[3]

In one of the most recently published studies, composition scholars Joyce Inman and Rebecca Powell share the results of a survey of student and teacher experiences of grading contracts. According to Inman and Powell, the survey results suggest that both teachers and students experience a sense of "dissonance" under a contract grading system. One year later, Albracht et al., a group of scholar-practitioners of labor-based grading contracts, published a response challenging the generalizability of Inman and Powell's findings and critical of their treatment of grading contracts as "monolithic." Albracht et al.'s critique demonstrates the field's growing awareness of what Schwarz, in (De)Norming Classroom Merit, calls attention to—the variety of contracts within the genre and the need for situated contracts in response to local conditions. Most importantly, though, as Albracht et al. argue, significantly more research is needed to understand the efficacy and impact of non-traditional approaches to grading, and especially, I would add, to gain a better sense of the benefits, limitations, and possibilities of these approaches in relation to social justice. As illustrated through disability justice critiques of Inoue's labor-based grading contract model (Carillo and Kryger and Zimmerman), creating more socially just writing assessments is a complicated, thorny, and imperfect process. But these scholarly conversations, e.g., between Carillo, Inoue, and Kryger and Zimmerman and between Inman and Powell and Albracht et al., are exactly what's needed to re-invent writing assessment in productive, meaningful, and ultimately, more socially just ways. Critical conversations like these offer hope for the development of more robust and transformative approaches to assessment and gesture toward a future in which we might even imagine "['ungrading'] as a social justice project."

Conclusion: Toward Social Justice and Trauma-Informed Writing Assessment

As we consider the future of writing assessment in the context of this post-pandemic era, I want to suggest that attending to students' well-being through integration of trauma-informed pedagogies will be crucial to the project of enacting assessment as social justice. According to composition and trauma-informed pedagogue Melissa Tayles, trauma-informed pedagogy brings to bear clinical scholarship on how service providers like teachers can build relationships with and support students dealing with trauma and psychological distress. Many of the critical pedagogues discussed in this review (Alexander, Caswell and Banks, Cedillo, Mallette, Lederman and Warwick, Tinoco et al.) express concern about students' well-being in relation to assessment practices that judge their writing against dominant norms. Randall et al. make the nuanced point that normative writing assessments exacerbate the racial trauma many students of color already experience in their lives. In fact, research shows that traumatic stress and other mental health challenges, including anxiety and depression, are prevalent among college students, and post-pandemic studies paint a bleak picture. According to a recent article published in the *American Journal of College Health*, nearly two-thirds of college students reported "moderate to severe psychological distress," approximately one-third had reported treatment for anxiety, one-third for depression, and just under ten percent for post-traumatic stress disorder (Cusak et al.). From a disability justice standpoint, these numbers on their own demonstrate the need for writing assessment ecologies that center trauma-informed care. But it is also important to recognize that rates of depression, anxiety, and other forms of psychological distress are higher among minoritized and marginalized students, particularly among African American and Hispanic students, women-identified students (Cusack et al. and Qeadan et al.), and LGBTQ students (Qeadan et al.). Moreover, trauma can be a consequence of and/or compounded through experiences of oppression and discrimination (Qeadan et al. and Comas-Díaz et al.). In fact, social work scholars

Shaia et al. refer to these traumatic experiences as "socially-engineered" in order to emphasize the role of structural oppression in the development of post-traumatic stress. This is all to underscore that students' psychological distress must be understood in relation to both the personal *and the structural,* and that by extension, our assessment interventions need to be mindful of these dimensions. As Carillo suggests, we should "anticipate" and "build into our assessments" the "widespread anxiety and depression that students have experienced and will likely continue to experience" (29). Composition and trauma pedagogy scholar Lorelei Blackburn further extends our thinking about the implications of the unprecedented levels of psychological distress among our students, pointing out that trauma can be understood through the lens of disability studies, and as such, disability justice necessitates a trauma-informed pedagogical approach. Application, then, of trauma-informed pedagogy to writing assessment will be crucial to re-making "assessment as a social justice project."

Although a growing body of literature on trauma-informed pedagogy exists (see, for example, Blackburn, Day, Gelms et al., Gross, and Tayles), to date Randall et al. are among only a few composition researchers who have explicitly addressed the intersections of social injustice, trauma, and classroom writing assessment, and they do so only briefly. Composition scholars Graphenreed and Poe, however, bring these theoretical axes together in an in-depth way. In fact, they apply both antiracist and trauma-informed pedagogies to writing assessment, and in so doing, provide an instructive model for how social justice-oriented teachers might bring trauma-informed pedagogies to bear on their classroom writing assessment practices. Graphenreed and Poe assert that "colonial and imperialist histories and traditions produce classrooms as violent spaces that endanger the well-being of students … and deny them full use of their embodied, cultural, and linguistic knowledges" (57). Citing Fallot and Harris's "Creating Cultures of

Trauma-Informed Care (CCTIC): A Self-Assessment and Planning Protocol," Graphenreed and

Poe demonstrate how teachers can apply the tenets of trauma-informed care to classroom genres,

and they provide examples of self-assessment, peer review, teacher response, and rubric tools

that are both trauma-informed and attentive to the role of dominant norms in the reproduction of

social injustices. As they explain, the revisions they propose challenge "traditionally reified

hegemonic norms" and "shape" a classroom ecology that "empower[s] and validate[s] ways of

knowing and being that are historically marginalized in writing classrooms" while "center[ing]

students' well-being" (Graphenreed and Poe 68). Given the many social injustice-related harms

enacted through traditional grading practices, application of trauma-informed pedagogy to the

praxis of classroom writing assessment will undoubtedly enrich social justice scholars' efforts to

reimagine and invent more socially just grading practices, and Graphenreed and Poe's examples

illustrate what can be gained by applying both social justice and trauma-informed pedagogies to

classroom writing assessment.

Future research might also benefit from applying systemic trauma theory to classroom

writing assessment. Goldsmith et al., who coined the term "systemic trauma," define it as a

paradigm for analyzing the "contextual features of environments and institutions that give rise to

trauma, maintain it, and impact posttraumatic responses" and point out that this framework can

be applied across a range of institutions, including education (118). Significantly, social

injustices enacted through judging students against dominant norms are among the institutional

"features" of classroom writing assessment that may exacerbate trauma among marginalized and

minoritized students. Exploration of systemic trauma theory and trauma-informed pedagogy as

they apply to social injustices embedded in traditional grading practices would thus help scholars

theorize effective strategies for not only challenging but dismantling unjust assessment practices.

If we are to re-invent "assessment as a social justice project," as Poe et. al call on us to do, or consider turning to an even more radical proposition—"['ungrading'] as a social justice project"—then it is critical that we attend not only to creating more equitable opportunities for learning and achievement but also to cultivating practices that nurture the emotional well-being of our students. A social justice oriented, trauma-informed praxis could further our progress toward these worthy aspirations, help us enact meaningful pedagogical changes, and more effectively support our twenty-first century students—who face unprecedented individual and collective challenges—as they develop, learn to trust, and exercise their embodied voices as readers, writers, and rhetors.

Notes

1. These collections include a 2016 special issue of *College English* edited by Poe and Inoue, a 2018 anthology entitled *Social Justice, Writing Assessment, and the Advancement of Opportunity*, edited by Poe, Inoue, and Elliot, and a 2021 special issue of the *Journal of Writing Assessment* curated by Inoue and edited by Kelly-Riley and Whithaus.

2. See Inoue's *Antiracist Writing Assessment Ecologies: Teaching and Assessing Writing for a Socially Just Futu*re and *Labor-Based Grading Contracts: Building Equity and Inclusion in the Compassionate Writing Classroom*, both listed in the Works Cited.

3. Among the small number of published scholarly studies on contract grading, the following authors are commonly cited: Inman and Powell, Potts, Spindell and Thelin, and Villanueva. See the Works Cited for bibliographic information.

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The Counter-Narrative as a Heuristic for Teaching Critical Thinking and Literary Analysis:

A Unit Plan for Moshin Hamid's *The Reluctant Fundamentalist*

This [unit plan](#) focuses on teaching a contemporary novel, Moshin Hamid's *The Reluctant Fundamentalist,* in a themed Introduction to Literature course at an urban community college. In this course, students are introduced to literary genres and learn to create works of literary analysis with an emphasis on critical thinking, close reading, use of textual evidence, academic research, engagement in writing as a process, and social and collaborative learning. This themed course, entitled "Counter-Narratives in Contemporary Literature," introduces students to contemporary works of literature that challenge and/or offer counter-narratives to dominant ideologies. The course and unit plan reflect my pedagogical commitment to anti-racism and anti-oppression teaching and learning in the writing studies classroom. These goals are especially important to me in the context of teaching at an urban community college where the majority of my students are members of marginalized groups, particularly in terms of age, race, class, language, religion, veteran-status, and culture. The readings and class activities have been carefully curated to represent diverse voices and experiences. The course grading model is a flexible, labor-based grading contract, developed to emphasize participation and process over product. The reading and writing tasks are designed to encourage students to grapple with diverse ideas and perspectives while developing skills in the critical analysis of dominant ideologies. This unit also reflects my pedagogical emphasis on process-oriented and collaborative learning through interactive class discussions and activities and a drafting process that includes peer review and individual conferences with me to support teacher-student collaboration on student writing.

As a genre, the counter-narrative offers students an opportunity to explore too-often marginalized perspectives and ideas and to critically analyze the more familiar dominant narratives. In other words, for me, teaching the counter-narrative serves several purposes. These narratives tend to feature marginalized voices, thus providing more opportunities for marginalized students, who too often do not see themselves represented in the curriculum, to have such experiences. The class as a whole has the chance to grapple with ideas that may be new or different, and such narratives—by challenging familiar and seemingly "natural" truths— invite deep critical thinking and critical inquiry. Moreover, a well-crafted, engaging story like *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* has the potential to pique student interest and investment in learning even if they do not necessarily "relate" to a protagonist's experience. For all of these reasons, the counter-narrative will serve as an entry point to literary analysis in this course. The goal is to "see" in new and different ways in order to reach insight through analysis of the text, and the counter-narrative, through its interruption of dominant ways of "seeing" and "knowing," facilitates—or at least invites—readers to do so. In fact, I would suggest that the counter-narrative provides a powerful heuristic for teaching literary analysis in introductory settings.

Hamid's richly evocative and intricately crafted novel is ideal for the third unit of this course. Prior to reading the novel, students will have completed units on the genres of the short story and dramatic play. Short stories will include Sandra Cisneros' "My Name," Jamaica Kinkaid's "Girl," ZZ Packer's "Drinking Coffee Elsewhere," Tim O'Brien's "The Things They Carried," Warsan Shire's "Conversations about Home (At the Deportation Centre)," and Jonathan Wei's "Why I Lie." Students will also have read Claudia Rankine's dramatic play, *The White Card*. Each of these literary works explores characters' experiences of minoritized and/or marginalized identities, interrogates dominant ideologies, and offers some form of counter-

narrative. The *Reluctant Fundamentalist* is narrated from the point of view of a South Asian, Muslim protagonist; challenges dominant ideologies about terrorism, Islam, and empire; and offers counter-narratives to these ideologies through the protagonist's coming-of-age story and a set of life-altering realizations about his personal and political relationships, cultural and national identities, and the "ruins" of empire. Hamid's novel, then, will build on previously assigned counter-narrative texts and literary genres, offering students the chance to wrestle with a much longer and more complex work of literature in this third unit of the course.

Several of the scholars whose work I read in preparing this unit emphasize the ways in which Hamid's novel can be read as a counter-narrative to dominant ideologies. For example, Nazry Bahrawi, in "Moshin Hamid's War on Error," calls *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* a "counter-historical narrative," concluding that "Hamid's novel has attempted to correct what could be described as an epistemic error of sorts: the story of the 'undeniable threat' of secret 'bad Muslims' plotting to annihilate the free world's democratic ways of life" (277). As Bahrawi points out, the protagonist of Hamid's novel, Changez, disrupts this "epistemic error" (277). He becomes disenchanted with America, furious, even, with America, but not for religious reasons, nor because he is opposed to democracy or modernity, but rather, because of opposition to America's "interference in the affairs" of other countries and its weaponization of finance to expand its empire (Hamid 156). As indicated in my lesson plans for my introduction of the novel, I am framing *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* as a counter-narrative to mainstream ideologies about "the war on terror," 9/11, Islam, and American imperialism. Through course activities, students will not only explore the novel's counter-narratives, but also critically examine their own relationship to mainstream ideologies. For example, one of the homework writing prompts asks students to reflect on why the protagonist, Changez, may have initially and, as he explains,

involuntarily, smiled while watching television coverage of the fall of New York City's Twin Towers on 9/11. Students will be asked to consider their own responses to this scene in the novel, and as a class, we'll explore the complex social and political reasons why Changez had this initial reaction, which will include considering how Changez's experience of America as empire conflicts with dominant narratives about America as a liberatory and democratizing influence.

In what follows, I provide a detailed unit plan for the four weeks during which students will read, discuss, and write about the novel—activities which prepare students for and culminate in a final paper. The plan is organized for a course that meets twice a week for an hour-and-a-half. I introduce the novel on the first day of the lesson plan and students begin reading two chapters per class period until the end of the unit. On each day of the lesson plan, I've listed the topics I'll cover, discussion questions, class activities, and the homework due the next class period. For this unit, I have also assigned group "teach-in" projects, a pedagogical spin on group presentations; five student groups will be assigned, and on the day assigned, groups will both present research and lead the class in a discussion or activity based on the writing prompt response due that day. Student presentations will last about 45 minutes. The activities and mini lectures planned for the second half of class on group presentation days are intended to build on what the groups have covered, so they are flexible lesson plans that will be adapted as needed depending on what the groups accomplish during their presentations. In some cases, we will not have time for all that is planned, but I prefer to plan more rather than less so that I have plenty to choose from and can easily adapt the lessons based on student presentations. On the last day of the unit, students will have completed a pre-writing activity for the paper ("Writing Project 3: Analysis of a Novel"), and I'll guide them through some wrap-up discussion activities as well as providing time for in-class workshopping of their ideas for the paper. The Writing Project 3

description, writing prompts, and a dimensions-based rubric follow the lesson plans. The unit plan closes with an annotated bibliography of sources cited and consulted in my development of the lesson plans and assignments, including scholarship on *The Reluctant Fundamentalist*.

As mentioned, prior to reading the novel students will have completed a unit on short stories and a unit on drama, during which time we will have covered literary elements and devices in an in-depth way. For the paper on short stories, they will have analyzed an author's use of a literary element to develop theme in a selected short story. For the second paper, they will have analyzed elements of counter-narrative in a dramatic play. Thus, by the time we begin the third unit on Hamid's novel, students will be well prepared to construct an argument about a longer, more complex work. The writing prompts for "Writing Project 3: Analysis a Novel" offer a range of options so that students can choose a topic of interest to them. At the same time, however, the prompts are designed to encourage student exploration of the novel's overarching critiques of dominant narratives. For instance, one of the writing prompts invites students to explore Changez's reliability as a narrator, and one of the sub-questions encourages students to consider how Changez's identity as a Pakistani man may—depending on the reader—influence perceptions of reliability. I have also carefully chosen secondary sources to support students' understanding of the novel, such as a PBS NewsHour segment on the experience of Muslim Americans since 9/11, and an excerpt from Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's "The Dangers of a Single Story," which not only complements my focus on the value of counter-narratives but also illustrates the experience of someone who, like Changez, dealt with stereotyping and prejudice in America due to a "single story." Thus, through the unit plan's reading, viewing, and writing tasks, in-class activities, group projects, and class discussions, students will have had ample opportunity to consider and write informally in response to most of the "Writing Project 3:

Analyzing a Novel" prompts in some way, shape, or form. Ideally, by the end of the unit,

students will be able to choose a topic with confidence, engage the novel in a way that's

meaningful to them, and reach insights through the writing process.

Through this unit, students will achieve the following learning outcomes: apply what they

learned about the elements of fiction in the short story unit to the genre of the novel; through

participation in a group project, gain practice conducting academic research and engaging in

social and collaborative learning; and through a writing process, inclusive of pre-writing,

drafting, peer reviews, and instructor conferences, compose a substantial work of literary

analysis that demonstrates close reading, use of textual evidence, and critical thinking about a

work of literature. Beyond these learning outcomes, I hope, also, that students will have gained

an appreciation for the novel form, or at least that they will have enjoyed reading a novel that

many readers describe as a "page-turner"! As a counter-narrative, *The Reluctant Fundamentalist*

provides a heuristic for engaging a text that may be especially helpful for students new to literary

analysis. Even for students more familiar with literary analysis, by challenging commonly held

notions of "truth" and offering another perspective from which to understand self and world, the

counter-narrative may help students "see" anew and thus more easily identify textual elements

for analysis and develop interpretive ideas. Ideally, through engaging the novel as counter-

narrative, students will have sharpened their critical thinking skills and will be more prepared to

critically read, interpret, and question dominant ideologies across texts and genres they encounter

beyond the course, an invaluable skill as they navigate the challenges and complexities of

twenty-first century life.

Elements of the Unit Plan

Lesson Plans for Teaching *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* (TRF)

Week 1: Introduction to the Novel as a Genre and to *The Reluctant Fundamentalist*	
Monday	**Wednesday**
• **Intro:** features of the novel as a genre • **Free-write + Class Discussion**: Based on the text and cover imagery, what do you expect this book will be about? What details led you to this prediction? • **Free-write + Pair/Share:** What do you know or remember about 9/11? • **Lecture/Background:** key facts about U.S. response to 9/11 that are relevant to the novel (invasion of Afghanistan and Iraq, effects of invasion, rise of hate crimes against people perceived to be Muslim) • **10-Minute Video**: "American Muslims remember how 9/11 changed America" • **Mini-Lecture:** concept of dominant and counter-narratives • **Class Brainstorm:** What are some dominant narratives about the "war on terror"? About Islamic fundamentalism? • **Mini-Lecture:** dramatic monologue/preview of novel's structure	• **Overview**: Introduce the group "teach-in" project. Group "teach-in" projects begin Monday. • **Full Class Activity:** map what we have learned thus far about Changez as a character and his American conversant • **Full-Class Discussion:** (possible questions based on student input about the two characters): What differences of interpretation do you notice? What differences do you notice in the number of details generated about each character? How trustworthy do you find Changez as a narrator? What's the dynamic between the two characters? • **Mini-Lecture:** introduce concept of unreliable narrator + Greta Olson on unreliability as a strategy for social/political critique • **Video Clip:** Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's "Danger of single story" • **Free-write + Pair/Share:** Why does Adichie argue that a "single story" is "dangerous?
Homework	**Homework**
Reading: Read chapters 1 and 2 of Hamid's *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* (TRF). **Writing:** Writing Response Prompt: What do we learn about the protagonist, Changez, in the first two chapters? For example, what do we learn about his background, his interests, and his struggles? What about the American he is talking to? What clues do we get about this character?	**Reading:** Read chapters 3 and 4 of Hamid's *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* (TRF). **Writing:** Writing Response Prompt: How would you describe similarities and/or differences between "worlds" depicted in these chapters? For example, what can we infer about cultural differences between Changez and the un-named stranger Changez speaks to? What about Changez and Erica's worlds? Jim's world? What about New York in comparison to Lahore?

Week 2: Discuss Chapters 3-6 of *The Reluctant Fundamentalist*	
Monday	**Wednesday**
• **Group 1 Presents and Leads Class Activity (45 min)** (background information assigned: information about Pakistani culture relevant to understanding Changez as a character) • **Mini-Lecture:** Review of symbols • **Class Brainstorming Activity:** generate a brief list of symbols and discuss possible significance (Underwood Sampson, Changez's scar, New York City, Erica/America) • **Free-write + Class Discussion:** What did the Twin Towers in New York City symbolize?	• **Group 2 Presents and Leads Class Activity (45 min)** (background information assigned): international responses to 9/11 on the days immediately following the terrorist attack) • **Video Clip + Class Discussion:** [Q&A Highlight – Moshin Hamid on The Reluctant Fundamentalist](#) • **Free-write + Class Discussion** (depending on what Group 2 covers): What was your response to the scene in which Changez and Erica's relationship moves beyond friendship? How do you think Erica feels about Changez at the end of chapter 6? What role does Chris still play in her life? • **Mini-Lecture**: review concept of conflict/plot and introduce concept of allegory
Homework	**Homework**
Reading: Read chapters 5 and 6 of Hamid's *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* (TRF). **Writing:** Writing Response Prompt: How did you feel reading about Changez's response to the Twin Towers falling? Based on what you've learned thus far about Changez as a character, and what he shares in chapter 5, why do you think he responded the way he did?	**Reading:** Read chapters 7 and 8 of Hamid's *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* (TRF). **Writing:** Writing Response Prompt: What conflicts (internally and externally) does Changez struggle with after 9/11? What conflicts does Erica face? How does Changez and Erica's relationship change? What conflicts and/or changes does Changez observe about America?

Week 3: Discuss Chapters 7-10 of *The Reluctant Fundamentalist*	
Monday	**Wednesday**
Group 3 Presents and Leads Class Activity (45 min) (background information assigned: changes to U.S. policies around questioning and detaining suspects after 9/11 and rise of Islamophobia) **Class Brainstorming Activity (depending on what Group 3 covers):** In what ways might Changez and Erica's relationship be understood as allegorical? **Brief Overview:** definitions of fundamentalism **Free-write + Pair/Share:** Changez uses and reflects on the term fundamentals and fundamentalism in the reading for today (pgs. 98-99 and 116-117). Examine these passages and reflect on how this term is used in the novel. Does it differ from your associations with the word? **Class Discussion:** What kind of fundamentalism does Sampson Underwood promote? What does fundamentalism mean to Changez? How is this fundamentalism (economic) different from mainstream usage of the word in American media/culture?	**Group 4 Presents and Leads Class Activity (45 min)** (background information assigned: effects of US bombing of Afghanistan on Pakistan and impact on U.S./Pakistan relationship) **Class Workshop (depending on what Group 4 covers):** Analyze significance of passage about "broadening arc of vision" (145) and Changez's realization about being a "modern-day jannisary" (154). **Free-write + Pair/Share:** How has Changez's relationship to the American Dream changed? **Mini-Lecture:** literary references and review of symbolism and theme **Class Brainstorming Activity:** What does the character of Juan-Bautista symbolize for Changez? What about the jannisaries? How does the theme of betrayal emerge through this symbol?
Homework	**Homework**
Reading: Read chapters 9 and 10 of Hamid's *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* (TRF). **Writing:** Writing Response Prompt: In what ways does Changez question his identity in these chapters and in what ways does he struggle with his sense of belonging? What role does Juan Bautista and his story about the jannisaries play in Changez's shifting ideas about identity and/or belonging?	**Reading:** Read chapters 11 and 12 of Hamid's *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* (TRF). **Writing:** Writing Response Prompt: How did you interpret the novel's ending? Explain why you reached the conclusion you did, using textual evidence to support your ideas.

Week 4: Discuss Chapter 11-12 of TRF and Begin Work on Project 3: Analyzing a Novel	
Monday	**Wednesday**
• **Group 5 Presents and Leads Class Activity (45 min)** (background information assigned: concept of American empire and American role in conflicts referenced on pg. 156) • **Class Discussion:** (depending on what Group 5 covers): To what extent do you believe Changez is a reliable narrator? If you find him unreliable, what makes him unreliable? A mental or moral failing? Suspicion that he may be a terrorist? To what extent do stereotypes play a role in our concept of him as unreliable? Why do you think Hamid structured the novel as a dramatic monologue? What is the effect? • **Short Video**: Excerpt from "The Reluctant Fundamentalist: Mohsin Hamid in Conversation with Akhil Sharma" (minutes 35-37) • **Free-write + Class Share (in response to video):** What might your conclusion (or lack of conclusion) about the ending reveal about your own beliefs and experiences? • **Overview:** Writing Project #3 Description and Prompt Options	• **Review + Questions:** Writing Project #3 Description and Prompt Options • **Jigsaw Activity**: Brainstorm list of themes the novel addresses together as a class and then each small group chooses one theme to explore. Each group shares a sentence expressing the theme and examples from the text of how that theme is developed. • **Peer Workshops:** In small groups, share your ideas for Writing Project 3 based on your pre-writing. Use the peer workshop questions to guide your discussion/feedback. • **Writing Time/Instructor Questions:** remaining time for students to begin writing a draft and ask me individual questions about their projects.
Homework	**Homework**
Reading: Carefully read the Writing Project #3 Assignment Guide and bring any questions you have with you to class. **Writing:** Pre-writing/Exploration: Choose a prompt that you are interested in writing about for Writing Project #3 and use any pre-writing technique of your choice (free-writing, mapping, clustering, listing, journaling, diagramming, etc.) to generate ideas for the project.	**Writing:** Write a draft of WP3 by Wednesday of next week and submit to the LMS for peer workshops and to Turnitin.com for credit. We'll workshop drafts in class on Wednesday of next week, and individual conferences will also take place next week. The final, polished draft will be due the following Monday.

Project Description: Group "Teach-in"

Over the next three weeks, each of you will collaborate to create a lesson plan for teaching a chapter selection from Moshin Hamid's *The Reluctant Fundamentalist.* The term "teach-in" references the teaching aspect of the project. That is, on the day your group presents, you will have what I hope will be the exciting task of leading the class for the first 45+ minutes. You'll present an analysis of a key passage of the text, share research in response to a prompt, and engage us in an interactive exercise to deepen our learning. Each student will sign up for participation in one group.

Components of the Group Project:

1. Give a **brief summary** of what happens in the chapters you're covering.
2. Select what you think is a **key passage** (about 2-3 paragraphs) from your section of the book. Your group should annotate it, indicating what you believe to be the passage's significance and how it relates to other parts of the novel. Please **annotate/mark it up electronically** (for example, you might use Google Docs or Digress.It) so that we can view the passage and your annotations together as a class via the computer projector.
3. [Research and present information on the topic assigned to your group.](#) Research should be conducted using the university library catalogue and/or databases. If you conduct research through the internet, carefully evaluate your sources for credibility.
4. Lead the class in an **interactive activity** as a way of exploring the day's writing prompt question together. Here are just a few ideas for getting the class involved: stage a talk show, skit, character interviews, debate, game, contest, or another group activity. When posing questions to the group, aim for **critical thinking** questions (questions that involve interpretation or analysis), not just recall/fact-based questions.

Goals for the Project

✓ Use a **visual aid** such as a film clip, photograph, map, drawing, or PowerPoint.
✓ Be **prepared**. Students (or the instructor) might ask you questions about the chapters you're covering. For example, I might ask you for your own ideas in response to the questions you pose, and your peers might want to know more about what you learned through your research. You are the experts for the day ☺
✓ **Thoroughly address the prompts**, including an in-depth discussion of the key passage you selected and thoughtful information in response to the research question assigned.
✓ Demonstrate your **critical thinking** in response to the text by considering specific scenes or moments in the novel that help explain your key passage's significance and by explaining connections between your research and your assigned chapters.
✓ Make sure all group members are involved in the presentation. Use our class guidelines for group work to ensure **collaboration** during this process.

Group "Teach-in" Projects: Schedule and Research Topics

Remember to conduct your research primarily through the university library catalogue and/or databases. If you conduct research through the internet, carefully evaluate your sources for credibility ☺.

Note: On the day your group presents, you do not need to complete the writing response prompt since you'll have prepared to lead a discussion or activity based on the prompt!

Group 1: Chapters 3-4

Research Topic: Changez grew up in Pakistan and makes a number of references to both cultural differences and similarities between the U.S. and Pakistan. Conduct some research on Pakistani culture, including *differences and diversity within* the culture, and share what you learn. What background information do you think will help the class better understand Changez as a character?

Writing Response Prompt (that the class will have responded to): How would you describe similarities and/or differences between "worlds" depicted in these chapters? For example, what can we infer about cultural differences between Changez and the un-named stranger Changez speaks to? What about Changez and Erica's worlds? Jim's world? What about New York in comparison to Lahore?

Group 2: Chapters 5-6

Research Topic: Explore international responses to 9/11 on the days immediately following the terrorist attack. For example, how did news outlets outside the U.S. (such as the *Afghan Daily*, *Al Jazeera*, or the *BBC*) report on 9/11? What differences or similarities do you notice in the coverage? Share what you learn.

Writing Response Prompt (that the class will have responded to): How did you feel reading about Changez's response to the Twin Towers falling? Based on what you've learned thus far about Changez as a character, and what he shares in chapter 5, why do you think he responded the way he did?

Group 3: Chapters 7-8

Research Topic: Changez observes and experiences changes in how people perceived to be Middle Eastern and/or Muslim are treated after 9/11. Conduct research on changes to U.S. policies around the questioning and detention of suspected terrorists after 9/11 and the groups most impacted by these changes in policy. Also research the rise of Islamophobia in the U.S. after 9/11. Share what you learn.

Writing Response Prompt (that the class will have responded to): What conflicts (internal and external) does Changez struggle with after 9/11? What conflicts does Erica face? How does Changez and Erica's relationship change? What conflicts and/or changes does Changez observe about America?

Group 4: Chapters 9-10

Research Topic: Changez refers to the U.S. government's bombing of Afghanistan and the impact it had on his family in Pakistan. Conduct research on the "war on terror" the U.S. waged in Afghanistan post 9/11 and the effects it had on Pakistan and Pakistan/U.S. relations. Share what you learn.

Writing Response Prompt (that the class will have responded to): In what ways does Changez question his identity in these chapters and in what ways does he struggle with his sense of belonging? What role does Juan-Bautista and his story about the jannisaries play in Changez's shifting ideas about identity and/or belonging?

Group 5: Chapters 11-12

Research Topic: Find and share definitions for empire and imperialism and research America's role in a couple of the conflicts Changez references on pg. 156. Based on what you learn, what do you think Changez means when he criticizes the American government's "constant inference in the affairs of others"?

Writing Response Prompt (that the class will have responded to): How did you interpret the novel's ending? Explain why you reached the conclusion you did, using textual evidence to support your ideas.

Project Description

Writing Project #3: Analysis of a Contemporary Novel

Context and Purpose

We've now completed reading a full-length contemporary novel, Moshin Hamid's *The Reluctant Fundamentalist*. In Writing Project 1, you practiced analyzing a short story through focusing on an element of fiction (literary device). In Writing Project 2, you engaged in a similar form of analysis but based on elements of counternarrative. In Writing Project 3, you will build on these skills, applying them to a longer, more complex work of fiction. You will argue a thesis through analysis in response to a prompt. Through this project, you'll sharpen your literary analysis skills and learn to compose and support an argument about a contemporary novel.

Your Task

Choose **one** of the prompt options and argue a thesis through analysis in response to the prompt. You may, if you wish, propose your own prompt, but you must get my approval before writing a paper in response to your own prompt. Please speak with me if you are interested in composing your own prompt.

Your final draft should be 5-6 pages (in MLA style: typed, double-spaced, one-inch margins, etc.) plus a Works Cited page. Five pages is a minimum requirement, but you are welcome to write more than six pages as needed or inspired ☺.

Audience

Your classmates and instructor will be your primary audience for this project. Because this is an academic paper, though, it's important that you write your paper with a secondary audience in mind, an audience that may not have read the novel. In other words, follow the academic convention of writing for an audience that may or may not have read the work of literature. This means it's a good idea to give a brief overview of the novel in the beginning of your paper. Then, aim to provide context for each of your assertions but without veering into plot summary.

Structure

Please structure your project through the traditional format of an introduction that ends with a thesis statement, body paragraphs supporting your thesis, and a conclusion paragraph. However, if you choose one of the creative options, you may develop your own structure as long as it meets the general guidelines below.

Thesis: Present a thesis statement toward the end of the introductory paragraph (or somewhere at the beginning of the paper if you choose one of the creative options). Aim for a specific and concise answer to one of the prompt questions.

Body: Other than a brief summary of the novel for readers who may be unfamiliar with it, devote the body of your paper to proving your thesis through analysis. This means examining parts of the novel to answer the question, not summarizing the novel. Aim for topic sentences in each paragraph that present main points in support of your thesis. Within your body paragraphs, provide textual evidence (through quotations, paraphrases, and summarized examples) from the novel and explain how this evidence supports your ideas. Quotes can be a helpful way to illustrate your points but should not substitute for analysis. General rule of thumb for quoting: avoid quoting more than 2-4 lines total per page so that your own voice doesn't get lost!

Format

Please format the paper in MLA style and follow MLA guidelines for in-text citations. Include an MLA style Works Cited page for the novel and (if applicable) any outside sources incorporated into the paper.

Process

You will write a draft, receive peer-review feedback during in-class workshops, and revise before submitting a final, polished paper. We will also schedule individual conferences to discuss your drafts as we did for your first two writing project in the course. To accompany the final draft, you will also submit a writer's memo in which you reflect on your writing process, decision-making, insights about yourself as a learner, and in which you practice "looking forward" to consider how you might use the skills you practiced in this paper in future contexts.

Submission

Please submit the draft through the LMS (to facilitate workshopping) and to Turnitin.com (for credit). The final draft only needs to be submitted through Turnitin.com. Please submit both the draft and final draft as Microsoft Word or PDF files.

Grading

As specified in our labor-based grading contract, each of the assignments leading up to the final draft will be marked as complete as long as you have fulfilled the assignment task as described in the directions. Your final draft of the project will likewise be graded as complete as long as you have fulfilled the assignment task as described in this guide. Final drafts that do not fulfill the assignment task will be returned and marked as "Incomplete" with the opportunity for revision.

Writing Project 3 Prompt Options

Please choose ONE of the prompts below and argue a thesis in response to one of the questions within that prompt. Several questions are included in each prompt in order to help you develop your ideas and guide your analysis. You do not need to answer all of the questions in the prompt you choose as long as you engage in an in-depth analysis that answers at least one primary question within the prompt you choose. <u>If you wish to propose your own prompt, please</u> <u>submit it to me for approval</u>.

1. TRF as a "Coming of Age" Story. How does Changez change during the novel? What motivates Changez as a character at the beginning of the novel? What does he realize about himself by the end of the novel? What people and events drive the plot, i.e., contribute to Changez's eventual shift of perspective that leads to a very different life than he had once imagined? What motivates Changez at the end of the novel? How has he "come of age"?

2. Erica/America as Allegory. Explore ways in which Changez's relationship with Erica can be read allegorically. That is, in what ways does Changez's relationship with Erica mirror his relationship to America? In what ways does Changez's relationship with Erica mirror the relationship between non-Muslim Americans and (perceived) Muslim Americans before and after 9/11? If read allegorically, what does the love triangle between Erica, Chris, and Changez suggest about America post 9/11? Read as allegory, what is the significance, in Changez's words, of Erica's "disappearing into a powerful nostalgia, one from which only she could decide whether or not to return" (113)?

3. TRF as Social/Political Critique. In what ways do you think this novel engages in social or political critique (e.g., of American economic values, America's response to 9/11, America's foreign policy, or dominant narratives about 9/11)? For this prompt, you are welcome to conduct research on mainstream narratives about 9/11 and consider ways in which this novel calls such narratives into question. Also consider how Hamid accomplishes social/political critique in the novel. For example, how does the novel's structure as a dramatic monologue contribute? How do symbols help convey critique?

4. Changez's Reliability as a Narrator. To what extent do you believe Changez is a reliable narrator? What textual evidence supports your interpretation? How does Hamid's decision to structure the novel as a dramatic monologue affect your interpretation of Changez's reliability? How does Changez's identity as a Pakistani man—depending on the reader—potentially impact perception of his reliability? If you wish, conduct research on examples of unreliable narrators in classic literature and compare them to Changez. What makes these other characters unreliable as narrators? Does Changez share these characteristics? Why or why not?

5. Significance of Names. Analyze the significance of characters and place names in TRF. For example, Changez's name suggests change; Erica's name is contained within Am(erica); Chris is contained in Christopher Columbus and Christ; Underwood Sampson contains U.S. and Sam, as in Uncle Sam. How do you interpret the significance of the names Hamid chose for places and characters? How do they contribute to/deepen our understanding of the novel? How does each relate to or contribute to the development of the novel's themes? You're welcome to conduct research on any of the names or places in the novel and incorporate this into your analysis.

6. Themes of Identity and Belonging. How are the related themes of identity and belonging portrayed in the novel? For example, in what ways does Changez struggle with his identity (and conflicting identities) and what conflicts does he face around feeling a sense of belonging? To what extent, and how, do you think Changez finds a sense of identity and belonging? What does the novel suggest about the challenges of identity and belonging in cross-cultural and cross-national contexts? What does it suggest about the challenges of identity and belonging for people perceived and treated as "other" due to their perceived race, ethnicity, class, or religion?

7. Interpreting the Ending. What happens at the end of the novel? Explain your interpretation of the ending by providing textual evidence to support your interpretation. In your paper, consider the clip from Hamid (posted in the LMS) in which he discusses the novel's ending and explore how your own experiences, background, and/or biases may have contributed to your interpretation of the ending. Does this exploration shift your ideas about the ending in any way? If so, how? Also consider why Hamid chose to leave the ending open to interpretation.

8. TRF as a 9/11 Novel. This novel is sometimes classified as a 9/11 novel. What makes this a 9/11 novel? For example, what role does 9/11 play in the novel? How significant is 9/11 to themes the novel addresses? How significant is it to the plot? Without 9/11, do you think Changez would have changed in the ways that he did? To what extent does the novel challenge mainstream narratives about 9/11 and the "war on terror"? For this prompt, you are welcome to conduct research on mainstream narratives/dominant narratives about 9/11 and/or the "war on terror" to help you develop your response.

9. Theme of Fundamentalism in *The Reluctant Fundamentalist.* How is fundamentalism portrayed in the novel? What is the significance of the title and how does it deepen our understanding of the novel? Conduct research and analyze the various meanings of fundamentalism. In what ways do you think Changez is reluctant? In what ways is he a fundamentalist? How does his fundamentalism (the meaning he attaches to it) shift during the novel? To what extent does the novel offer a counter-narrative to fundamentalism as it is discussed in American media or popular culture?

10. Effects of Racism and Islamophobia. The novel takes place just before and after 9/11, after which racism against people perceived as Middle Eastern and Muslim increased. How is racism and Islamophobia portrayed in the novel? For example, how is racism and Islamophobia shown through Changez's interactions with other characters, some of them known to him, and some of them strangers? How does racism and/or Islamophobia impact Changez and/or other characters in the novel? What differences (or similarities) exist before and after 9/11?

11. The Jannisaries. Conduct research to learn more about the history of the Jannisaries and analyze their symbolic significance in the novel. How does Changez's experience compare to what you learn about the Jannisaries in your research? What themes do the Jannisaries help to develop in the novel and how?

Creative Options

a) Write in response to any of the above prompts and structure your response as a dramatic monologue in which you converse with any character from the novel or a character from your own imagination.

b) Write an epilogue (short ending) to the novel, in which the reader learns what happens at the end. You may write your epilogue as an omniscient narrator or in the voice of any character from the novel (Erica, Jim, the unnamed American character, Changez, etc.). You may structure it however you like. Just be sure that your epilogue is based on textual evidence and demonstrates your close reading of the novel.

Writing Project 3 Dimensions-Based Rubric

The purpose of this rubric is to guide us in providing close reading and description of each other's writing and to help you develop ideas for revising your draft. Instead of asking if the writer has reached specific standards, we will describe what we, as individual readers, notice about the writing. We will use this rubric for peer workshop letters, and I will refer to this rubric during our conferences and when providing feedback on your final draft.

After responding to each other's work through the peer workshop process, you will have rich descriptions of what several classmates noticed about your draft. You will likely find at least some contradictory ideas about your writing. This is to be expected because as diverse human beings we tend to have different responses, even to the same piece of writing!

Your task is to make decisions about what you want to change in order to communicate what *you* want to get across to your reader and so that you feel proud of your final draft.

Dimension of Writing	Questions to Guide Reader Response
Thesis	What sentence or sentences did you interpret to be the thesis? Which prompt question do you think it answers? What do you find interesting or thought-provoking about the thesis claim? Is there anything about the thesis you have questions about or that was unclear to you as a reader?
Support and Development	How do you think the writer's supporting points relate to the thesis? Of these, which do you find most interesting and why? How do you think the textual evidence (in the form of brief quotes or paraphrased or summarized examples) supports the writer's ideas? Which textual evidence do you find most persuasive and why? If the writer uses sources outside of the novel, how do you think these sources contribute to the overall argument? Where might the writer have explained their ideas further to help you understand their argument? Are there places where you would have found more textual evidence helpful?
Organization	How would you describe the structure of the writer's argument? For example, do you think it follows a traditional format of introduction, body paragraphs with supporting points, and conclusion? Or do you think the writer uses a different approach, and if so, how would you describe it? What is an example of where the writer transitions from one idea to the next that you found effective and why? Is there anything about the organization that you have questions about? Are there any places where more guidance from the writer would have helped you understand the writer's argument?
Conventions of Style and Usage	What is an example of a spelling, capitalization, punctuation, or grammar choice that you think helps communicate the writer's argument? In what ways do you think the writer is using traditional conventions for spelling, capitalization, punctuation, or grammar and/or where do you think the writer may be challenging conventions?
Sources	When the writer quotes or provides textual examples from the novel, do you see MLA style in-text citations? What is an example of a place where you think the writer smoothly incorporates a quote or textual example and why? Do you see an MLA style Works Cited page? If the writer uses outside sources, are you seeing in-text citations and entries in the Works Cited page?

Resources for Teaching *The Reluctant Fundamentalist*:

An Annotated Bibliography

This document includes sources cited in the unit plan and sources consulted in my

development of the lesson plans and assignments, including literary scholarship on *The Reluctant*

Fundamentalist. The annotations are designed to provide a brief introduction to each source and

its relevance to this project. While they provide support for and indicate a rationale for many of

my choices in this unit plan, I also hope they will be helpful to fellow instructors interested in

teaching the novel.

Allred, Jeff. "Novel Hacks: New Approaches to Teaching the Novel Genre." *Transformations:*

The Journal of Inclusive Scholarship and Pedagogy, vol. 24, no. 1–2, 2013, pp. 121–

37. EBSCOhost, https://search-ebscohost-

com.ezproxy.bgsu.edu/login.aspx?direct=true&db=mzh&AN=2014400133&site=ehost-

live&scope=site

> Allred addresses the challenges of teaching the traditional print novel in the
>
> digital age and in a context in which students' reading and writing practices are
>
> rapidly changing. He argues that teachers can make use of new and emerging
>
> screen-based, networked reading and writing practices to engage student interest
>
> in the novel genre. Allred presents a case study based on a college class he
>
> designed called "Novel Hacks," sharing insights gleaned. He highlights two
>
> primary assignment strategies: 1) collaborative student creation of audiobook
>
> versions of novels and 2) collaborative student creation of the "marked-up novel"
>
> using platforms like Digress.it. Allred's second "hack," the collaboratively
>
> "marked-up novel," inspired an element of the group "teach-in" project.

Specifically, I ask each group to select and collaboratively mark-up/annotate a

passage from the chapters they are assigned and to do so using an electronic

platform like Google Docs or Digress.it so that the class can view their marked-up

passage during their presentation.

"American Muslims Remember How 9/11 Changed America." *Microsoft Bing*, uploaded by PBS

NewsHour, 6 Sept. 2021,

www.bing.com/videos/search?q=documentary+impact+of+9%2f11+on+muslims&&vie

w=detail&mid=A903A32B6DA607C4BD06A903A32B6DA607C4BD06&&FORM=VR

DGAR&ru=%2Fvideos%2Fsearch%3Fq%3Ddocumentary%2Bimpact%2Bof%2B9%25

2f11%2Bon%2Bmuslims%26FORM%3DHDRSC4.

This clip from PBS NewsHour features several American Muslims who lived

through 9/11. Through their personal stories, the viewer gains an understanding of

the increased stereotyping, prejudice, and violence American Muslims and people

perceived to be Muslim have faced in the two decades since 9/11. I am showing

this as part of my introduction to *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* as background to

prepare students—to help cue them for—references to this rise of Islamophobia in

the novel after 9/11. I also hope it will help center the experiences of Muslim and

South Asian people in America, and again, cue students to consider—and be

curious about—Changez's experience, which for some will be very different than

their experiences growing up in the U.S.

Bahrawi, Nazry. "Mohsin Hamid's War on Error: The Reluctant Fundamentalist as a Post-Truth

Novel." *CounterText,* vol. 4, no. 2, Aug. 2018, pp. 256–80. EBSCOhost, https://doi-

org.ezproxy.bgsu.edu/10.3366/count.2018.0130.

Bahrawi argues that Hamid's novel provides a counter-narrative to the "master" narrative about the threat of Islamic fundamentalism that has dominated since 9/11. Bahrawi posits that Hamid accomplishes this through a "post-truth" tactic aligned with the project of decoloniality. That is, the novel's unreliable narrator, Changez, in combination with the open-ended conclusion, "blurs the lines between fact and fiction" in a way that calls into question not only the accuracy of his narration but also the accuracy of dominant narratives about Islam and Islamic fundamentalist post-9/11, thus inviting the reader to contemplate what counts as "truth" and consider their own biases. The most helpful aspect of this article for me was Bahrawi's summary of two primary narratives about 9/11, one put forth by the U.S. government's *The 9/11 Commission Report* in 2004 (that "Islamic fundamentalism is the enemy") and the second, a counter-narrative less visible in mainstream American culture, that Islamic fundamentalism is not "to blame" for 9/11, but rather, American imperialism and neocolonial economic policies. Bahrawi suggests that Hamid's novel provides just such a counter-narrative and that given the post-truth era in which we live, it has the power to raise questions about the veracity of reports/narratives like that of the 9/11 Commission. This information served as invaluable background knowledge for me while planning my unit and influenced my choice of research topics for the group project presentations. I tried to assign topics that would challenge mainstream narratives and deepen students' understanding of the factors that contributed to Changez's experience of being perceived as a threat after 9/11.

Eaton, Mark. "Pathways to Terror: Teaching 9/11 Fiction." *Teaching 21st Century Genres*, edited

      by Katy Shaw, Palgrave Macmillan (London), 2016, pp. 129–45. EBSCOhost,

      https://search-ebscohost-

      com.ezproxy.bgsu.edu/login.aspx?direct=true&db=mzh&AN=202018796427&site=ehost

      -live&scope=site.

          In this chapter from *Teaching 21st Century Genres*, Eaton discusses the

          characteristics of what he calls a "new literary genre: 9/11 fiction." Eaton

          identifies several approaches to 9/11 fiction, including novels that serve to

          commemorate and bear witness to 9/11, novels in which 9/11 is not the central

          event but rather a "trigger" for other events that unfold, and novels that focus on

          "pathways" to terrorism. Eaton primarily focuses on the latter, demonstrating how

          fiction can disrupt binaries (like "East vs. West" and "us vs. them") and offer

          more nuanced and complex representations of the motivations that lead people to

          consider or commit acts of terrorism. I disagree with his characterization of *The*

          Reluctant Fundamentalist as novel about the protagonist's "path of

          radicalization," and his grouping of it among novels that helps us see into the

          "minds" of terrorists because the ending is, in my reading of it, and in Hamid's

          own description of it, open to interpretation. Nonetheless, this article proved quite

          helpful to me through its explication of 9/11 fiction as a new genre and common

          elements of the genre. It also inspired me to compose a prompt question for the

          paper assignment about *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* as a 9/11 novel.

Haider, Nishat. "Globalization, US Imperialism and Fundamentalism: A Study of Mohsin

      Hamid's *The Reluctant Fundamentalist*." *South Asian Review*, vol. 33, no. 2, 2012, pp.

203–38. EBSCOhost, https://doi-

org.ezproxy.bgsu.edu/10.1080/02759527.2012.11932885.

Haider offers a compelling analysis of what she calls *The Reluctant*

Fundamentalist's "reversal of the concept of the fundamentalism." Not only,

Haider posits, does the novel offer a counter-narrative that complicates

mainstream tropes about Islamic fundamentalism and the 9/11 terrorist attack, but

she argues that the novel implicates American "economic fundamentalism" as a

"fundamental" aspect of American culture and suggests it propagates a form of

imperial terrorism on a global scale. Haider provides invaluable background

information about 9/11 and the U.S.'s response, which I will draw on in my

introduction to the novel and as supplemental background during the student

groups' presentations as needed. She also provides information about the novel's

classification by the Library of Congress Cataloguing-in-Publication as

"September 11 Terrorist Attacks 2001- Fiction," which reaffirms its categorization

as a 9/11 novel. Her analysis of the novel's portrayal of fundamentalism also

helped me develop lesson plan discussion questions and a writing prompt

question about the theme of fundamentalism.

Hamid, Mohsin. *The Reluctant Fundamentalist*. Harper Perennial, 2008.

Hamid's novel is about a Pakistani man named Changez who travels to the U.S. in

pursuit of the American Dream. The novel is narrated as a dramatic monologue in

which Changez converses with an unnamed American character in Lahore. We

never hear the American speak but we do get clues about his reactions during the

conversation through Changez's description of them. The two appear to be unsure

of each other's motives throughout the novel. Changez begins his journey as a student at Princeton and later achieves a coveted spot at the financial firm Underwood Sampson, where he excels. Changez also meets a woman, Erica, early in the novel whom he develops feelings for. After 9/11, his life changes significantly. He has a mixed reaction to watching the Twin Towers fall on 9/11 in part because of what he calls the "symbolism" of the towers. While there are hints of racism and Islamophobia early in the novel, after 9/11 incidents increase in severity and frequency, and Changez increasingly feels out of place in America. His relationship with Erica falters as she is still in love with a boyfriend, Chris, who passed away, and they are only able to make love when he encourages her to pretend he is Chris. After 9/11, Erica's mental illness increases and she withdraws from the relationship, eventually, it is hinted, committing suicide. Similar to the demise of his relationship with Erica, his American Dream falters, too. He is increasingly treated as an outsider in America, protected only by his class/economic status. He also finds himself pained and angered by American attacks on Afghanistan, which impact his homeland, Pakistan, and his family in Pakistan. He has an increasingly difficult time focusing on his work, and after a conversation with Juan-Bautista, a publisher whose business will likely be de-valued by Underwood Sampson's work, he has a significant and life-changing realization. Bautista shares with him the story of the jannisaries, who as children were trained to annihilate their own people, and Changez realizes that he, too, has become a jannisary to his people through his role at Underwood Sampson, a company that is the epitome of American economic imperialism. As he explains

it, America's empire has and continues to be built through its economic policies. Changez vows to become an ex-jannisary, and with great trepidation, leaves America and moves back to Pakistan where he employs his "ex-jannisary gaze" as a professor and inspires students to agitate for Pakistani independence from America. We learn toward the end that his rhetoric for Pakistani independence has been conflated with anti-Americanism and terrorism and that he suspects an American operative has been sent to kill him. In the final pages of the novel, tension builds between Changez and the unnamed American when a waiter from the restaurant appears to be approaching and the American reaches for something that looks like it may be a gun. The ending is left open to interpretation. That is, is Changez actually involved in the terrorist activities he's been accused of and hence poses a danger to the American, or is the American in fact a CIA agent sent to kill him as he suspected? I found the novel deeply thought-provoking and richly developed with a number of important themes and brilliantly crafted literary elements, which would make for an excellent choice for the novel unit in a community college Introduction to Literature course, so I decided to build my unit plan around this novel. I was not disappointed; if anything, there's much more to this novel than I could ever cover with my students, but I am confident they will find it to be an interesting novel and that they'll be able to write strong papers in response to the prompt options I wrote for the paper assignment.

Jayasuriya, Maryse. "Reading Terror, Reading Ourselves: Conflict and Uncertainty in Mohsin Hamid's The Reluctant Fundamentalist." *Multicultural*, edited by Robert C. Evans, Salem Press; Grey House Publishing, 2017, pp. 249–61. EBSCOhost, https://search-ebscohost-

com.ezproxy.bgsu.edu/login.aspx?direct=true&db=mzh&AN=2017400796&site=ehost-
live&scope=site.

Jayasuriya's article examines several themes in the novel with a focus on the

pursuit of the American Dream and 9/11 and its aftermath within and outside of

the U.S. Jayasuriya also analyzes several literary elements Hamid uses to

construct the novel and reveal theme, including allegory, dramatic monologue,

symbolism (inclusive of the significance of the names of people and places) and

the unreliable narrator. This article helped me make decisions about which literary

elements/devices to incorporate into my lesson plans. In fact, I will be giving

mini-lectures and engaging students in discussion on each of the aforementioned

literary elements. I also composed writing prompt questions for the paper that are

based on and/or that expand on knowledge of these elements.

Malik, Surbhi. "Postcolonial Ruins, Transnational Intimacies, and the Terror of the Have in The

Reluctant Fundamentalist." *Verge: Studies in Global Asias*, vol. 5, no. 1, 2019, pp. 237–

60. EBSCOhost, https://doi-org.ezproxy.bgsu.edu/10.5749/vergstudglobasia.5.1.0237.

Malik uses the concept of literary "ruins" to analyze what he argues is the real

terrorism Hamid's novel portrays: the violence of capitalism and neoliberalism,

particularly in the global south. He argues that the novel also critiques the concept

of meritocracy, which functions to elide this violence, suggesting that, in *The*

Reluctant Fundamentalist, meritocracy is the "affirmative reincarnation of

imperialism." Malik further shows how Hamid reveals the neocolonial violence of

meritocracy and neoliberalism through his use of sensory images (arising from the

ruins—literal and figurative—depicted in the novel) and intimate relationships,

namely Changez and Erica as allegory for the Pakistan-America relationship, but
also the dynamics of Jim and Changez's relationship (representing colonial
dynamics) and Juan-Bautista and Changez's relationship (representing
possibilities for political critique and transformation). This was perhaps the most
fascinating of the articles I read about Hamid's novel. It deepened my
understanding of the novel and interpretative possibilities and inspired both lesson
plans and a prompt question for the paper about the use of allegory in the novel. It
also inspired and helped me write the prompt question for the paper about
social/political critique.

Morey, Peter. "'The Rules of the Game Have Changed': Mohsin Hamid's *The Reluctant*
Fundamentalist and Post-9/11 Fiction." *Journal of Postcolonial Writing*, vol. 47, no. 2,
May 2011, pp. 135–46. EBSCOhost, https://doi-
org.ezproxy.bgsu.edu/10.1080/17449855.2011.557184.

Morey's article, which I read after Eaton's article on the emerging genre of the
9/11 novel, also discusses common conventions of the 9/11 novel, though he
categorizes them in a slightly different way. Like Eaton, he argues that early 9/11
novels tended to portray the psychological aftermath for people directed
impacted, but Morey also points to another common category—works that depict
life in Islamic societies as "miserable" and repressive. Morey argues that Hamid's
The Reluctant Fundamentalist "changes the rules of the game" (that is, the rules
of the 9/11 genre) by offering a 9/11 narrative that disrupts mainstream narratives
about Islam and the factors that led to 9/11. In particular, he points to the ways in
which Hamid's novel challenges homogenizing representations of culture and the

problematic belief that 9/11 was somehow the result of a "clash of civilizations."

Morey's article underscored for me the importance of presenting the novel to

students as a counternarrative to dominant narratives about 9/11 and of providing

students with background information about the dominant narratives so that they

have the tools to recognize the novel's social/political critique, which I have

written into the lesson plan for my introduction of the novel and which I return to

through discussion questions and some of the writing response prompts.

Ngozi Adichie, Chimamanda. "Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie: Danger of Single Story." *YouTube*,

uploaded by Continuing Professional Studies, 17 Oct. 2014,

www.youtube.com/watch?v=qm17oQk9_QU.

In this excerpt from her TedTalk, Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie shares with the

audience how she was stereotyped as an African upon moving to America, which

she characterizes as arising from Americans' minimal exposure to Africa and the

diversity of Africans; that is, Americans tend to have only a "single story" of what

it means to be African. Her point is that when we base our understanding of

people on a "single story," we not only miss important aspects of a person or

group of people but also that we risk making decisions that are harmful to others

and we risk dehumanizing them. In my introduction of the novel, I'll discuss the

concepts of dominant and counter-narratives and frame *The Reluctant*

Fundamentalist as a counter-narrative (or at least a novel that can be interpreted

as a counter-narrative) to dominant narratives about 9/11 and the concept of

fundamentalism. I decided to include this short video on the first day of our

discussion of the novel because it highlights the importance of learning from

multiple stories, and I'd like students to have this perspective in mind as they dig into the novel.

Olson, Greta. "Questioning the Ideology of Reliability in Mohsin Hamid's The Reluctant Fundamentalist: Toward a Critical, Culturalist Narratology." *Narratology and Ideology: Negotiating Context, Form, and Theory in Postcolonial Narratives*, edited by Divya Dwivedi et al., Ohio State University Press, 2018, pp. 156–72. EBSCOhost, https://search-ebscohost-com.ezproxy.bgsu.edu/login.aspx?direct=true&db=mzh&AN=2018401523&site=ehost-live&scope=site.

Olson complicates the conventional means by which a narrator is judged "unreliable," pointing out that frequently unreliable narrators are members of marginalized groups and that assessment of "unreliability" may in part be attributable to bias. Colonial subjects, she points out, are not on equal footing with the colonizer, much as a character from the global south like Changez is not on equal footing with the white American he converses with, and thus there are many good reasons why a member of a group with less power might intentionally engage in misdirection or omission when "equality" doesn't exist between the two parties. Hamid, Olson contends, uses unreliability as a rhetorical strategy, exploiting the Western reader's suspicions about the reliability of a narrative by a character they perceive, based on their own biases, might be a terrorist. Olson describes Hamid's use of the unreliable narrator as a "representation of 'talking back' to power." This deeply insightful article helped me make sense of some of my own confusion around calling Changez an unreliable narrator. That is, just as

Olson discusses, I am accustomed to characterizing a narrator as unreliable based on clues that the narrator has some kind of "moral failing" or "mental" instability. This wasn't the case in *The Reluctant Fundamentalist*, and Olson has shed light on why Changez didn't fit my conception of an unreliable narrator, even if, as Olson argues, there are certainly some clues about unreliability, including the use of the dramatic monologue. In my lesson plans, when I introduce the concept of an unreliable narrator, I will briefly touch on some of Olson's points. I also composed a writing prompt question that invites students to consider several angles when assessing Changez's reliability as a narrator.

"*The Reluctant Fundamentalist*: Mohsin Hamid in Conversation with Akhil Sharma." *YouTube*, uploaded by PEN America, 7 May 2010, www.youtube.com/watch?v=IYfxlqN7c60.

In this interview conducted by Akhil Sharma, Hamid answers questions about his process as a writer and his novels *Moth Smoke* and *The Reluctant Fundamentalist*. I plan to show a two-minute clip in which Hamid discusses the ending of both novels (approximately minutes 35 to 37). He explains that the endings of both novels are open to interpretation but that the ending of *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* has "higher stakes" for the reader because it presents a context in which they may find themselves making judgments in real life based on how trustworthy they find a Pakistani man with a beard. I will show this clip after students have finished reading the novel as a way to generate reflection about how students' own experience and background may have influenced their interpretation of the ending. They will do a free-write in response to the video in which they consider to what extent their own experience may color their

interpretation of the ending and the extent to which Hamid's comments on the

ending shifts (or doesn't shift) their thinking. This novel presents students with

the opportunity to examine their own biases, and I hope this clip in combination

with the free-writing activity will encourage such exploration. I also developed a

prompt question for the paper assignment about the novel's ending, for which I

ask students to review the clip.

"Q&A Highlight - Mohsin Hamid on 'The Reluctant Fundamentalist.'" *YouTube*, uploaded by

Australian Broadcasting Corporation, 19 May 2015,

www.youtube.com/watch?v=OGkZoNDCGfM&t=27s.

In this Q&A panel highlight, Hamid provides background information about the

scene in the novel in which Changez smiles when watching the Twin Towers fall.

He explains that this reaction was not necessarily uncommon, especially outside

of the U.S., and it was important to him, in writing this novel, to explore why

someone would have this mixed reaction. He also observes the human ability to

separate the horror of atrocity from the "symbolism" of an attack like 9/11 and

that Changez portrays this. I chose to show this short video clip on the day after

students have read chapters 5-6 (in which Changez smiled at the towers coming

down) because I think it's helpful context for students to have, both in the sense

of knowing what the author was trying to accomplish and also in reinforcing the

idea of the novel as offering a different perspective, a counter-narrative, that helps

us imagine why someone might have this mixed response.

Shaw, Kristian. "Teaching Contemporary Cosmopolitanism." *Teaching 21st Century Genres*,

edited by Katy Shaw, Palgrave Macmillan (London), 2016, pp. 167–85. EBSCOhost,

https://search-ebscohost-

com.ezproxy.bgsu.edu/login.aspx?direct=true&db=mzh&AN=202018796600&site=ehost

-live&scope=site.

In this chapter from *Teaching 21st Century Genres,* Shaw traces the development

of what she calls "a new contemporary manifestation of cosmopolitanism" and

argues that teachers of English would benefit from applying a contemporary

cosmopolitan lens to the teaching of literature. This means going beyond

incorporating diversity into the selection of literary works (and beyond

multiculturism) to recognizing the extent to which we live in an increasingly

transnational and global society and giving students, many of them already

wrestling with their own cross-cultural and multilingual identities, the opportunity

to explore, critically analyze, and engage conflict and differences individually and

collectively. A literary cosmopolitan pedagogy, Shaw argues, addresses the

challenges of "loyalties" and "allegiances" culturally and nationally and explores

identity formation across these differences; it recognizes the extent to which

differences vary within and not just across cultures and helps students develop

empathy for others, especially those who they may perceive as "other."

Significantly, she argues that fiction is vital to the project of helping students

develop a cross-cultural, global orientation and for imagining social change. This

article had a tremendous influence on me. Shaw's description of literary

cosmopolitan pedagogy contained elements of antiracist and critical pedagogy,

which are both important to me, and offered a helpful overview of how to enact

this pedagogy through the teaching of fiction. My lesson plan for this unit

provides many opportunities for students to research and critically examine issues

of cultural differences, identity, and belonging, and Shaw's article helped me

develop many of these questions and activities.