ENGLISH M.A.
GRADUATE STUDENT HANDBOOK

DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH

WESTERN ILLINOIS UNIVERSITY

(Revised 05/15/2023)

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OVERVIEW OF THE M.A. IN ENGLISH AT WIU

Welcome to the English M.A. program at Western Illinois University. Our program emphasizes literature, writing studies, and cultural studies and offers a wide range of courses, including traditional and contemporary literature, professional writing and editing, rhetoric and composition, English education, film and new media, gender and queer studies.

Students may also earn credits through internships in various fields, including teaching, professional writing, and library science. Internships provide opportunities for gaining hands-on experience and making valuable professional connections.

To complete the M.A., students work under the direction of a faculty committee to develop and present an ambitious project that makes a significant contribution to their area of study. In consultation with the Director of the Graduate Program in English (DGSE) and graduate committee, students can choose between one of three exit options: applied research project, comprehensive exam, or thesis.

One Program, Two Campuses

Courses are offered on the Macomb and Quad Cities (QC) campuses. Some courses are offered online in real-time via live streaming on Zoom.

Regardless of your resident campus, we encourage you to get to know students and faculty to the north or south of you. You can find links to faculty bios in the department directory: http://www.wiu.edu/cas/english/contact_directory/

Full-Time Students

Full-time students can complete their degree in four semesters, generally taking 9 hours each semester. Graduate students who also hold a teaching assistantship may take 6 hours per semester, depending on the type of assistantship awarded, but are still considered full-time and can complete the degree in two years by taking advantage of summer tuition waivers to complete degree requirements over the summer.

Part-Time Students

Over half the students in our program are part-time, taking one or two classes each semester. By taking one class each semester, students can complete the degree in six years (the maximum time allowed).

International Students

International students are an important part of our program and are fully eligible for assistantships. International students may need to meet additional requirements once accepted in

the English M.A. program. International students should attend an orientation week prior to the beginning of the semester and work closely with both the International Admission office and the Director of the Graduate Studies in English (DGSE). For more information visit: http://www.wiu.edu/graduate_studies/international/

Initial Meeting with the Director of Graduate Studies in English (DGSE)

Once you are accepted into the program, please email your faculty advisor, the Director of Graduate Studies in English (DGSE), to make an appointment during the first week of the semester. The Director, who is also your academic advisor, will help you understand program requirements, select courses, and uncover opportunities to help you meet your goals. As you begin, please email the Director anytime or drop by office hours when you have questions or concerns.

ENGLISH STUDIES: LITERATURE, WRITING STUDIES, & CULTURAL STUDIES

One of the great challenges and delights is exploring the many areas of English studies and defining yourself as an intellectual. While English once meant mainly the study of British and American literature, today English Studies is a vast field of inquiry. Our program focuses on literary theory and criticism, writing studies, and cultural studies.

LITERARY THEORY AND CRITICISM

Intense study of the traditions, forms, and interconnections of literature, usually with an emphasis on a particular geographical place, period, genre, or author.

The study of literature means wrestling with questions of meaning and interpretation. Literary theory and criticism provide the conceptual and historical backgrounds you need to make sense of the forms and traditions you are reading. As you move through your coursework, you will learn about theory and criticism while developing your ability to apply what you learn in your own writing.

Literature is often understood as imaginative writing: poetry, plays, short stories, and novels. However, literature in our M.A. program also includes many other forms–including non-fiction essays, philosophical arguments, biographies, and historical writing–that have become key to understanding particular traditions. Emerging literatures–such as slam-poetry, flash-fiction, and even the interactive narratives of video gaming–are also an important part of our curriculum.

WRITING STUDIES

Rhetoric

Study of the history and theories of persuasion, argument, and human communication in visual, written, and oral form and analysis of how particular texts function within their discourse communities and contexts. Rhetoric helps us understand how we construct our worlds and make meaning through language. Includes modern subfields informed by various critical approaches, such as feminist rhetoric, visual rhetoric, environmental rhetoric, and rhetoric of science.

Composition

Research and theory in the history and practice of writing and writing pedagogy, especially at the post-secondary level. Composition focuses on the writing process, writing center studies, English Language Learners, writing in the disciplines, basic writing, conventions and genres of writing, writing and technology, literacy studies, and more. Includes various critical approaches informed by such fields as ecocriticism, cognitive psychology, and feminist studies.

Technical Communication

The study and practice of conveying written, visual, and oral information to a specific audience, including attention to usability, accessibility, style, conventions, genres, and media for delivery. Areas of study in technical communication might also include internet studies, digital and new media studies, graphic design, and visual rhetoric.

CULTURAL STUDIES

Cultural studies emphasizes interdisciplinary approaches to interpreting the meaning of cultural phenomena, from the texts of popular culture to the practices of everyday life. Cultural critics employ sophisticated methods of literary, semiotic, and linguistic analysis in concert with theories of power and the perspectives and techniques of other disciplines—particularly history and sociology. While cultural critics often analyze popular culture texts, including music, film, and television, they also write about architecture, fashion, food, and emerging new media.

PROGRAM REQUIREMENTS

I. Core Course: 3 s.h.

- ENG 500 Theory and the Practice of English Studies (3)

II. Electives: 21 s.h.

- Approved coursework in English to complement undergraduate courses taken.
- It is recommended that no more than 12 hours of coursework be taken at the 400G level.
- Up to 6 hours may be taken from ENG 620 and ENG 622. It requires approval from the DGSE.

III. Exit option: 6 s.h.

a) Option I: ENG 670 Applied Research Project (6)

b) Option II: ENG 680 Comprehensive Exam (6)

c) Option III: ENG 690 Thesis (6)

TOTAL PROGRAM: 30 s.h.

ENG 500: Theory and Practice of English

ENG 500 is the only required course in our program. It provides context and prepares you for every other course you will take by grounding you in the norms of the discipline, particularly for writing and research. You should take this course as soon as you enter the program, but especially within your first 9 s.h.

CHOOSING YOUR ELECTIVES

You will work with the DGSE to choose from a variety of graduate courses, including 400G courses and, occasionally, independent studies and internships. Graduate faculty believe that you will have the most rigorous and transformative intellectual experiences in English courses at the 500 level.

400G Courses

Often simply called “G” courses, these are 400-level undergraduate courses that you can take for graduate credit by doing work that rises to the level of graduate coursework.

ENG 620: Independent Study

If your intellectual goals cannot be met through a regularly offered course, an independent study may be an option. Once you've received approval from the DGSE, you will need to find a faculty member willing to work with you on your project. Together, you and the faculty member will write the formal proposal for the independent study and submit the form to be approved by the DGSE. Forms can be found on the English M.A. website, http://www.wiu.edu/cas/english/english_graduate.php

ENG 622: Internship

Developing your professional goals can be an incredibly important part of your degree. The graduate faculty encourages students to find or create internships that relate to your career interests. Internships are especially recommended for those students interested in non-academic careers. To register, please first complete an Internship Proposal plan (ENG 622 form) and have it approved by the DGSE. Samples of Internship "Plans" can be found in the "Appendix" and forms can be found on the English M.A. website, http://www.wiu.edu/cas/english/english_graduate.php

Courses in Other Departments

Given the particular focus of your project, in some circumstances a graduate course in another department can make a vital contribution to your studies. However, you should always consult the DGSE before you register for a course outside the English department.

FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES

Teaching Assistantships

Teaching Assistantships (TA),Teaching Support Assistantships (TSA), and TA/TSA hybrids are available to full-time students on a semester-by-semester basis. TAs teach one section of English 180 (the basic first-year writing course at WIU) per semester. TSAs work in the University Writing Center as writing consultants with students across a variety of disciplines and academic levels. TA/TSA hybrids teach one section of ENG 180 each semester, working closely with the director of the Writing Program, and work 7 hrs per week as writing consultants in the University Writing Center. New TAs are required to take English 580, "Teaching Assistant Colloquium," the first semester of their assistantship. TAs and TSAs are required to attend orientation the week before fall classes begin.

Assistantship Eligibility Requirements

To be considered for an assistantship position, students should do the following:

1. submit a Graduate Assistantship application to the School of Graduate Studies
2. be enrolled as a degree-seeking graduate student. Probationary students, non-degree students, and second bachelor's degree students are not eligible to hold assistantships
3. have a GPA of at least 3.0 if graduate courses have been completed at the time the contract is initiated
4. be enrolled in at least 9 s.h. of graduate coursework or undergraduate deficiencies if holding a Graduate or TSA position for fall/spring; or at least 6 s.h. if holding a Teaching Assistant position for fall/spring; or 3 s.h. for summer (any position). If it is the assistant's last semester of coursework (as verified by the degree plan), it is acceptable to be registered for only the remaining required courses
5. complete all required employment paperwork when assigned an assistantship.

All students admitted to our English M.A. program are considered for an assistantship position. But consider that assistantships are very competitive. Students will be required to be interviewed by the DGSE and the Directors of the Writing Program and the University Writing Center to determine their eligibility. Interviews generally occur during the spring semester (March-April).

For more information about assistantships, visit this link: http://www.wiu.edu/graduate_studies/prospective_students/gainfo.php.

WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO BE A GRADUATE STUDENT?

Acquiring the M.A. degree is arguably the most intellectually transformative experience you will ever have. Your expectations for yourself and your studies will hopefully be characterized by great ambition. In commencing graduate study, you are a student but you also become a scholar as you learn new perspectives to help you produce your own knowledge.

Beyond excelling in your classes, you will ideally seek to contribute with your fellow students and professor to the culture of the department by attending readings, lectures, colloquia, and presenting your own work at the annual English Graduate Organization (EGO) Conference.

English Graduate Organization (EGO)

The English Graduate Organization is an organization for students enrolled in the English graduate program. The organization meets regularly throughout the school year to plan events, such as Roundtables with Alumni and Graduate Colloquium. EGO events allow students opportunities to share their work in progress with peers and faculty. To learn more about the EGO and its collaboration with the WIU Sigma Tau Delta, visit the website: http://www.wiu.edu/cas/english/ego/

Interdisciplinary English and Arts Society (IDEAS)

IDEAS is open to all students at the QC campus, including English and Liberal Arts and Sciences majors, among others. IDEAS meets regularly and is focused on facilitating opportunities for students and faculty to come together to share their work and participate in other activities of interest to the humanities, such as creative writing workshops, study groups, and book clubs. It also collaborates with EGO for events, such as the EGO Conference, and with other outside organizations. To learn more, visit https://www.wiu.edu/cas/english/organizations.php

Reading as a graduate student

What distinguishes students of English from almost all other disciplines is our commitment to reading as a way of life. Reading assignments in an English graduate course can sometimes feel overwhelming. A literature course can have weeks that ask students to read hundreds of pages, in addition to supporting critical articles. Other times, a reading assignment will be a short theoretical argument, but its difficulty will challenge your attention and demand new comprehension strategies.

Below is a list of tips to help you become a stronger critical reader:

1. **Making reading an essential part of your everyday practice.** Integrate reading into your life and pleasurable and sustainable ways. Speak with other readers about how you can make reading an enjoyable part of your routine instead of seeing it as an interruption.

2. **Develop strategies to focus.** Different texts, goals, projects, and classes can demand different approaches to reading. Dr. Mark Mossman, for instance, was a "late night" reader as an M.A. student and an "early morning" reader as a Ph.D. student. Dr. Banash would read every morning in a noisy coffee shop. Experiment with different techniques and spaces for reading, as you might find that a change in environment or habit helps you to focus more effectively.

3. **Experiment with techniques for engagement.** Different note-taking strategies can engage you with the text in a different way. Dr. Amy Mossman recalls that as a graduate student, she would "set a timer to get through X pages in X minutes." When time was up, she would "skim ahead" to the next section. She "always wrote notes and questions" directly in the book and "color-coded those notes." For Dr. Alisha White, "annotated bibliographies" allowed her to "sketch her understandings" and "connect" them with other readings and classes.

4. **Join or make a reading group.** Reading groups can help you explore new interests, take on difficult texts, or simply enjoy the pleasure of reading. Dr. Merrill Cole recalls that in graduate school, "students who shared an interest agreed to read material together and discuss it as a group." In joining a "Marxist study group," Dr. Cole was able to "read a lot more of *Capital* than I would have on his own."

Writing as a graduate student

Graduate student writing is high stakes. In a graduate class, a major portion of your grade may depend on a single seminar paper, which requires you to synthesize theory and scholarship to make an original contribution to English Studies. Much of the writing you produce will serve as the foundation on which you build your future career. Learning to write as a scholar of English Studies involves taking on a new identity. It is important for you to develop effective work habits to make this process easier.

DEVELOPING YOUR PLAN OF STUDY

Students will discuss a "Plan of Study" with the DGSE when accepted to the program and work with the DGSE to keep their plans up to date. The departmental Plan of Study will supplement other forms required by the School of Graduate Studies.

Graduate Catalog and the School of Graduate Studies Website

Complete information about course requirements, exit options, and course descriptions is available in the Graduate Catalog. You can consult it online at the School of Graduate Studies website along with forms and other vital resources: http://www.wiu.edu/graduate_studies/

EXIT OPTION, COMMITTEE, & PROPOSAL

The exit option represents what is arguably the most important part of your degree and comprises the final 6 s.h. of the program. The exit option can take one of three forms: the applied research project, comprehensive exam, or thesis. The timeframe in the following section applies only to full-time students, as part-time students require an estimated three or four years to complete their degree and will work on the exit option and its components in different semesters.

Near the end of their first year or after at least 15 s.h., full-time students must select a director who will oversee their work on the exit-option. In selecting the director and forming the committee, students will consult with the DGSE first and then meet with the exit option's director to plan their approach to the exit option, and work on writing the proposal over a period of at least 6-8 weeks, which is ideally over the summer. Then, in the beginning of their second year (it's recommended no later than the 8th week), students will defend the exit-option proposal before their committee. Once the committee approves the proposal, students will continue to work with their director on completing the exit option by the end of their fourth semester.

Below are some suggestions shared by Dr. Rebekah Buchanan to our students when approaching their exit-option proposals:

1. **What other people have to say:** What are other people saying about your topic? What research do they engage in, and what theoretical approaches do they use?

2. **What you have to say:** Why do you want to explore this topic? What arguments do you wish to assert? How might you contribute to the discourse centering on your topic?

3. **Your plan:** What will your final product look like? If writing a thesis, outline your chapters. If working on an applied research project or comprehensive exams, discuss what you are researching and constructing, and why.

4. **Working bibliography:** Maintain a list of all the texts you are consulting or finding on your topic. What might these texts contribute to your project, and how might they shape your ideas and approach?

5. **Your timeline:** What does your schedule look like? When do you plan to graduate? What steps can you take to complete your project well and on time?

Applied Research Project (ENG 670)

For some students, the most effective way to bring their intellectual interests and professional goals together is through an applied research project. Potential applied projects are diverse but include producing research-based content supported by a reading list of at least twenty-five sources and an annotated bibliography. Past students have produced varied projects, including creating a comprehensive writing style manual for a business; reviewing, redesigning, and implementing new assessment practices in a high school; creating a website devoted to the history of animation; working with digital media or film to produce a research-based content project. An oral "defense" follows the written section. The committee will ask questions about your project and you are expected to speak about your project with depth and confidence.

Comprehensive Exam (ENG 680)

The comprehensive exam is organized for broad reading rather than in-depth scholarly writing. Instead of producing and defending a large written argument typical of a thesis, this option culminates in a written and oral examination supervised by your committee that establishes your expertise in your area. Because of the focus and writing commitment demanded by the thesis, the comprehensive exam may, in certain cases, be a better option. For example, the thesis will analyze only a few texts or authors, while the comprehensive exam will allow you to read twenty or thirty novels and support criticism. You will also need to supply an annotated bibliography with a minimum of twenty-five sources. The content and parameters of the comprehensive exam are developed in consultation with your committee. This is a written exam followed by an oral exam. You will work with your exit option's director and committee on a reading list and on developing exam questions.

Thesis (ENG 690)

The thesis is a sustained work of scholarly research on a specific topic. Thesis projects are typically between 40-60 pages and divided into two or three chapters. Writing the thesis differs from other writing you will do in its scholarly rigor and professionalism. For instance, your thesis project might investigate a particular novel or several works by different authors. However, the depth of research and the writing process is a major time commitment. Generally, it takes two semesters to complete a thesis. The advantage of writing a thesis is that the thesis may serve as a testament to your writing and expertise when applying for further graduate work.The thesis "defense" comprises a presentation of your project followed by questions about your thesis work. The committee may ask you about any aspect of your work and you are expected to speak about your project with depth and confidence.

For guidelines on preparing your thesis, visit the School of Graduate Studies website and download their "Guidelines for Preparation and Submission of Electronic/Non-electronic Theses and Electronic Dissertations" at
http://www.wiu.edu/graduate_studies/thesis_and_dissertation/thesis_dissertation_guidelines.pdf

ADDITIONAL REQUIREMENTS

The School of Graduate Studies likes to see a degree plan filed when you have taken at least 15 hours of credit. **Consult with the DGSE at the end of your first year (or at least two semesters prior to your graduation).**

Applying for Graduation

During your final semester, you will need to file an Application for Graduation with the School of Graduate Studies. This form can be found on their website: http://www.wiu.edu/graduate_studies/current_students/forms/clear.pdf. A copy is also in the appendix. You must submit your application to the School of Graduate Studies by **March 10** for spring graduation; **June 10** for summer; and **October 10** for fall. Also remember to fill out the Alumni Register Form (located in the dropdown box on STARS).

If you are a thesis student, please upload your thesis to ProQuest no later than Friday before finals. For electronic submission instructions, please visit: http://www.wiu.edu/libraries/featured/2010s/2011/dissertationsAndTheses.php.

If you have indicated that you will be participating in the Spring Macomb commencement ceremony, find information about the ceremony here: http://www.wiu.edu/graduate_studies/commencement/

TIMELINE

Hours	Requirements	Goals
0-9	• Meet with DGSE • Take ENG 500	• Meet as many faculty as possible • Join EGO • Define your intellectual goals • Define your professional goals
9-18	• Continue coursework	• Present a paper at the EGO Colloquium • Discuss possible exit options with DGSE and graduate faculty • Apply for awards to travel for conference presentations or research
18-24	• Choose faculty director for exit option • Assemble exit-option committee • Write exit-option proposal	• Assemble job search materials or applications for further graduate study
24-30	• File degree plan • Apply for graduation • Complete and defend exit option	• Plan to publish a section of your exit option • Give a talk based on your projects

DEPARTMENT SCHOLARSHIPS, FELLOWSHIPS, & UNIVERSITY GRANTS

Applying for University Grants

Full-time and part-time graduate students from Macomb and the Quad Cities may apply for a Graduate Student Research and Professional Development Award. This is designed to support student research projects and presentations, scholarly activities, and professional development opportunities. For more information, visit:
http://www.wiu.edu/graduate_studies/current_students/studentfund.php.

Department Scholarships and Fellowships

There are a number of scholarships and awards available to full- and part-time graduate students from Macomb and the Quad Cities each year. These include:

Alfred J. Lindsey Memorial Scholarship	Graduate: Minimum cumulative 3.5 GPA, Demonstrate contributions to, and excellence in, the field of English or English education.	$1000
John Merrett Scholarship	Applicants must be graduate students majoring in literature and making acceptable progress toward a degree. An original essay written on a topic in English Literature must be submitted with the application, Grade point average, Financial need, and personal potential will be taken into consideration.	$750
The Drs. Nai-Tung Ting and Lee-Hsia Ting English Scholarship	Undergraduate or graduate majoring in English. Entering and current graduate students must have a minimum cumulative 3.5 GPA, Demonstrate outstanding contribution to the field of English. Preference given to students enrolled at WIU from mainland China.	$750
The Wanninger Foundation Scholarship	Graduate or undergraduate English whose education was uninterrupted by at least two years. See the department website for more information.	$500

Ron and Leslie Walker Graduate Fellowship	The recipient must be a student who has completed at least one semester of work in the Department of English. If the recipient is holding a teaching assistantship in the department she/he must have completed at least nine hours. The recipient must have a 3.5 or higher cumulative GPA.

C. John Mahoney English Graduate Fellowship	The recipient must be a student who has completed at least one semester of work in the Department of English. If the recipient is holding a teaching assistantship in the department she/he must have completed at least nine hours. The recipient must have a 3.5 or higher cumulative GPA.
Syndy M. Conger Essay Award	This award is given to the Best Essay written by a graduate student in each academic year. The funding will help students support a research trip or an application or conference fee.
Outstanding Teaching Assistant Award	Award for outstanding work as a graduate teaching assistant. Further information can be found on the department website and by contacting the director of the Writing Program.

AFTER THE M.A.: CONSIDERATIONS, RESOURCES, AND ADVICE

Whether you are applying for jobs or further study, check out the Department's Student Resource page: http://www.wiu.edu/cas/english/english_graduate.php

Applying for Jobs

One of the biggest misconceptions is that an M.A. in English can lead only to a Ph.D., or at least that any other path is less dignified. The reality is quite the opposite: English M.A.s are well-qualified for work in publishing, journalism, advertising, government, social work, business communications, and other fields.

Applying for Further Study

For M.A. students who desire to move onto a Ph.D. program in English, our best advice is to get informed and understand that the path to becoming tenured is difficult and unpredictable to traverse. The time it takes to obtain a Ph.D. in English ranges from four to seven-eight years. Other students, however, may find themselves drawn to graduate study in a different field. If you find yourself going down this path, explore schools that you feel fit your intellectual and personal goals and desires. Think about how you can tailor the graduate work that you have already completed to this new disciplinary field. We encourage students to talk with the DGSE and the English faculty to inquire and determine what is the right path for you.

APPENDIX

The following pages contain samples meant to help you at different stages in your program. The forms of the exit options proposals and internships plans can be found online on the English Graduate Program website, http://www.wiu.edu/cas/english/english_graduate.php

SAMPLE INTERNSHIP PLAN: PROFESSIONAL WRITING (ENG 622) (1)

The goals of the internship are to hone and apply professional writing skills through work on a variety of documents pertaining to sustainability at Western Illinois University. The intern's site supervisor will be the sustainability coordinator at the WIU Physical Plant.

The intern will gain experience with the following:

- Conducting interviews
- Writing profiles
- Writing articles for websites and print
- Writing reports
- Researching and compiling information for reports and grants

Competencies to Be Gained

- Conducting interviews and gathering data and other information
- Writing about sustainability, including technical-related topics, for the general public
- Experience with creating technical and professional documents including institutional reports

Responsibilities and Assignments

- Interviewing subjects for information on sustainability initiatives at WIU
- Interviewing subjects to write profiles and guest editorials for university, local, and regional publications
- Assist the sustainability coordinator in researching and compiling information for the WIU sustainability report submitted to AASHE (Association for the Advancement of Sustainability in Higher Education)
- Developing and writing content for a WIU sustainability newsletter aimed at WIU faculty, staff, students, and alumni
- Producing documents for the WIU sustainability website
- Attending sustainability-related events, helping to coordinate these events, and reporting on them for the newsletter, website, and local and regional publications
- Attending meetings of the sustainability committee and other meetings as appropriate.

SAMPLE INTERNSHIP PLAN: PROFESSIONAL WRITING (ENG 622) (2)

1. **State the goals and objectives that this internship will help you realize.**

   This internship with the Macomb Arts Center provides an opportunity to learn about researching and writing grants as an area of professional writing, and to gain experience working with a local not for profit organization. My goals for this internship experience are to 1) become familiar with the basic concepts and constructions of grant writing through my own readings and research pulled from past course syllabi, 2) gain experience working with an organization researching funding opportunities and assisting with drafting proposals, and 3) create several potential pieces for a portfolio of projects I have worked on.

2. **Describe what competencies you hope to gain during the internship.**

   During this internship, I hope to become familiar with the terminology and structure of writing common in grants, as well as learn about the resources and search tools used to find foundations and opportunities for funding. Another main goal is to gain hands-on experience with the process of researching and writing a proposal, as well as potentially networking and fostering relationships with funding agencies. I also hope to learn the style of writing which is used in proposals and how my own existing writing skills can be used in this new area. In addition to writing the actual proposals, I plan to apply my organizational abilities to create and compile useful resources on past applications and foundational information for future grant proposals.

3. **List the responsibilities and assignments you will be given during the internship.**

   Compiling materials with background information required for any grant process for easy future reference; organizing and updating information about events and activities the Macomb Arts Center offers to the community; drafting basic boilerplate descriptions of the organization's history and goals that can be tailored to fit various purposes; researching funding that would be a good match for the goals and services of the Center; writing and submitting proposals to appropriate grant opportunities.

4. **How many hours a week will you be working and for how long?**

   My schedule will depend on the availability and needs of the Macomb Arts Center and might change week to week. For 2 credit hours (100 hours), during the 15 weeks of the semester I plan to work 6 hours a week (90 hours), with the remaining 10 hours completed in the two or three weeks after the end of the semester. To begin, I will spend three hours a week (10 am - 1 pm) on Thursdays on-site at the Arts Center, as well as attending various events in order to gain familiarity with the services and activities the Macomb Arts Center provides for the community. This will also be supplemented by outside research and meetings with WIU faculty and staff with experience in the area.

SAMPLE THESIS PROPOSAL (ENG 690) (1)

Working Title: Saving Worlds, Sustaining Ourselves: Sustainability and Speculative Fiction

Thesis Proposal:

Ecocriticism, as described by noted ecocritic Cheryll Glotfelty in the introduction to *The Ecocriticism Reader* (2006), explores literary use of the environment as well as ecological issues expressed in texts (xviii). At first, ecocriticism seemed limited to discussing what is typically known as "nature writing"; works by writers like Thoreau and Aldo Leopold were generating much more discussion as a result of the interest in ecocriticism. However, just as environmentalism has broadened to encompass issues beyond "nature," ecocriticism has begun pushing into other realms of literature.

In an essay published in Beyond Nature Writing (2001), Patrick Murphy explores an ecocritical analysis of what he calls "nature-oriented science fiction" (263). While this is an excellent and intriguing piece, it stops short of a much larger possible argument in two ways. The most notable is the limitation inflicted by the use of the term science fiction (sci-fi), rather than the umbrella term speculative fiction (sf), which is defined by the Encyclopedia of Science Fiction (1995) as having "com[e] to include not only soft and hard sf but also fantasy as a whole" (1144). The other limitation is in the use of the term "nature-oriented," which implies that only sf texts that pointedly address ecological issues are to be evaluated with an ecocritical eye.

With Murphy's essay as inspiration, I hope to push ecocriticism beyond nature writing even further by making the argument, first, that there are aspects of speculative fiction that lend the entire genre to ecocriticism, and second, that with the growing interest in sustainability, speculative fiction becomes an especially valid realm of study for the ecocritic and can offer interesting insights for the field of sustainability. The focus of this thesis will be on the analysis of two sf trilogies that are considered seminal works in the genre: J.R.R. Tolkien's The Lord of the Rings (LotR) (1965)—the persistently popular and critically acclaimed fantasy epic—and Isaac Asimov's Foundation (1951)—a work that, while not as popularly read as it originally was, has been recognized as "the best sf series ever" and still manages to generate a fair amount of scholarly criticism.

These two texts are most suited for this analysis because they are considered representational or foundational, if you will, of their respective genres. Orson Scott Card, a current sf writer and critic, references both works as influences on his own work and even states that much of the work in the fantasy genre is essentially Tolkien rewritten (xxii). More recently, Tom Shippey has proclaimed Tolkien as the "Writer of the Century" in the title of his latest book. James Gunn, a noted sci-fi critic, thinks so highly of Asimov's Foundation that he subtitled his book on Asimov, Foundations of Science Fiction. Since it would be impossible to analyze all works of sf in order to make a generalization about how sustainability applies to the genre, analyzing two such influential texts provides a good starting point for such an argument. 37 Also, the decision to use

these two texts is because they are very different from each other: LotR exhibits very clear environmental themes and has generated a fair amount of ecocriticism already, whereas Foundation, while it is still frequently discussed, has not been examined for ecocritical significance, largely because "nature" hardly seems to have a presence and, unless one is looking for environmental themes, it can be easy to overlook them.

However, ecocriticism of these two texts that is informed by sustainability discourse shows that, while there are many important differences between the two works, there are many similarities as well. For example, while it is clear that human superiority becomes problematic in Tolkien's world, where humans must share the land with many other different creatures that are just as, if not more intelligent than humans, human superiority in Asimov seems to go fairly unquestioned since humans are undoubtedly the only active presence in the trilogy. However, the presence of a powerfully mutated human (the Mule) and humans with extraordinary powers (the Second Foundation), while still recognizably human, operate in the narrative to question human superiority. Similarities such as these provide the core of my argument for the applicability of sf as a whole to ecocriticism.

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SAMPLE THESIS PROPOSAL (ENG 690) (2)

Working Thesis Title:

"The Covert Identity: the renunciation of vivid Queer in Africa and Queer Portrayal in African Literature."

Description of Project:

I'm interested in examining the impact of colonial domination on African predisposition toward heteronormativity and how the unpleasant past still influences how Africans fight the presence of queerness in Africa (Precolonial and Postcolonial Africa). I would also look at how Africans' views on homosexuality have been shaped in part by the teachings of Christianity and Islam, the two main African faiths, and most importantly, I plan to examine the views on homosexuality expressed by some of the continent's most well-known writers, particularly those from Nigeria. Nigerian authors Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, Wole Soyinka, Jude Dibia, and Chris Abani, all of whom have written about homosexuality in their works and who all hail from Nigeria, would be my primary sources for my project.

My thesis will include an introduction and two chapters. In the introduction, I will look at the background of the study; this will look at how Africa has struggled to recognize that homosexuality is part of its existence and how queer people still face discrimination across the continent. The intentional denunciation of this sexual orientation in many parts of Africa is the same argument used to defend pervasive homophobia. I will examine what some famous African leaders have said about this topic and share my experience about what I consider homosexual instincts among some students I taught. To look at the impact of African literature on the subject of homosexuality in the continent, I will do a brief reading of two prominent African writers' (Wole Soyinka and Chinua Achebe) texts: *The Interpreters* and *Things Fall Apart*, to establish the fact that homosexuality is part of Africa as seen in the characterization of some of the characters in these texts. My problem statement will acknowledge the long silence of African writers on the issue of homosexuality and the misreading of African literature that looks away from the hidden queer depictions. The scope of my study will discuss why I have chosen primary texts and articles by Nigerian writers, including Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, Jude Dibia, and Chris Abani, who have all shown interest in the African homosexual community. Even though the issue of 'Queer in Africa' has not been well explored, my introduction will end with a literature review that comprises a systematic review of relevant academic literature that serves as a synoptic picture of the subject. I have compiled some relevant and notable articles on the topic to offer a complete look at what has been said on the issue and by whom.

In the first chapter, I will look at the existence of queer in pre-colonial African cultures and how colonial invasion impacted the views of African people on the subject. The second section will look at how religious inclinations have instilled enmity in the minds of Africans

toward the topic. Generally, in Africa, people do not feel comfortable talking about sex and sexuality. Factors like previous colonial legacy and religions (Christianity and Islam) have been reasons why issues of sex, not to talk about homosexuality, are being avoided and euphemized. Avoiding sexual discourse is considered an act of decency in Africa. The second chapter will examine the works of Adichie, Dibia, and Abani to draw out themes of homosexuality. I will look at Adichie's *Half of a Yellow Sun* and *Things Around your Nec*k, Dibia's *Walking Shadows*, and Abani's *Graceland*.

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SAMPLE THESIS PROPOSAL (ENG 690) (3)

Working Title:

"The Young and Wounded: How Trauma is Presented in YA Dystopian Fiction and its Potential Impact on Readers."

Thesis Proposal:

Dystopian fiction has always been an inherently traumatic genre. Characterized by a post-apocalyptic suffering, rife with injustice and cruelty, dystopian fiction exists as a bleak speculative lens into the future. For readers of young adult (YA) fiction, the target demographic of which is between ages of twelve and eighteen, consistent exposure to these types of graphically traumatic narratives during a key developmental period has the potential to impact readers' long term mental health and ability to engage in normal social-emotional reciprocity. The goal of this thesis, then, is to explore the following areas in regards to trauma and YA dystopian fiction: what types of traumatic experiences are modeled, how the narrative talks about the traumatic experiences, and how the exposure to these experiences could impact readers. In order to meet the expressed goal, the thesis would explore between three to four different YA dystopian fiction series, each predicated on a different traumatic experience. All the books selected have been published in the last twenty years in an attempt to discuss texts and experiences that would be familiar to current members of the YA fiction target demographic. Each chapter of the thesis would be dedicated to one series in an effort to afford the appropriate amount of time for each concept, with a final chapter at the end to discuss the impact of exposure to trauma in YA fiction as a whole.

The introduction to the thesis would contain a background on dystopian YA fiction, and situate readers within a frame of "why dystopian fiction as opposed to other YA fiction?" This is Wallace 2 where I would introduce readers to the idea of dystopia as inherently traumatic, and bring in the idea of reading these texts through a trauma theory lens. I want to explore both the positive and negative impact on readers. So, my base claim (tentatively) is that because dystopian fiction embodies trauma in ways that other genres of YA fiction don't, it possesses a unique ability to impact the psychological development of its target demographic.

For the first chapter, I would like to discuss Jeanne DuPrau's *Book of Ember* series, published between 2003 and 2008. In this chapter I would focus the discussion on trauma caused by poverty and lack of resources. The second chapter would use Neal Shusterman's *Unwind Dystology*. I'd like to use this series to discuss violations of bodily autonomy and medical trauma. Chapter three would use the pop culture icon for YA dystopian fiction, Suzanne Collins *The Hunger Games* series, published between 2008 and 2010 with a recent 2020 prequel. While

a thesis all its own could be dedicated to the multiple forms of trauma present in this series, here I would attempt to focus mainly on the trauma inherent in war and violent conflict that *The Hunger Games* portrays. Between the grotesque depictions of violence seen in the actual Games to the rebellion-war that the third book, *Mockingjay,* heavily centers, using this series would be preferable to others because of its multiple depictions of war and person-versus-person violence. The next chapter, chapter four, would feature the *Delirium* series by Lauren Oliver, published between 2011 and 2013. I thought this series would present an opportunity to talk about non-physical traumatic experiences. The other chapters talk about trauma that has a lot of physical manifestations, from the starvation of poverty to the bodily violation of medical procedures to the physical violence of war. Oliver's *Delirium* series presents an opportunity to look at traumatic relationships not through the typical lens of physical trauma—like domestic violence—but through a lens much more based in emotional trauma. I think it's important to distinguish that not all traumatic experiences are inherently related to bodily harm, and this series is the best way to reinforce that stance. Finally, chapter five would be the last chapter of the thesis and would be exclusively dedicated to both the positive and negative impacts of engaging with the traumatic content of YA dystopian fiction. The necessary sources for this chapter will be discussed later in the prospectus, in an effort to adhere to a logical organization of information.

Now that the specific types of traumatic experiences within the thesis have been covered, we can turn to the next area: how each narrative talks about trauma. In order to do this, I plan to employ several secondary sources covering multiple facets of trauma theory. Using Anne Whitehead's Trauma Fiction, particularly the half of the book that focuses on form, I plan to talk about how traumatic content informs the structural and stylistic components of each series, including the point of view, the types of literary devices used, the tone and grammatical style of each series, and how each series sequences events in time. Most of my sources are more concerned with content over form, however. Laurie Vickroy's Trauma and Survival in Contemporary Fiction, for example, focuses on the idea that traumatic fiction reflects the cultural awareness and impact of society's problems at the time of publication. This source serves as an opportunity to ground each fiction series in a historical context, adding analytical depth to the discussion of their traumatic themes. I also plan to use Ron Eyerman's article "Social Theory and Trauma" to help further my analysis by categorizing the traumatic experiences and expressions in each series according to his discussed system of cultural, collective, and personal trauma. By exploring how each series fits into these categories, I can lay the groundwork for the later discussion about impact severity on readers, and whether those impacts are positive, negative, or some combination thereof. "Trends in Literary Trauma Theory," written by Michelle Balaev, provides an opportunity to build on Eyerman's work by exploring much more explicitly how these collective-versus-personal traumas shape the language we use to talk about the significance of place and the formation of the protagonist's identity.

My next set of secondary sources pair together in an effort to highlight both the positive and negative aspects of trauma narratives in fiction. The first of these two sources, Joshua Pederson's "Speak, Trauma: Towards a Revised Understanding of Literary Trauma Theory," actually accomplishes a second purpose as well. I plan to use Pederson's article in the introduction of the thesis to ground readers in an understanding of trauma theory—both its past and present. However, within the body of the thesis, Pederson's work will function as an opportunity to discuss the positive facets of trauma fiction; namely, the fiction creates a necessary space to perform, reclaim, explore, and explain trauma in ways that factual retellings

of trauma are ill-equipped to replicate. Mark Seltzer's "Wound Culture: Trauma in the Pathological Public Sphere" complicates Pederson, however, by representing a much more negative view of trauma narratives. Seltzer focuses on fiction's ability to turn trauma into a spectacle, sensationalizing violence for public consumption. He also explores the idea that this consumption serves to create a culture obsessed with both physical and emotional suffering. To keep both of these texts anchored in the discussion of YA dystopian fiction, I plan to utilize Mathieu Donner's "Introduction: Reading the Body, Reading (YA) fiction." Donner discusses YA fiction's ability to reflect the adolescent experience while simultaneously shaping that experience, and by extension shaping the post-adolescent experience as well. Using his article gives the thesis a chance to apply Pederson and Seltzer's ideas to YA fiction's target demographic and answer questions about how trauma in YA fiction actually impacts readers.

Continuing on the subject of impact, the thesis would need to employ some psychological sources. I plan to use Jane Goodall and Christopher Lee's book Trauma and Public Memory as the beginning of my psychological discussion. While the book avoids talking about fictional representations of trauma to instead discuss real-life events, I believe the work it does to show how the public internalizes traumatic events is indispensably useful in my quest to explore how intaking traumatic narratives could affect readers. Another source to use in conjunction with Goodall and Lee's book would be the article "Secondary Trauma Among Field Researchers: Lessons from the Field," written by Amelia van der Merwe and Xanthe Hunt. Their study focuses on the various types of secondhand trauma responses that come from long term exposure to traumatic stories. The authors limit their scope to psychologists and emergency response professionals, but their comprehensive understanding of secondhand trauma and its manifestations acts as good support for the ideas in Goodall and Lee's book and can be easily applied to any group that regularly intakes large amounts of traumatic material while being removed from the actual traumatic event itself.

The final two sources I plan to use for the thesis discuss the positive impacts of engaging with traumatic narratives. Judith Herman's Trauma and Recovery talks extensively about engaging with traumatic stories as a form of healing rather than a form of traumatization. The last source I plan to use for the thesis is "Narrating Pain: the Power of Catharsis," written by Richard Kearney. In his article, Kearney asserts that interacting with trauma narratives also presents an opportunity for people to purge negative emotions from their systems in a safe and controlled environment, thus improving psychological health.

Why does this thesis matter, though? What makes the intersection of YA dystopian fiction and trauma studies worth investigating? I believe this area of literary research allows both scholars and the general public to have meaningful insight into a facet of adolescent culture. By exploring trauma as a central theme within a genre that gained traction and then exploded in popularity within the last two to three decades, we are presented with a chance to better understand the dystopian literary movement and empathize with arguably the most emotionally neglected age range that exists in Western society. I also believe this thesis could open the door for other fields to build off of its analysis in practical applications, such as exploring the use of dystopian fiction as a therapeutic tool in psychiatric settings or building educational lessons that allow high school students to analyze traumatic themes, among other possibilities.

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Meeting Schedule:

Dr. White and I will meet twice a month to discuss the progress of the project. We will keep this meeting schedule for both the Fall and the Spring. I will have the initial draft of Chapters 1-4 finished by the end of the Fall semester, and an initial draft of Ch. 5, the Introduction, and the Conclusion by the beginning of April in the Spring semester. The finished final draft of the project will be completed by May 1st of 2023

SAMPLE COMPREHENSIVE EXAM PROPOSAL & PLAN (ENG 680)

Proposal:

A year ago, I could not imagine I would be earning a master's degree in English. Reading and writing are my earliest hobbies, my first and fondest memories, and even though I've realized my personal legend (I finally read Paulo Coehlo's *The Alchemist* recently) is to end up consistently publishing my words, I did not think I'd be planning to use an English degree to supplement the bills. I leapt at the opportunity to complete this comprehensive exam exit option because I have always denied myself the purest form of learning to write—reading.

My first encounter with speculative fiction was spring 2016, during my junior year of high school. I was in the senior English IV class and my teacher, Mrs. Paddock, assigned a couple book reports. For both of mine, I stood at the front of the classroom way past the time limit and passionately told my peers why they should read Catherine Fisher's Darkwater and Obsidian Mirror. One of the requirements of the reports was to identify the genre of the book, and that's when I fell down the rabbit hole. I Googled speculative fiction and was fairly satisfied with defining it for the assignment as an umbrella term for fantasy, science fiction, and horror, as well as religious and folklore themes. Well, I'm not satisfied with that definition anymore—I want to know what, specifically, speculative fiction is capable of.

So, last December, I began pondering what speculative fiction truly was. With my boyfriend as a sounding board, I was able to somewhat narrow down what Fisher did that I had liked so much: incorporated a science fiction plot of time travel within a fantasy, specifically, a Shakespearean, setting. Eureka? Hardly, after I emailed Dr. Hamner and he shared that speculative fiction and science fiction are interchangeably abbreviated as "sf."

Through the texts and questions below, I want to become critically fluent in and further explore feminist and craft intersections of speculative fiction. In one early email exchange, Dr. Hamner sent me a "HistoryOfSF" file, and I realized I have engaged with sf before I ever encountered Fisher. C.S. Lewis? Ray Bradbury? *Alice in Wonderland*? Grimms Fairy Tales? Edgar Allan Poe? That was my childhood. One of my goals is to reevaluate these texts, as well as ones like Nathaniel Hawthorne's "Rappacinni's Daughter" and Octavia Butler's Dawn, both of which I read during my undergraduate studies, and the latter of which I absolutely was not ready for. Additionally, I want to add to my tool box: the novels and nonfiction contributions of Ursula K. LeGuin, Charlie Jane Anders, and Margaret Atwood.

The genre I most comfortably and naturally write in has always been within the realm of the fantastic. I want to mimic Fisher's (and alike's) worldbuilding, characters, and prose. My plan is to closely read (and reread) first the secondary sources and short stories and then the novels listed below. I look forward to producing annotated bibliographies, reading responses, and creative practices of mimicry so I can more intellectually address my initial and already revised questions about sf and how I can use it.

Part 1

Secondary Sources:

1. “Through Time and Space: A Brief History of Science Fiction” by Paul Kincaid
2. “On Defining SF, or Not: Genre Theory, SF, and History” by John Rieder
3. Science Fiction by Sherryl Vint
    a. Chapter One
4. Science Fiction Criticism edited by Rob Latham
    a. “On the writing of speculative fiction” by Robert A. Heinlein
    b. “What do you mean? Science? Fiction?” by Judith Merrill
    c. “The many deaths of science fiction: A polemic” by Roger Luckhurst
5. “Spectrum Orders: Digital Science Fiction and the Corrected Present” by Rebekah Sheldon
6. “Somatic Capitalism: Reproduction, Futurity, and Feminist Science Fiction” by Rebekah Sheldon
7. Octavia E. Butler (Modern Masters of Science Fiction) by Gerry Canavan

Short Stories for Sampling:

1. “The Sandman” by E.T.A. Hoffman (1816)
2. “The Murders in the Rue Morgue” by Edgar Allan Poe (1841)
3. “Rappacinni’s Daughter” by Nathaniel Hawthorne (1844)
4. “The Machine Stops” by E.M. Forster (1909)
5. “The Comet” by W.E.B. Du Bois (1920)
6. “Shambleau" by C. L. Moore (1933)
7. “I, Robot” by Isaac Asimov (1950)
8. “There Will Come Soft Rains” by Ray Bradbury (1950)
9. “The Heat Death of the Universe” by Pamela Zoline (1967)
10. “Nine Lives” by Ursula K. LeGuin (1969)
11. “When It Changed” by Joanna Russ (1972)
12. “Burning Chrome” by William Gibson (1982)
13. “Pretty Boy Crossover” by Pat Cadigan (1986)
14. “Homelanding” by Margaret Atwood (1990)
15. “The Space Traders” by Derrick Bell (1992)
16. “Think Like a Dinosaur” by James Patrick Kelly (1995)
17. “The Fermi Paradox is Our Business Model” by Charlie Jane Anders (2010)
18. “The Semplica-Girl Diaries” by George Saunders (2012)
19. “Welcome to Your Authentic Indian Experience” by Rebecca Roanhorse (2017)

With these secondary sources and short stories, I hope to maintain flexibility in the selections as my thinking continues to develop. I also plan to begin 2-3 of the novels listed below during Fall 2022 as I finish the short stories.

Part 2

SF Writers on Craft and Purpose:

1. Writing Speculative Fiction: Creative and Critical Approaches by Eugen Bacon
    a. Chapter 4: "The speculative: A problem with definitions"
    b. Chapter 5: "Genre and subgenres of speculative fiction"
    c. Chapter 11: "Short story"
    d. Chapter 12: "Targeting young adults and new adults"
    e. Chapter 13: "Critical and cultural theories"
2. Dancing at the Edge of the World by Ursula K. Le Guin
3. Never Say You Can't Survive by Charlie Jane Anders
4. "About 5,175 Words" by Samuel R. Delany
5. Thrill Me: Essays on Fiction by Benjamin Percy
6. Damn Fine Story: Mastering the Tools of a Powerful Narrative by Chuck Wendig
7. Mastering Suspense, Structure, and Plot by Jane Cleland
8. Save the Cat! Writes a Novel by Jessica Brody

Major Novels:

1. *Through the Looking-Glass*, and *What Alice Found There* by Lewis Carroll (1871)
2. *Herland* by Charlotte Perkins Gilman (1915)
3. *Out of the Silent Planet* by C. S. Lewis (1938)
4. *The Minority Report* by Philip K. Dick (1956)
5. *Something Wicked This Way Comes* by Ray Bradbury (1962)
6. *The Left Hand of Darkness* by Ursula K. Le Guin (1969)
7. *The Lathe of Heaven* by Ursula K. Le Guin (1971)
8. *The Handmaid's Tale* by Margaret Atwood (1985)
9. *Lilith's Brood* (trilogy: Dawn, Adulthood Rites, Imago) by Octavia E. Butler (1987-89)
10. *Darkwater Hal*l by Catherine Fisher (2000)
11. *Cloud Atlas* by David Mitchell (2004)
12. *Incarcero*n (has sequel titled Sapphique) by Catherine Fisher (2007)
13. *The Obsidian Mirror* (#1 in Chronoptika quartet) by Catherine Fisher (2012)
14. *Vicious* (has sequel titled Vengeful) by V. E. Schwab (2013)
15. *Station Eleven* by Emily St. John Mandel (2014)
16. *The Fifth Season* by N. K. Jemisin (2015)
17. T*he Power* by Naomi Alderman (2016)
18. *All the Birds in the Sky* by Charlie Jane Anders (2016)
19. *An Unkindness of Ghosts* by Rivers Solomon (2017)
20. *Remote Control* by Nnedi Okorafor (2021)

I also hope to maintain some flexibility with these secondary sources by sf writers and major novels, as my first readings of the secondary sources and short stories will help me identify which writers' work I want to especially focus on.

Questions for Consideration:

1. I think sf began with Mary Shelley's Frankenstein, but I also think it has been a genre dominated by white males; what do the female critics and major writers have to say about and contribute to the history of sf, as well as contemporary sf?
2. Within different cultural contexts such as feminism, race, and sexuality, how have sf writers utilized blending—and blurring—the elements of science fiction, fantasy, and horror to achieve different purposes?
    a. What demarcations among the subgenres of sf have major writers set or shifted?
    b. How have BIPOC and LGBTQIA+ sf writers used structural elements to subvert racial and heternormative cultural contexts?
3. How have film adaptations of major feminist and post racial sf novels neutered their cultural significance?
4. What are various narrative techniques sf writers have used to enable the temporal manipulation of chronos and kairos (i.e. how do they visit the future—with tech—and past—with character tropes—at the same time)?
5. Do the major writers listed above work within similar specifics (i.e. waves) of sf? How do their cultures and subcultures shift among each other?

I expect these questions to develop further and refocus as I read, write, and discuss with Dr. Hamner and my committee.

Topic: An Ideological Hierarchy of Empathy

I am a firm believer that reading makes people, individually and collectively, better. I love the Western trope of the cowpokes trading old newspapers and magazines out on the trail just to have something to read; the literate among these rugged workers would read to the illiterate. In my experience as a Western fiction consumer, the heroes would love reading while the villains of these tales would treat literacy with scorn. In my experience as an educator, these tropes do not hold. I have many students who are resistant to reading at all and always a few who revel in the fact that they do not read and when forced will only read poorly. I understand the myriad of reasons students would rejoice in their illiteracy; the jovial approach is an easy mask for discomfort for one reason. Still, I worry about the devaluation of reading, especially reading fiction, I witness my students exhibit.

Probably most simply, reading is linked to improved vocabulary. An improved vocabulary helps a person navigate the world, rapidly decoding signs, and generating best ways to express what they want. Understanding precise word choice leads not just to good speaking and listening or reading and writing. More importantly, precise word choice provides insight to communication and critical thinking.

But in my mind, the skills correlated to regular fiction reading, such as empathy and self reflection, are more important than an increased vocabulary, even as my prefered skills are more difficult to assess. Regular readers seem to understand unique perspectives and nuance better than non-readers. However, this understanding does not always bear obvious fruits as avid readers can still be jerks. I assume this disparity between empathetic skill and willful application is a place where ideology comes to play. In our country, we claim an egalitarian society. At Bettendorf High School, we claim to work to provide a place for all students to reach their highest potential. However, I recognize that such equality is not extended to all, either nationally or in our school community. As a professional educator, I want all of my students to be able to understand nuance, to empathize, and to improve on the person they were before. As I encourage my students to consider multiple points of view as being legitimate, even as our culture devalues some points of view, I will also be asking them to reflect on how they fit into these segregating ideological structures.

Further, I want to help my students develop a framework with which they can take on the difficult work of decoding the ideology they inhabit. Central to this goal, I hope to develop a curriculum that helps the students recognize which texts, if any, exemplify an egalitarian ideal, or which texts allow some to be more equal than others. Still, my students often do not bother to read; a common complaint among my professional peers is that their students do not read. Even as they are assessed with quizzes, tests, and essays, the students are not reading the fiction that has so much potential to help them become more understanding and insightful human beings.

Many education scholars advocate letting students choose what they read as the first step to get them reading. There is a level of discomfort in giving up the structure and predictability of studying novels in whole class sets. Still, I am willing to take the leap of faith, invest the hope and trust that if the students are reading then they are becoming better people with improved empathy and critical thinking skills. Embracing student choice removes me as a teacher from being the expert in a text and positions me as an expert reader. While I am great at reading prose and skilled at poetry, a problem I already see in this approach is my weakness as a reader of comics/manga and I know a large minority of my student population is going to be interested in

engaging that form. Note in the Secondary Texts a section dedicated to helping me improve as a graphic novels reader.

Another point of friction already mentioned is the unclear connection of student choice to how the texts that will help them grow. I can trust that more reading leads to increased empathy skills, but as text also indoctrinates an ideology, the students will be invited to apply their empathy skills within a framework of multiple invisible systems of oppression. Over the past year, the English 10 team has been looking to adopt a new class novel to replace Jodi Picoult's *Nineteen Minutes*, and we have considered titles such as *All American Boys* and *The Hate You Give* to help our students have a more empathetic and nuanced understanding of social tensions in America. Several of the mini-lessons I develop will need to focus on having the students build a lens to apply to whatever they are reading through which they can see what ideological power structures are being supported or challenged.

The curriculum I will be building is for BHS's Introduction to Literature 11th grade elective. Every 11th grade student has to take one literature based class: British Literature, American Literature, Contemporary Literature, or Intro to Lit. Intro to Lit is only available at teacher recommendation to students who score below the 40th percentile on their Iowa Assessments. Intro to Lit catches many resistant readers, and a few students who have outright refused to read in the past. Applying the principles of choice based reading will test the claims that when given choice all students pick up reading. Further, as BHS does not offer Intro to Lit until quarter three of the 2018- 19 school year, I will have the Fall Semester for developing curriculum, the first half of the Spring Semester for implementing the curriculum, and the second half of Spring for reflection/assessment on how the implementation went.

Questions:

1. How can I cultivate habitual readers?

2. How can I jump-start student empathy in their reading?

3. How can I help students transfer their empathy from text(reading experience) to life(lived experience)?

4. How can I help these high school students begin to grasp the implications of ideology? 5. How can I, or should I, help students understand if/when the stories they are reading are reproducing or challenging systematic forms of oppression?

6. How do I build a standards based curriculum that still focuses on decoding ideology, and can be applied to any chosen text?

7. Considering my reading list, how can I transition a racism lens to other systems of oppression: misogyny, ableism, etc.?

8. How do I know if students have critically engaged their literacy?

Primary Texts

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2013, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CevxZvSJLk8.

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2018, https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/44272/the-road-not-taken.

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10. Older, Daniel José. *Shadowshaper*. Scholastic, 2016

11. Kishimoto, Masashi. *Naruto Vol 1: Uzumaki Naruto*. VIZ Media, 2003.

12. Backderf, Derf. *My Friend Dahmer*. Harry N. Abrams, 2012.

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Jerry. *Stargirl*. Ember, 2002.

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1. Gallagher, Kelly and Penny Kittle. *180 Days: Two Teachers and the Quest to Engage and Empower Adolescents*. Heinemann, 2018.

2. Roberts, Kate. *A Novel Approach: Whole-class Novels, Student-centered Teaching, and Choice*. Heinemann, 2018.

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5. McTaggart, Jacquelyn. "Graphic Novels: The Good, the Bad, and the Ugly." *Teaching Visual Literacy: Using Comic Books, Graphic Novels, Anime, Cartoons, and More to Develop Comprehension and Thinking Skills*. Ed. Nancy Frey and Douglas Fisher. Thousand Oaks, 2008. 27+.

6. Versaci, Rocco. "'Literary Literacy' and the Role of the Comic Book Or, 'You Teach a Class on What?'" *Teaching Visual Literacy: Using Comic Books, Graphic Novels, Anime, Cartoons, and More to Develop Comprehension and Thinking Skills*. Ed. Nancy Frey and Douglas Fisher. Thousand Oaks, 2008. 91-111.

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16. Allan Luke (2012) Critical Literacy: Foundational Notes, Theory Into Practice, 51:1, 4-11, DOI: 10.1080/00405841.2012.636324.

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19. Wilhelm, Jeffrey D. *Enriching Comprehension With Visualization Strategies: Text Elements and Ideas to Build Comprehension, Encourage Reflective Reading, and Represent Understanding*. Scholastic, 2013.

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Schedule:

1. Foundational reading through Early Nov.

a. Meet with Readers in Late November

2. Turn to curriculum development in earnest Nov. - Early Jan.

a. Meet with Readers in person or online Early Jan.

3. Teach and reflect Late Jan - March

4. Reflect Finalize Apr - May

Topic: Modern Mini-Lessons for Literary Classics

As a high school Language Arts teacher, I find myself on two warring sides within my department, to use classics or to go for modern stories. When talking with other educators, many feel a loyalty to using certain classics like *The Tragedy of Romeo and Juliet* or *Lord of the Flies*, but they also see the need to bring modern literature into their classroom. The common issue when wanting to do this is the time, resources, and finances to bring modern pieces into lesson plans without removing beloved classics. This is an area that needs to be expanded upon for teachers who don't have the time or access to materials.

I took time to talk with teachers in my department to hear from them on what classics they felt they couldn't remove but were in need of modern voices. Bettendorf High School is part of an area that is growing to be more diverse. With the news of Amazon warehouses, this diversity is expected to increase. As of now, our school population is about 75% white students and 25% students of color. My school has had a long standing expectation of excellence, and it has struggled to maintain this degree in the last few years. It currently ranks 17th in the state and has about a third of the population in an economically disadvantaged background. The school has had an increase of open-enrollments, and my staff and I feel that our curriculum doesn't fit the students. The Language Arts department focuses on writing and analyzing texts as well as characterization, theme, summary, and other core topics. Students are required to take English 9, 10, a writing class, a literature class, and another elective. Our department provides one of the largest varieties of electives.

We discussed the themes of their novels and what they would hope to achieve with modern items. The six texts that I decided on were: *The Tragedy of Romeo and Juliet, Macbeth, To Kill a Mockingbird, The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn, The Scarlet Letter,* and *Grapes of Wrath*. These texts provide a range of age level, content, and time periods. While there are two Shakespeare pieces listed, he is one author that many high schools feel they need to represent and teach in some way. Providing modern connections for age groups that struggle with motivation and interest can help create new interest.

English 9 and English 10 are the two core classes that every student in the Language Arts must take; this also means that more teachers are on a PLC to teach these classes. After this, students have the choice between three different literature classes and our AP class. *The Tragedy of Romeo and Juliet* and *To Kill a Mockingbird* are taught in the general English 9 course, and the latter is also taught in our Honors English 9 course. Both of these are common in other schools, so I felt that more teachers would benefit here. *Macbeth*, *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn,* and *The Scarlet Letter* are texts from English 10 and Honors English 10. This course has less diverse material and older texts. I decided to include another Shakespeare piece because many teachers feel that Shakespeare is a necessary component in their curriculum, and I wanted to provide lessons on more than one play in order to provide teachers with the options across grade levels. The other two pieces are taught in our Honors course, and I believe that kids should have the chance to take these challenging pieces and connect them to events and situations today. They also represent different time periods in American literature that many teachers pull material from. My goal would be to create some lessons that are interchangeable among the time period pieces, but ones that are still relevant to today. The final item *Grapes of Wrath* is from our AP literature course. This piece is one of John Steinbeck's more popular pieces to be taught in English classrooms. Others may find its size intimidating and unfortunate that they don't have

time to spend reading it. I want to demonstrate to teachers how they can take pieces of a novel to use if they don't have time for its entirety, and how they can connect it to today. I think that the socioeconomic status of the characters as well as the conversations about immigration and society could provide several connections to students who read Steinbeck's work. While each of these are from different time periods, they each have the opportunity to provide students with new insight into the world today.

My plan for each piece is to create a variety of mini-lessons that can be taught throughout the unit and will only be an additional day to three days of lesson planning. Some teachers with required teaching materials may only be able to work in new content for a day or two in order to keep with their expected schedule. I want to provide opportunities for teachers no matter their situation and district mandates. These lessons will provide perspectives that fit with the characters, themes, and plot of each text. I plan to provide lessons that are free, but I also will create lessons that use additional materials such as articles, graphic novels, podcasts, parts of novels, film, and music. I also plan to suggest companion texts and text sets if teachers have the ability to purchase new materials and the time to add to their unit.

The type of materials I will be reading for this project will be a wide range of text type and demographics. From my conversations and examinations of my school's curriculum, it's clear that there are many underrepresented individuals in our school. I want to highlight and give a voice to these groups. I want to provide several different ethnicities, genders, and backgrounds in my mini-lessons. In order to accomplish this, I will create lessons where students can break into groups where they will each read different samples to discuss in small and large groups. This is also why I will be working with so many different mediums, so I can provide a thorough depiction of each group. Many of my lessons will include additional elements of discussion, exploration, and synthesizing between the classic text and new materials.

My steps to accomplish these plans

This spring semester I will:

1. Come up with a list of themes and focuses for each core classic text
2. Begin reading and examining materials and organize them based on the text type and how they can fit within the themes

The following fall semester I will:

1. After finding a variety of text types, I will begin forming three types of lessons per text: something at the beginning, middle, and end of each piece.
2. I will also create companion texts and reflections per classic text to help teachers understand the direction and choices that I made.
3. I will post my content on a website for free access. I would also like to submit my suggestions on well-known teacher websites for others to find quickly and efficiently. Some websites I will look into will be TeachersPayTeachers, ReadWriteThink, and NCTE.

Bibliography

Shout (free verse memoir)

Laurie Halse Anderson

Sweetgrass Basket (poetry novel)

Marlene Carvell

An American Sunrise (poetry)

Joy Harjo

Fresh Ink (short stories)

A variety of authors including Walter Dean Myers, Thien Pham, Jason Reynolds, and Nicola Yoon)

Ink Knows No Borders (poems memoir)

A variety of authors writing on the immigrant and refugee experience

Blackout (romance short stories)

A variety of authors including Tiffany D. Jackson, Nic Stone, and Angie Thomas

Unbroken: 13 Stories Starring Disabled Teens (short stories)

Marieke Nijkamp and other authors

Seekfolks (novel)

Paul Fleischman

Autobiography Of A Face (Memoir novel)

Lucy Grealy

Kindred (graphic novel)

Octavia Butler

Maus (graphic novel)

Art Spiegleman

American Born Chinese (graphic novel)

Gene Luen Yang

Almost American Girl (graphic novel)

Robin Ha

Learning for Tolerance (website)

https://www.learningforjustice.org/

Better Lesson (website)

https://betterlesson.com/

Mini-Lessons for Literature Circles. (Pedagogy book)

Daniels, Harvey "Smokey and Nancy Steineke.

How to Teach British Literature: A Practical Teaching Guide. (Pedagogy book)

Marlow, Elizabeth McCallum.

When Text Meets Text: Helping High School Readers Make Connections in Literature. (Pedagogy book)

King-Shaver, Barbara.

Adventurous Thinking: Fostering Students' Rights to Read and Write in Secondary ELA

Classrooms (Pedagogy book)

Blackburn, Mollie V.

The Civically Engaged Classroom: Reading, Writing, and Speaking for Change. (Pedagogy

book) Ehrenworth, Mary, Pablo Wolfe, and Marc Todd.

80 Days: Two Teachers and the Quest to Engage and Empower Adolescents (Pedagogy book) Gallagher, Kelly and Penny Kittle.

Textured Teaching: A Framework for Culturally Sustaining Practices. (Pedagogy book). German, Lorena Escoto.

For my applied project I would like to focus on the Malpass archives collection of Decker Press materials, creating and expanding online information highlighting details of the collection. The collection held by the library includes photographs, newspaper clippings, correspondence from contributors, copies of published editions, and several articles written by previous scholars on the history of the press. My goal in working with these materials is to create a useful resource for a variety of audiences, increasing awareness and ease of access.

I've always been interested in publishing in general, primarily contemporary commercial trade publishing, and I would love the chance to expand my knowledge to learn about small independent presses through the historical examination of a regional publisher. By exploring this collection, I also hope to learn more about how publications are created, communicated to audiences, and collected for future preservation. Especially this year, in light of COVID-19, accessible online information is more important than ever, as this type of communication is essential when in-person activities are not possible. How information is transformed and translated to the digital space is a fascinating process and a vital area of learning. I want to help connect people to useful and interesting historical details, enabling learning motivated by both personal interest and academic scholarship.

To begin, I seek to piece together a history of the press and the Decker family involved in its founding. Started by James A. Decker in Prairie City, Illinois, the small press published over a hundred volumes between 1938 and 1948, primarily focused on poetry. The press operated out of the back of the family drugstore, with the help of James' sister, Dorothy Decker, and published the writing of notable authors including Edgar Lee Masters, William Everson, and other poets. Despite Decker's passion and a growing national reputation as a venue for promising new voices, the press faced financial difficulties. Ownership passed from James Decker to Harry Denman and then Ervin Tax, but the business struggles continued, until the press came to a sudden end in 1950 with a murder-suicide case in which Dorothy Decker killed Ervin Tax and then herself. This is a historical overview painted in broad strokes, and I would also like to investigate the smaller details of how these events unfolded and what impact they had on the larger literary community.

Furthermore, I would like to examine the Decker Press as a case study of the small Midwestern press, situating its effects within the larger literary context. What other presses were active at the time or in nearby areas? How was the Decker Press similar or different than others publishing materials at the same time? What was the impact of such presses? Which authors were published, and what was the influence of their writing? By answering these and other questions that emerge, I ultimately hope to explore the impact of the press and how its publications remain relevant today.

Another component I hope to pursue in my project is the question of the best methods of presenting archival materials in a digital space. It is incredible that Western Illinois University has so many of these materials that have been preserved, but how might they be better showcased? What is the best way to make such information more accessible to a wider audience, so it can be better appreciated? Possessing materials is only the first step in encouraging communication, and I hope that through exploring best practices and procedures in digital archives I can create a project that continues to foster an online atmosphere conducive to learning and sharing literary history.

In determining how to present materials in a digital format, I also plan to carefully consider who the audience is, and how different presentations might be beneficial to various demographics. For example, fleshing out the Wikipedia page on the Decker Press will provide an easily accessible introduction for general audiences, and as an online collaborative resource this offers the opportunity to link new information to other existing sources so that it can become part of a larger web of information across the internet. A more academic audience will benefit from the creation of a dedicated online space with historical details. Academic researchers overlap with the audience of library patrons, who will profit from the creation of detailed finding guides that outline the contents of the collection. Although the pieces published by the Decker Press are still under copyright and cannot be reproduced, a digital version of the tables of contents or a more detailed description of what each item is about would assist more specific research. Audiences could decide which materials would be useful or interesting to them, and then coordinate a visit to the library to see the relevant physical documents.

In terms of my goals and outcomes, I have several outlets in mind in terms of showcasing this information in a digital space. First, I hope to contribute to the Wikipedia article on the press, which already exists but is only a small stub with no sources cited. Second, I hope to create or curate a digital space to share information about this collection, including items such as a timeline of events, biographies of authors involved, and a list of titles published by the press. Third, I would like to investigate the options for what I can include as part of a finding guide that would give audiences searching online a better idea of what the collection includes and how to find an item in the physical collection housed in the Malpass library archives.

Project components & deliverables:

1. Fleshing out the Wikipedia article on the Decker Press and adding sources a. Linking other Wikipedia articles back to the page on the Decker Press (for example, adding information on the pages of notable poets who were published by the press) in order to increase web traffic, reach a larger audience, and connect this information to a larger web of online research and historical information
2. Creating a website or webspace to showcase this collection, with pages/component that might include:
    a. Historical overview of the press
    b. Timeline of events in its creation, publishing history, and ultimate demise c. List of authors and titles published
3. Finding guides that outline what is included in the collection, so audiences searching for information online can see an overview of specific items
    a. Tables of Contents scanned for online viewing

The format and fine details of how this information would be presented is a component I would develop depending on what I find in my research. I would love to create something that would be hosted by WIU or possibly affiliated with the library, so that it would be preserved and easily accessible for researchers. I would also want to create a foundation that could be expanded upon by future researchers.

In terms of a timeline, I plan to meet with project director Dr. Buchanan at the beginning of each month, to discuss my progress and address any issues that have arisen. My expected date of completion is March 2021, so my committee will have time to give feedback before defense.

Preliminary Bibliography

Publishing & Small Presses

Altman, E., Pratt, A. “Rummaging through Dustbooks: An Analysis of Independent Small Presses.” *Book Research Quarterly*, vol. 3, no. 4, 1988, pp. 3-17.

Laquintano, Timothy. "The Legacy of the Vanity Press and Digital Transitions." *Journal of Electronic Publishing*, vol. 16, no. 1, 2013. https://doi.org/10.3998/3336451.0016.104

Tebbel, John William. *A History of Book Publishing in the United States*. R. R. Bowker Co., 1973.

White, Eric B. *Transatlantic Avant-Gardes: Little Magazines and Localist Modernism*. Edinburgh University Press, 2013.

Archives & Digital Preservation

Altschuler, Sari, and David Weimer. “Texturing the Digital Humanities: A Manifesto.” *PMLA*, vol. 135, no. 1, January 2020, pp. 9–22. https://doi.org/10.1632/pmla.2020.135.1.9

Gaillet, Lynée Lewis, et al., editors. *Landmark Essays on Archival Research*. Routledge, 2016.

Harvey, Douglas Ross, and Jaye Weatherburn. *Preserving Digital Materials*. 3rd edition, Rowman & Littlefield, 2018.

Lui, Alan. “Toward a Diversity Stack: Digital Humanities and Diversity as Technical Problem.” *PMLA*, vol. 135, no. 1, January 2020, pp. 9–22.

https://doi.org/10.1632/pmla.2020.135.1.9

MacNeil, Heather, and Terry Eastwood. *Currents of Archival Thinking*. 2nd edition, ABC-CLIO, 2017.

Martin, Julia, and David Coleman. “Change the Metaphor: The Archive as an Ecosystem.” *Journal of Electronic Publishing*, vol. 7, no. 3, 2002.

Pearce-Moses, Richard. *A Glossary of Archival and Records Terminology*. Society of American Archivists, 2005.

APPLIED PROJECT (Completed)

Applied Project Reflection

My inspiration for this applied project was the Decker Press Collection held by the Malpass library archives. The collection consists of numerous folders, including materials such as articles, photos, newspaper clippings, manuscript drafts, and correspondence between various authors, scholars, and individuals connected to the press. My goal for this project was to create a practical, useful resource that would be both interesting and helpful to a variety of audiences, and I also wanted this information to be available online. The Malpass library website did include a brief summary of the history of the press as well as a complete bibliography of the titles published, but for the focus of my project, I wanted to create more detailed online resources that would increase the visibility and accessibility of information in the collection. Especially with the ongoing pandemic, visits to the library archives can be difficult and access to the physical collection can be limited, so my project was centered around the goal of creating online resources that would allow a variety of audiences to learn more about the history of the press and the collection itself.

A key part of my initial vision for the project was considering how best to meet the needs of various audiences. Different demographics might have different interests or viewpoints, and I wanted to make sure that was reflected in the digital information I was providing. For example, in my work on expanding the Wikipedia articles on the press, my goal was to provide an easily accessible introduction for general audiences. Within this general overview, I also tried to use the collaborative network of information to my advantage, by considering which other topics might be linked to help readers find the page about the Decker Press and then the cited sources with more in-depth information. A fundamental part of expanding Wikipedia is thinking carefully about what audiences already know, what might be helpful in augmenting their understanding, and how to connect each new fact or detail to a larger network of information.

For the finding guide that I created for the archives website, the intended audience was academic researchers or other library patrons who would benefit from additional historical details. Although the finding guide is a condensed summary, I thought carefully about which names, titles, and other information might be useful for keyword searching, with the intention of reaching anyone searching library catalogues or the internet at large. While I might not be aware of the significance of a certain detail, a researcher with more specialized knowledge might be able to use my general guide as a starting point for more detailed analysis. In this way, I hope to facilitate further study and connections to related topics. As I worked on this project, there were inevitable changes and adjustments to my plan. Part of my initial interest in this project was the publishing aspect, and one question I wanted to investigate was the stigma of vanity presses and whether the Decker Press would fall under such a label. From my preliminary readings I learned more about the definition and negative connotations of vanity presses, which reverse the usual publishing model by changing authors to have their work printed rather than paying the writer an advance. Discussions of whether the Decker Press should be qualified as a vanity press come up several times in a few articles and letters in the archive collection; and while in the strictest sense the Decker Press might be considered a vanity press, this flattens the nuances of the situation. As author Timothy Laquintano notes in the article “The Legacy of the Vanity Press and Digital Transitions,” vanity presses have acquired negative connotations as it became “mostly taboo for authors to invest in publication and for publishers to charge authors for services.” However, in the case of the Decker Press, publications were made possible only because of author contributions. While an established publishing house will have the money to pay authors’ advances, James Decker started the press using his personal funds and his grandfather’s back

room. The collaborative financial structure that included author contributions allowed new or unknown poets to publish their work, sharing the cost of printing and production in order to gain exposure. While this element didn't make it into any of my online overviews, it was still an interesting point to discover in my research that only furthers the importance of understanding the circumstances of small presses. Additionally, as part of my original idea for creating online resources, I had hoped to scan items or documents from the Decker Press collection so that audiences could see a sample of some of the materials without having to visit the library in person. However, in consulting with the archives staff, I discovered that this was not feasible due to copyright reasons. None of the volumes of poetry published by the press are in the public domain, and I was also advised against using things like personal correspondence because determining the copyright holder would be too difficult. However, I hope that the work I have done has increased the possibility for discovery of this fascinating topic and laid the groundwork which could be expanded by someone in the future, perhaps someday when the books are out of copyright. Another change in my project was an expansion of the sources I used to inform my archival approach. Originally, I had compiled a reading list of articles and chapters from books. Many of these readings proved useful as an introduction to archival work, such as *A Glossary of Archival and Records Terminology*, which offered not only detailed definitions of various terms but also related words and broader or narrower concepts in the same category. For example, a guide in the broadest sense could be broken down into a calendar that offers a chronological inventory of materials, a summary guide that provides a brief description of the archive's holding, or scope and content note that summarizes the contents of the materials. These definitions were both informative and validating, as I saw my own vision for my project described in the definition of a finding aid as "a tool that facilitates discovery of information within a collection of records" which also "assists users to gain access to and understand the materials" (168). A key component in the definition of cataloging, for example, was the intent to "connect user queries with relevant materials" (63). These formal definitions helped me gain a fuller understanding of all the possibilities of archive resources and plan my own version for the Decker Press collection.

As I continued in my research, I discovered new sources that were also extremely relevant. Some of the most inspiring articles that I read during my research for this project included discussions on how to use new digital technologies to adapt traditional archival goals and distribute information to virtual users. Another subject that was fascinating to me was the exploration of audience engagement, as some online formats allow users to contribute to databases, assist in digitization efforts, or contribute information, in addition to simply viewing the preserved records. This theme of interactivity also came up in several articles using a pedagogical approach, in which instructors encourage students to develop collaborative communication skills as they work in these online archival spaces. This selection of readings provided useful illustrations of theoretical concepts as well as numerous case studies showing the many applications of archival philosophies.

Since online archival processes continue to develop so quickly and differ so widely, I also consulted a variety of other sources for creating a unique project. Without an official procedure or style to follow for creating an online resource, I first investigated what information was presented about other WIU collections. This varied greatly, from the 280-page guide to the Congressman Lane Evans Collection to the shorter, more narrative summary of Icarian Studies collections. I also spent time examining the finding aids from institutions mentioned in the

Decker Press collection, including the University of Chicago and the University of Kentucky, to get an idea of how other libraries structured elements such as contents, dates, descriptions, and so on. In addition, I looked at a sampling of collections from the Library of Congress to get additional ideas about typical conventions for online archives. These examples varied as well, but seeing the variety in style, form, and organization gave me ideas to incorporate into my own draft. Exploring these real-world examples gave me a practical understanding to complement the formal definitions.

Finally, as a type of meta-document related to my own process creating this project, I compiled both the readings and other resources into a guide serving a purpose similar to an annotated bibliography. This guide offers a selection of sources and sites pertaining to online archival topics that I found helpful during my own work and that I hoped might be a good starting point for anyone interested in learning more. These articles, online tools, and links to various websites could be useful for others working on similar archival projects, or anyone applying these concepts in a new area, such as the classroom. As with the rest of my project, I hope that this document could be a foundation for further expansion, as readers could add their own findings or adapt my guide for a related purpose.

While there are still many more ideas that could be developed for this project inspired by the Decker Press collection, the work I have done allowed me to develop skills of research, writing, and digital communications, and gain a more detailed understanding of online resources for preserving archival information. For example, one small detail in my process was the feedback from the archives staff after I sent a draft of my finding guide outline. I had included hyperlinks to several articles available online and pages with collection details at other institutions, but I wanted to ask whether external links would be too difficult to maintain on the website. As URLs change and pages move, the links can become nonfunctional, but the archives staff suggested that to avoid link rot, I use a stable link from the Internet Archive's Wayback Machine. This site archives snapshots of webpages, allowing users to see a page as it appeared at a given point in time, and thereby serves as a more permanent option for hosting links. Although I've used the Wayback Machine a few times before, it hadn't occurred to me as a solution for this problem; creating my own archived pages was a learning experience that expanded my arsenal of tools and broadened my understanding of contemporary archival practices. This project is the type of operation which seems never fully completed, and there were many ideas and avenues for expansion that I thought would be fascinating to explore further. However, I hope that the elements I have addressed for this project have laid the groundwork for future growth and ongoing scholarship.

Decker Press Finding Guide

2 boxes, 31 folders

Contents List:

Box 1

Bibliography, catalog

- List of titles held by the WIU special collections unit, with years of publication and some original prices noted
- Catalog from 1942 of the items published by the Press of James A. Decker. Catalog lists titles, authors, and prices of books along with blurbs from reviewers or other writers

Family biographical information

- Marriage, birth, and death certificates for members of the Decker family, beginning with the marriage of James Decker's grandfather E. E. James to Viola Singleton in 1889
- Announcements in the newspaper mentioning births, deaths, or other events involving members of the Decker family
- Brief biographical entry on James Decker from *Who's Who in the Midwest* publication, 1975
- James Decker's biography blurb from when he worked as an editor at Unity School in Lee's Summit, Missouri, 1975
- Bronze star certificate awarded to James Decker in 1945 for his military service in the Philippines **Correspondence with Sherry Swearngen (Decker's daughter)**
- Letters and emails between Sherry Swearngen and Marla Vizdal (an employee at the WIU archives) discussing details of James Decker's life and the press, dated 2004–2007
- Letters and emails between Swearngen and John Hallwas regarding a list of her father's books she had discovered in his belongings and then donated to the archives, dated 2001–2002
- Emails between Sherry and Jim Ballowe discussing his article "Little Press on the Prairie," which was first published in the *Chicago Reader*, May 3, 1996 *[see folder **James Ballowe: "Little Press on the Prairie"**]* **Correspondence, miscellaneous**
- Letters from Marla Vizdal to Celeste Benkendorf about titles she owned and about possibly donating them to WIU, dated 2005
- Correspondence between Marla Vizdal and people who have made donations to the collection ● Marla Vizdal discussing a talk she gave at the McDonough County Historical Society in November of 2004 *[see folder **Historical: Talks**]*
- Marla Vizdal's responses to various inquiries from scholars about the press
- Correspondence between Marla Vizdal and Jim Ballowe *[see folder **James Ballowe: "Little Press on the Prairie"**]* **Collection publicity**
- Articles about the collection itself held at Malpass in the Archives Special Collections Unit, including: ○ News release from WIU about donation from Eisner to the archives *[see folder **Eisner, Steve: Collection development**]*
    - Article in the *Macomb Journal*, dated September 10, 2003
    - Article in the *Macomb Eagle*, dated October 31, 2003
    - Article in the *Western News*, winter 2003

Book publicity

- Newspaper clippings and reviews, primarily from the *Chicago Daily Tribune* via ProQuest, on books from various authors published by the Decker Press, dated from 1940–1948

Books, searches and prices

- Online searches for Decker Press titles with prices from various websites and databases including AbeBooks, ILAB-LILA, Alibris, WorldCat, BookFinder, etc.

Court documents

- Legal documents concerning the ownership of the Decker Press, the purchase of the press by Ervin Tax, and the ownership of the estate of Ervin Tax after his death, from the County Court of McDonough County, dated 1949–1950

Historical: Writings

- Newspaper clippings of articles on the history of the press, including:
    - "Our Regional Heritage – Poetry and Murder: Prairie City's Decker Press" by John Hallwas
    - "Correspondence" by Will Wharton, from *Poetry* magazine in October of 1950
    - Numerous articles from the *Chicago Daily Tribune*, the Macomb *Daily Journal*, and other papers about the murder-suicide case, with information about the trial, description of the crime scene by witnesses, and photos of the scene, dated 1950
    - Articles about the publication of *Illinois Poems* (1941) and *Along the Illinois* (1942) by Edgar Lee Masters, and a few other articles about the press
    - Articles about the charges of embezzlement against Decker, dated 1949
    - Article from the *Prairie Citizen [see folder **C.R. Crabb**: **Prairie Citizen**]*

Historical: Talks given

- Copies of a talk about the history of the Decker Press, given by Marla Vizdal on several occasions:
    - September 19, 2005, for the McDonough County Genealogical Society
    - April 8, 2005, for the Retired Teachers of McDonough County
    - January 17, 2005, for the Industry Kiwanis Club
    - November 9, 2004, for the McDonough County Historical Society

Historical: Miscellaneous

- Interview with Zelma and Gilbert Dixon of Colchester (who had lived in the upstairs apartment of the Decker house in 1948) by Marla Vizdal
- Contract selling press from the Decker siblings to Harry Denman, dated 1946
- Employment contract between Ervin Tax and James Decker, dated 1948

Miscellaneous

- Materials about William Moon, possible binder for the press
- Miscellaneous papers

James Ballowe: "Little Press on the Prairie"

- Copies of Ballowe's article "Little Press on the Prairie" which appeared in the *Chicago Reader* in 1996, and in the *Illinois Times* in 2003
- Autographed poem "Blue Heron" by Martha Graham for James Ballowe

C.R. Crabb: **Prairie Citizen**

- Materials related to the *Prairie Citizen*, Decker's newspaper, which he started in May of 1941 and sold to Crabb in September of 1941
- Agreement selling the *Prairie Citizen* and its mailing list and subscribers to C.R. Crabb, dated September 6, 1941 ● Subscriber list

Authors: Sylvia Auxier materials copied from University of Kentucky

- Copies of materials from the Sylvia Trent Auxier papers from University of Kentucky
- Manuscripts and correspondence about books of poetry
- Auxier's correspondence with James Decker and Ervin Tax, including inquiries about publication details for her book *Meadow Rue* (1948), dated 1946–1950
- Several notices to Decker authors with news and administrative updates, including:
    - Letters from James and Dorothy Decker, dated 1947
    - Letters from Ervin Tax explaining his own involvement in the press and discussing the financial and technical struggles of the press, dated 1947
    - Letter from Tax announcing Decker's departure from the press, dated July 20, 1949
    - Notice from Lyle Robbins (administrator of Ervin Tax's estate) announcing Tax's death and discussing how the authors' contracts and books would be handled, dated August 11, 1950

Authors: Edgar Lee Masters materials copied from Indiana University

- Copies of materials from the Valentine–Masters Mss., 1915–1944, from Indiana University
- Correspondence between Masters and Decker about publications

Authors: Ervin Tax materials copied from University of Chicago

- Copies of materials from the Sol Tax Papers 1923–1989 from the University of Chicago
- Letters and correspondence from Ervin Tax to his brother Sol Tax, who was a professor at University of Chicago, about the press, business, and finances, dated 1948–1950
- Letter from Burton Frye about his paper, dated May 23, 1950 *[see folder **Eisner, Steve: Writings about the press (A. Derleth, B. Frye, R. Leekley)**]*
- Letters from Lyle Robbins about the late Ervin Tax's estate and press, dated 1950–1952
- Editorial report about Tax's manuscript *The Wraith of Gawain*, which was published by the Decker Press in 1948 **Box 2**

University of Buffalo: Correspondence

- Emails between Marla Vizdal and James Maynard from University of Buffalo regarding copies of materials from their collections, dated 2008

University of Buffalo: *Upward* vol. 1, no. 3

- Xerox copy of the issue: Winter 1938–39, volume 1, number 3

Eisner, Steve: Collection development

- Obituary of Steven Jack Eisner, dated 2003
- List of items and materials accompanying Decker Press books
- "History of the Decker Collection Items Assembled by Steven J. Eisner" – a narrative on how Eisner learned about the press, his investigation of its history, his visit to Prairie City, interviews he conducted with townspeople, and his correspondence with Decker

Eisner, Steve: Writings about the press (A. Derleth, B. Frye, R. Leekley)

- "Poetry in the Field" by August Derleth
- "The Decker Press of Prairie City, Illinois" which was written by Burton Frye in 1950 for ENG 354 at WIU
- "The Poet's Publisher, 1937–1950: James A. Decker of Prairie City, Illinois" by Richard Leekley **Eisner, Steve: Correspondence re: Decker Press**
- Handwritten authorization by William Everson for Steve Eisner to act as agent for materials related to *The Masculine Dead* held by Decker Press, dated April 21, 1959
- Letters from Sol Tax about Burton Frye's paper, dated December 14, 1961 *[see folder **Eisner, Steve: Writings about the press (A. Derleth, B. Frye, R. Leekley)]***
- Correspondence between Eisner and Richard Leekley discussing their research and writings on the press, dated 1975 *[see folder **Eisner, Steve: Writings about the press (A. Derleth, B. Frye, R. Leekley)]***

Eisner, Steve: Correspondence between Steve Eisner and James Decker

- Letter from Decker about details of the press, titles they published, and people involved, dated 1965
- Letter from Decker about the checklist of titles published. He also discusses the financial difficulties of the press, the sale of the press to Denman and then Ervin Tax's involvement, his own involvement in the legal trouble, the accusations made against him, and Dorothy and Tax's relationship. Also includes a brief autobiographical description from Decker, dated 1961

Eisner, Steve: Correspondence – Winfield Townley Scott

- Letters discussing the press and Scott's experience as an author
- Letters from Decker to Scott about publication details for his book and other titles

Eisner, Steve: Eisner's personal notes and checklist of book titles

- Lists compiled by Leekley and Eisner of Decker Press imprints, authors, titles, years
- Handwritten notes on titles with unknown years
- List of titles, with details on imprints, publication years, length, size, and binding color of various books **Eisner, Steve: *Upward*, vol. 1, no. 1**

- Photocopy of the summer 1938 issue, which includes poems and books reviews. James Decker was the editor, Warren L. Van Dine was the associate editor

Eisner, Steve: *Upward*, vol. 1, no. 2

- Photocopy of the autumn 1938 issue, which includes poems and books reviews. James Decker was the editor, Warren L. Van Dine was the associate editor

Authors, miscellaneous

- Bibliographies of authors including Louis Zukofsky, Kenneth Patchen, Charles Henri Ford, and Kenneth Rexroth
- Register for the David Ignatow papers from Mandeville Special Collections at the University of California San Diego

Eisner, Steve: *Upward*, Decker's copy

- Physically bound book of the first two issues of *Upward*: volume 1, numbers 1 & 2.

Multi-volume binding of Decker items

- Bound volume of four Decker Press publications and one author-related publication, including *Calendar, An Anthology of 1940 Poetry* edited by Norman MacLeod, *The Exiles Anthology of American and British Poets* edited by Helen Neville and Harry Roskolenko, *Towards a Personal Armageddon* by Henry Treece, *Paper Faces* by Nelson Del Bittner and *First Manifesto* by Thomas McGrath, published in 1940

Photographs

- Xerox copies of photos, original copies are in the Special Collections photo file under Prairie City: Businesses (Decker press)
- Pictures of the crime scene; Decker family photos and portraits of young James and Dorothy; military portrait of James; photo of Steve Eisner turning over collection to archives, dated 2003

Submitted by Graduate Student Maureen Sullivan (2021)

Guide to Archival Readings and Resources

This is my guide to online archival work, with some of the reading, resources, and other information that was helpful to me as I worked on the Decker Press project. Of course, this guide itself could always be expanded by others who wish to build from my beginnings and contribute their own experiences working with any form of online archives!

What do digital archives involve, and why are they important?

As technology evolves and communication becomes increasingly digital, the storage and distribution of historical information is also able to take new forms. In addition to being a physical place filled with boxes of papers, an archive can also be a digital space that allows wider audiences to view information. Online archival processes might include uploading scans of

documents, which serves dual purposes of preservation and distribution, or contributing information to virtual spaces that connect to larger institutional or educational systems.

Archives are important for a variety of audiences, and considering the different purposes that each demographic might have is something to keep in mind while assembling an online resource. A key function of an online archive is providing the information that could be the raw material for any number of projects: a student writing a paper for a class, a researcher tracing genealogical paths, a literary scholar analyzing a certain poet's work in the cultural context of the time, or even a computer engineer who wishes to work with the site itself to enhance digital storage or search possibilities. Increased accessibility through internet archives benefits audiences who may not be able to visit the archive in person for any number of reasons. Increased accessibility also benefits the institution and the collection itself, as more people can discover a previously unfamiliar topic and use it in their own projects.

1) Articles on Archival Areas

This is a selection of readings that I found most useful, covering a variety of topics ranging from the fundamental goals of traditional archives, ongoing transitions and translations into digital formats, possibilities for online archival resources, the participation of audiences in the creation of online sites, and case studies of how archival work was incorporated into classroom projects. These articles and books offer an excellent starting point for anyone interested in learning more about these topics, as well as mentioning other related sources for further study.

Buehl, Jonathan, et al. "Training in the Archives: Archival Research as Professional Development." *Landmark Essays on Archival Research*, edited by Lynée Lewis Gaillet et al., Routledge, 2016, pp. 256–279.

Dingwall, Glenn. "Digital Preservation: From Possible to Practical." *Currents of Archival Thinking*, edited by Heather MacNeil and Terry Eastwood, 2nd ed., ABC-CLIO, 2017, pp. 135–161.

Enoch, Jessica, and Pamela VanHaitsma. "Archival Literacy: Reading the Rhetoric of Digital Archives in the Undergraduate Classroom." *College Composition and Communication*, vol. 67, no. 2, 2015, pp. 216–242. *JSTOR*, www.jstor.org/stable/24633856.

Eveleigh, Alexandra. "Participatory Archives." *Currents of Archival Thinking*, edited by Heather MacNeil and Terry Eastwood, 2nd ed., ABC-CLIO, 2017, pp. 299–325.

Martin, Julia, and David Coleman. "Change the Metaphor: The Archive as an Ecosystem." *Journal of Electronic Publishing*, vol. 7, no. 3, 2002.

Morris, Sammie L., and Shirley K. Rose. "Invisible Hands: Recognizing Archivists' Work to Make Records Accessible." *Landmark Essays on Archival Research*, edited by Lynée Lewis Gaillet et al., Routledge, 2016, pp. 200–217. Pearce-Moses, Richard. *A Glossary of Archival and Records Terminology*. Society of American Archivists, 2005. Theimer, Kate. "Archives in Context and as Context." *Journal of Digital Humanities*, vol. 1, no. 2, 2012. VanHaitsma, Pamela. "New Pedagogical Engagements with Archives: Student Inquiry and Composing in

Digital Spaces." *College English*, vol. 78, no. 1, 2015, pp. 34–55. *JSTOR*, jstor.org/stable/44075096.

Vetter, Matthew A. "Archive 2.0: What Composition Students and Academic Libraries Can Gain from Digital-Collaborative Pedagogies." *Composition Studies*, vol. 42, no. 1, 2014, pp. 35–53.

2) Useful websites and online tools

Wikipedia (wikipedia.org)

Wikipedia is a free, collaborative, online encyclopedia that anyone can edit or expand. The goal of the site is to provide clear, factual information on a broad range of subjects, and volunteers can help by adding their own contributions. Since Wikipedia is often a starting point for general audiences, this is a great way to provide a basic overview of a topic and then provide sources that link to more detailed or in-depth information.

Useful links:

Introduction / About page: Gives an overview of Wikipedia's mission

Manual of Style: A detailed guide to Wikipedia's house style

Guide to Citing Sources: Overview of what kind of sources to use as references for articles and how to cite the information from them. These requirements for the use of reliable scholarly sources overlap with the types of sources often used for academic works and the type of attribution needed for many papers. Information must be from a credible source, and information must be rephrased or cited to avoid plagiarism. For students or other academics who already have experience with integrating sources, this can be a great way to put those skills into practice in a new context. Students or scholars who have access to academic databases (JSTOR, EBSCO, etc.) through their institution are also in a prime position to be able to synthesize information from those sources for a publicly accessible platform. Guide to Wikilinks: A guide to creating and editing the internal links which connect Wikipedia's many pages into an interconnected whole. This web of information helps readers find related topics and understand the context of the topic they are learning about.

Community Portal: A great starting point for new users, and a central hub to find new projects, join group efforts, ask questions, or consult references.

The Internet Archive (archive.org)

The Internet Archive is a digital library focused on offering scholars, researchers, students, and the public online access to a wide array of materials. In addition to books, the archive also includes videos, images, web pages, audio recordings, and software.

Useful links:

The Wayback Machine: Archived captures of webpages, preserved so users can see how a certain site appeared at a certain moment in time. This is a great resource for finding older pages that might have been taken down or changed, and it can also be used as a tool for preventing link rot by adding a capture of a page that will be preserved in the archive.

Project Gutenberg (gutenberg.org)

Project Gutenberg's mission is to create a free online library of eBooks of texts in the public domain. Their efforts seek to digitalize, archive, and distribute these literary works by making them available on the internet. Anyone can volunteer as a proofreader and help to check a scanned page against the text generated by OCR (optical character recognition) software and correct any errors. Participating in one of the three rounds of editing that a text undergoes as it is transformed into an eBook is a great experience to see behind the scenes of how texts are digitized, and it also offers insight into both the site's archival system and its philosophy of creative, collaborative efforts for the general public.

Library of Congress (loc.gov)

What Are Finding Aids? This page offers a brief overview of what a finding guide is and also includes extensive guidelines for the best practices on the more technical side of creating archival navigation documents. Digital Collections: Browse hundreds of online collections or search for a specific collection by subject, format, or date. Examining the assorted finding guides can be a great way to get a sense of possible organizational structures for online guides and how to present information including collection overview, contents list, and index terms.

Some examples of institutional archives:

- Western Illinois University: Archives and Special Collections
- University of Chicago: List of finding aids
- University of Kentucky: Searchable list of research guides
- Purdue University: e-Archives Digital Collections, which includes digital scans of original documents from various collections
- Cornell University: Searchable list of archival guides, as well as Digital Collections available online
- Online Archive of California: Provides access to collection guides from many institutions in California **Timeline of Events**

1917 – James Decker is born in Prairie City, Illinois

1921 – James Decker's younger sister Dorothy is born

1934–1936 – James Decker attends Park College in Missouri

1937 – James Decker returns to Prairie City, purchases a small press, and starts the Press of James A. Decker

1938 – Decker publishes *Upward*, a literary magazine that includes poems and book reviews
1940 – James Decker marries Florence Rhodes

1941 – Decker starts a newspaper, the *Prairie Citizen*, selling it a few months later

1941 – Edgar Lee Masters agrees to publish his collection *Illinois Poems* with the Decker Press
1942 – *Along the Illinois*, a second volume by Edgar Lee Masters, is published, which brings additional national attention to the press

1943–1945 – while James is serving in the military, Dorothy continues to work at the press

1945 – Decker is awarded Bronze Star for service in the Philippines

1946 – Facing financial issues, Decker sells the press to Harry Denman

1948 – Denman sells the press to Ervin Tax, who shortens the name to the Decker Press

1949 – Decker leaves Prairie City and moves his family to Kansas City

1950 – Dorothy Decker and Ervin Tax are killed in murder-suicide

1959 – Steve Eisner begins investigating the story of the Decker Press

1976 – Death of James Decker

2003 – Steve Eisner donates his materials on the Decker Press to the WIU archives

2004–2005 – Marla Vizdal gives a series of informational talks on the history of the Decker Press **Individuals related to the Decker Press**

The Decker family:

Eldon E. James and Viola Singleton: James Decker's maternal grandparents; Eldon owned the drug store where the press was set up

Arthur and Ulah Decker: James Decker's parents, married in 1913

Florence Rhodes Decker: James Decker's first wife, married in 1940

Sherry Swearngin: James Decker's daughter

Nicholas Decker: James Decker's son

People who are frequently mentioned in collection materials:

Harry Denman: local businessman and lumberyard owner, who purchased the press from James Decker in 1946

Ervin Tax: Chicago author whose manuscript *The Wraith of Gawain* was scheduled to be published by the Decker Press, but when it was delayed, Tax came to visit Prairie City to check

on its progress and ended up buying the press from Denman. He was involved in the administrative coordination of the press until he was killed by Dorothy Decker in 1950.

Sol Tax: Ervin Tax's brother, who was a professor at the University of Chicago

Edgar Lee Masters: author of *Illinois Poems* (1941) and *Along the Illinois* (1942), which Decker convinced him to publish with the Decker Press

Sylvia Auxier: author of *Meadow Rue*, which was published by the Decker Press in 1948

C.R. Crabb: purchased Decker's newspaper, the *Prairie Citizen*, in 1941

Lyle Robbins: the administrator of Ervin Tax's estate after Tax was killed by Dorothy Decker in 1950 *(A complete list of authors published by the Decker Press is available in the bibliography of titles)*

Scholars who studied the history of the press

James Ballowe: author of the article "Little Press on the Prairie" (published in 1996) on the history of the Decker Press

Steve Eisner: donated materials he had collected related to the Decker Press to the archives after researching the history and story of James Decker's life and publications

Richard Leekley: author of the article "The Poet's Publisher, 1937-1950: James A. Decker of Prairie City, Illinois"

John Hallwas: archives researcher and author of several articles on the history of the press, including "Our Regional Heritage – Poetry and Murder: Prairie City's Decker Press"

Marla Vizdal: employee at the WIU archives who investigated the story of the press and expanded the collection of Decker materials

Buron Frye: wrote a paper on the history of the press titled "The Decker Press of Prairie City, Illinois" in 1950 for ENG 354 at WIU

Overview of Wikipedia Work for Decker Press

1) Expanding the article

The first element of my applied project that I worked on was fleshing out the Wikipedia article on the Decker Press. Wikipedia is a free online collaborative encyclopedia that anyone can edit or expand. Volunteers build from the work of others with the goal of creating informative articles on a wide range of subjects.

I wanted to start with expanding the Decker Press article on Wikipedia because it is an accessible, easy starting point for general audiences seeking information about a topic. For many people looking for a basic understanding or introduction to a subject, a quick internet search is the first step. Wikipedia is frequently the first search research on Google for many topics, and Google will often generate a sidebar summary for the reader drawing information directly from the Wikipedia page. It is with this theme of connection in mind that I hoped to add more information, so that an interested audience can be directed to the several articles that provide an overview of the press, or perhaps even to WIU's archive collection. There was already a page started for the Decker Press, but it was a stub, meaning that it was very short without many details or sources.

Decker Press

From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia

The **Press of James A. Decker** was a poetry publishing house once located in the tiny hamlet of Prairie City, Illinois. The Decker Press received national attention in the 1940s, when it published work by famous authors like Edgar Lee Masters, August Derleth, Hubert Creekmore, William Everson (Brother Antoninus), David Ignatow, Kenneth Patchen, Kenneth Rexroth and Louis Zukofsky.[1]

The Archives and Special Collections Unit at Western Illinois University Libraries is the single-largest holder of materials from the Press of James A. Decker. Archives staff has compiled a complete bibliography of Decker Press books with a listing of which books are currently held there. Other materials include unpublished typescripts about the Decker Press and James Decker, correspondence, newspaper clippings, and historical articles.

References [edit source]

1. ^ "The Decker Press - Article by John Hallwas". www.connectotel.com. Retrieved 2020-10-29.

This article about a United States publishing company is a stub. You can help Wikipedia by expanding it.

Categories: Book publishing companies based in Illinois | Defunct book publishing companies of the United States | United States publishing company stubs

The article before my additions:

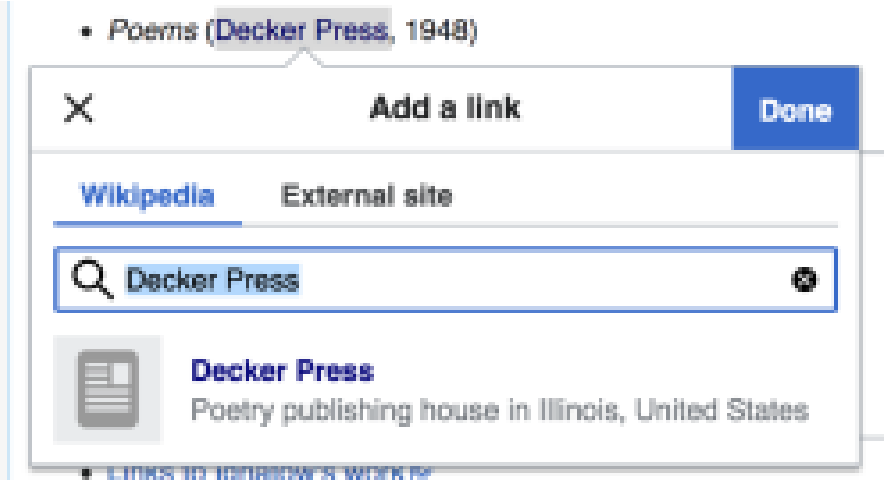
I expanded the lead section of the article, which serves as an introduction to the topic and gives a basic summary of the article. I also created several additional subsections, including a brief family summary, a historical overview of the press, and a list of notable authors. By adding these additional details and multiple sources supporting this information, I hope to create a foundation which, in the spirit of Wikipedia, can continue to grow as it is expanded by others.

2) Adding links

The second component of my work on Wikipedia was the creation and insertion of numerous internal links, or wikilinks. Wikilinks connect web pages together, directing readers toward related topics and increasing traffic to articles. This is important not only for readers but also other potential editors: people with additional knowledge or sources on a subject can't add it if they don't know an article on that topic exists. In the guide for new editors, wikilinks are described as "one of the key components of Wikipedia," as they unite all the individual pages into an interconnected whole. In this way, each article is part of a larger informational network.

I started the process of inserting links back to the Decker Press page simply by searching for mentions of "Decker Press" in Wikipedia. I found several pages that listed the press as the publisher of various authors' works, but those mentions did not usually link to any further information about the press. After finding those handful of pages where the press was mentioned

by name, I also searched for other authors whose names frequently came up in articles about the history of the press or whose work was frequently mentioned in archive materials. For those authors' pages, I added either the relevant title that was missing from their bibliography or a sentence or two that mentioned the press's publication of their work. Once I found pages related to the Decker Press, I could easily add links with Wikipedia's Visual Editor by highlighting the term; existing articles matching that term will pop up.



Adding a link in Visual Editor

List of wikilinks added on related pages:

1. 1949 in poetry

2. August Derleth

3. Carlos Bulosan

4. David Ignatow

5. Edgar Lee Masters

6. Edouard Roditi

7. Gilbert Maxwell

8. Herbert Bruncken

9. Hubert Creekmore

10. Kenneth Patchen

11. Kenneth Rexroth

12. Lorine Niedecker

13. Louis Zukofsky

14. Marshall Schact

15. Objectivism (poetry)

16. Park College

17. Robert Friend

18. Thomas McGrath

19. Tom Boggs

20. William Everson

21. WIU (library systems)

3) Adding redirect and disambiguation pages

Something that I noticed while adding the links was that automatic link generation doesn't work if the term doesn't match the title of the existing article exactly. You can still type in a different term to find a different page to link, but I realized that this posed a barrier in making connections between pages and inserting links. The original name was "The Press of James A. Decker" which was later shortened to simply "The Decker Press," so articles of authors used both names. To avoid confusion on the readers' part and to make sure all mentions of the press were linked back to the central article, I created redirect pages for "The Press of James A. Decker" and "Press of James A. Decker" which would automatically reroute readers to the main Decker Press article.

Message shown at the top of the page when readers click on a redirect link

In a similar vein, I created a disambiguation page for "James Decker" since the existing redirect page automatically took readers to the page for the 2000 film *Animal Factory*, which

includes a character named James Decker. This redirect page that helps readers find exactly what they are looking for increases the traffic to the page, makes the information easier to find, and reduces any confusion about similar terms.

One initial reason I was interested in working with Wikipedia is because it is a unique form of online writing that blends the collaborative interaction of social media with the informative communication of academic papers. Wikipedia does have its own Manual of Style that prescribes style and convention, and the sources required for article citations are very similar to scholarly sources required for academic writing. In this part of my project, I enjoyed the opportunity to become familiar with a new style of writing, as I gained experience in tailoring writing to a certain audience and gained skills in a new type of online communication.

APPLIED PROJECT (Completed)

HYPERMASCULINITY AND THE ABSENCE OF THE BLACK LESBIAN: NOLA DARLING IN SPIKE LEE'S SHE'S GOTTA HAVE IT

by ISHIMINE GOINS

An Applied Project
Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of
WESTERN ILLINOIS UNIVERSITY
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
for the Degree of
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English
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Approved By: Roberta Di Carmine, Ph.D., Chair
David Banash, Ph.D., Committee Member
Barbara, Lawhorn, MFA., Committee Member

ABSTRACT

This applied project functions in two parts: (1) A critique of hypermasculinity showcased through Black bodies in American cinema through the case study of Spike Lee's She's Gotta Have It—to illuminate the absence of Black lesbian bodies in mainstream film, and; (2) A scripted documentary that represents the creative outcome of this analysis. As the objective of my applied project responds to the following studies of feminist, queer, gender, race, and psychoanalysis—I will investigate the construction of Black masculinity and its effect upon the existence and visibility of multifaceted Black female bodies shown in mainstream cinema. I will examine the visibility and inclusion of queering subjects among Black female bodies in American cinema in order to identify gender normalities and hypermasculine privileges and disadvantages. In exploring representations of Black bodies in film, this project will study Black narratives and discuss essential problems concerning the lack of visibility and sexuality granted to Black female characters. The primary reference for this project is Spike Lee's 1986 film She's Gotta Have It. I will also briefly refer to Lee's 2017 Netflix series She's Gotta Have It (it should be noted, currently there is only one season available), in order to determine to what extent these two narratives challenge or submit to traditional gender normalities and patriarchal systems of hypermasculinity. Furthermore, my examination of Black female bodies is supported by the feminist critique of bell hooks to show how Black female experiences are affected when co-existing in patriarchal systems of hypermasculinity. This project also expands upon the scholarly works of Laura Mulvey to consider how applications of the maze gaze portray female objects as spectacles of to-be-looked-at-ness from the feminist perspective—as Mulvey

contends, the male gaze is a dynamic device that allows viewers to see the effectiveness of psychoanalysis incorporated between the active male and passive female. Furthermore, in applying the Lacanian concept of the mirror stage, this project aids to illuminate the fundamental process of recognition and misrecognition. As Black bodies in mainstream cinema pursue the development of self, applying "the unattainable object of desire" (also known as objet petit a) to the misrecognition of Black queer women in cinema provokes conversation concerning the constructiveness of Black bodies due to hegemonic exclusion.

Lastly, imbedding the scholarship of Judith Butler—and the notion of 'gender performativity' allows this project to stress the stigma of binary constraints placed upon gender and sexuality through the visibility of choice and desire. The lack of visibility given to Black queer women has promoted a much needed discussion regarding images of Black bodies through the history of mainstream cinema. To this end, this project will expand the discourse as I study holistic representations of Black bodies that subsequently permit the absence of the Black lesbian character in mainstream cinema.

INTRODUCTION

Composed with images of Blackness and sexuality, Shelton Jackson Lee—otherwise known as "Spike" Lee, released his film *She's Gotta Have I*t to mainstream cinema on August 8,1986, at the age of 29. Ten days earlier in Los Angeles California, on July 29, 1986, I too was born into the soundscape of Blackness. Over the years I witnessed the significance in Lee's voice within Black communities during times of turmoil and distress. As the Los Angeles riots of 1992 erupted in response to police brutality and the brutal beating of Rodney King, the Brooklyn New Yorker delivered a message in the form of his 1992 film *Malcom X*. Although Lee is well known for his political and race related narratives, the director of the 1989 film Do the Right Thing resurfaced his 1986 directorial debut *She's Gotta Have It* in the 2017 Netflix series. Partnering with the streaming phenomenon, Lee joined forces with Netflix to direct and produce the racially-charged, culturally-aware, sexually-fluid and reconstructed Nola Darling in the 2017 Netflix series *She's Gotta Have It.* The resurfacing of the film generated a sense of nostalgia for those familiar with Nola Darling, Mars Blackmon, Jamie Overstreet, and Greer Childs. Season one of the Netflix series contains ten, thirty-minute episodes that provoke timely conversations of Black sexuality, Black bodies, and Black masculinity. In addition, the presence granted to the returning character Opal Gilstrap, illustrates a shift in culture pertaining to the representation of Black female sexuality and independence. Lee's "modernized" character, Opal Gilstrap, encompasses a narrative of her own as she is presented to viewers as business owner and the mother of an adolescent daughter. Opal Gilstrap's character exhibits an extreme shift in representation compared to Lee's 1986 character whose sexual preference was deemed highly problematic for the male characters in the film, along with the media outlets in the eighties who often depicted the character as a pariah in the realm of her male competitors. Nevertheless, Lee's 2017 Netflix series reveals Opal Gilstrap as the equal competitor in the conversation of men in Nola Darling's life, erasing the previous censorship around the discourse of lesbianism and creating inclusivity concerning topics of choice and desire.

Spike Lee's 1986 film *She's Gotta Have It* may well classify as a romantic comedy (rom-com). However, during the eighties, this film provoked many conversations from film critics pertaining to the genre and the relationship between Black filmmakers and their execution of the genre. Scholar Mark A. Reid discusses the genre of "Urban Black folk comedy" in

connection to Spike Lee in his 1993 book Redefining Black Film. Reid contends that Urban Black folk comedy (often referred as Black comedy) alludes to any form of "Black-oriented comedy whose laugher is not evoked through an objectified racial other but might objectify other groups, such as women, homosexuals, and certain social classes, within and outside this community" (93). While I am partially in favor of Reid's argument, I would argue that we must also take into consideration the year in which the book was written. In my experience as a viewer of various film genres, there is a distinction in mainstream cinema that compartmentalizes Black films within a subgenre disassociated from the original genre. This separation inadvertently creates Black films and Black television shows in juxtaposition to white normalized, hegemonic images in mainstream cinema. As Reid discusses the recurring pattern shown in the framework of cinematic pictures, Black filmmakers in present day are working to modify the previous stigma associated in the language and image of Black comedy. In the last decade, an array of Black creators have penetrated the space of large screen productions and mainstream cinema, inserting eclectic images of Blackness to irradiate the image of the "objectified other." Black directors such as Ava DuVernay (*A Wrinkle in Time,* 2018; *When They See U*s, 2019), Barry Jenkins (*Moonlight,* 2016; *If Beale Street Could Talk*, 2018), Issa Rae (*Insecure*,2016—), Ryan Coogler (*Black Panther,* 2018), and Jordan Peele (*Get Out*, 2017; US, 2019), add to the collection of Black films and television series that illuminate the narratives of Black lived experiences which co-exist among white hegemonic images on television and mainstream cinema.

As a result, Black content creators like Emmy Award winner Lena Waithe employ their visibility and Black experiences as Waithe has done from the lens of a queer woman from Chicago to illuminate Black bodies and culture. Within her writing for season two of Netflix's Master of None (2017), her Showtime drama series The Chi (2018—), and recently within her televised rendition of the 1992 rom-com film Boomerang, Waithe demonstrates the importance of Black visibility as she extracts Black narratives from disassociated subgenres and integrates Black experiences in reflection of society. This transformation illustrates how genres such as "Urban Black folk comedy" can modify its narrative to produce images and language associated with the Black lived experience without ostracizing queers, women, etc. Although the expansion of the Black narrative continues to increase over time, large traces of Mark Reid's analysis linger in the content of numerous cinematic productions today. In critical response to Lee's 1986 romantic comedy, Reid contends that, "*She's Gotta Have It* typifies the urbanized Black comedy film in which the absence of white characters prevents the film from reflecting a racially dualistic world" (94). Others, such as Stanley Crouch also recognize Lee's persistent narrative and obsession with race and sexuality. Stanley Crouch's response to the 1989 film *Do the Right Thing*, as noted by Reid to facilitate his argument, demands some consideration as he "criticizes Lee's appropriation of Black idioms to create a racist vision of American justice" (105). When associating idioms to Blackness and culture, the evolution of Black sound is accentuated. Black poets like James Baldwin, Neale Hurston, and Ralph Ellison were often referred to as noisy authors in reference to their incorporation of Black sound in their poetry. Sounds of Blackness integrated the soundscape of whiteness after slavery. This would include the sounds of Black vernacular and Black laugher as it "challenged the acoustics of white power and served as a weapon in the struggle for political and social justice." I refer to this conversation of Black noise to demonstrate the power associated within the voice and image of the Black experience once integrated within the hegemonic soundscape of whiteness.

Spike Lee's films are continuously recognized through his distinctive usage of camera techniques to exhibit concepts of superiority and weakness. His controversial narratives have distinguished his sound of Blackness through a catalog of films susceptible to time. For instance, the resurgence of Spike Lee's voice in the 2017 Netflix series *She's Gotta Have It* provided Lee wider exposure to newer and younger audiences after the 2016 presidential election of Donald Trump. Fully cognizant of political confrontation, Lee provided a voice of Black experience to the discussion surrounding Trump who has visibly promoted hatred toward people of color, women, queer communities, immigrants, and the list continues. Producing a space to address pressing issues concerning race, police brutality, sexual harassment, gentrification, sexual fluidity, and bigotry is beneficial in furthering the aim of normalizing the inclusivity of Black experiences. To this end, newer audiences unfamiliar with Lee's confrontational voice and tactic may refer to previous themes illustrated in the films *School Daze* (1988), *Jungle Fever* (1991), *Get on the Bus* (1996), *Chi-Raq* (2015), and *BlackkKlansman* (2018), in order to understand the imperativeness of the soundscape of Blackness. Thus Spike Lee's culturally developed 2017 adaptation of *She's Gotta Have I*t, expansively explores the evolution of the Black bodies while delineating reflections in society through the progression of his storyline and characters. As present day culture demonstrates the importance of self-love, Lee utilizes Netflix's platform to accentuate the physical image of Black women and illustrate visibilities of trauma associated with sexual assaulted women. It is explicitly clear then, that the now 61-year-old creator and director of the 1986 film incorporates a sense of reparation for the disreputable rape scene between Nola Darling and Jamie Overstreet. In a 2017 interview with Craigh Barboza of The Hollywood Reporter titled "Spike Lee Talks 'Black Klansman' Movie and Why He Regrets the Rape Scene in 'She's Gotta Have It' Film", Lee states, "People always ask me if there's one thing I could take back, a do-over. The first thing I say is the rape scene in the original film from 1986." In the political climate of the #MeToo era, this is not the first time the director has vocalized his regret for the scene in which Nola Darling is raped and slut-shamed by her lover Jamie Overstreet. Lee also expressed this sentiment during a 2014 Deadline interview with Mike Fleming Jr., as he referred to the sequence by saying, "It was just totally stupid […] It made light of rape. If I was able to have any do-overs, that would be it." Lee's regret demonstrates the exigence for Black creators to repurpose the narratives told concerning the lives and experiences of Black bodies. However, one can also argue that Lee's 2017 narrative surrounding the adulterated relationship between the now married Jamie Overstreet and Nola Darling supports the stigma concerning Black character archetypes and the relationships between Black women and married men.

Going forward, I will use the works of Richard Dyer and his critique of the political movement of queer expression to query existing conversations concerning the function of social constructions, and whether it authorities inclusivity to create visible space for Black lived experiences. In regards to his work, Dyer discusses extending identifications to class, race, and geographical locations, which paired with my research to provide support relating to the contrast of Black queer narratives and how they are portrayed in mainstream cinema. Therefore, I plan to illustrate through the works of Dyer how Black "lesbian culture has suffered from the same invisibility as women's culture" in relation to the existence of Black hypermasculine characters. In addition, using the scholarship of Dyer and his respect to queer theory, I will argue that race functions as a displacement operation within the characteristics of Black queer women to enable a sense of conformity that is then applied to the visibilities of the queering subjects in film. Because the patriarchal system associated with mainstream cinema utilizes punishment to

dismiss Black female sexuality, characters who are portrayed as lesbian, transsexual, and bisexual, are always presented as problematic for the hypermasculine subject in the film. Specifically, focusing on Black female bodies, the goal of this project is to explore Black female sexuality in mainstream cinema in accordance to the connection of punishment elicited by Black masculinity.

In conjunction with Richard Dyer, this project expands the contention of a list of scholars whose theoretical arguments validate the themes and discussions presented within this project. I will refer to the works of Maria Filippo, Nick David, and Mercer Kobena to address aspects of identity and sexuality as described through film and society. Maria Filippo in her book The B Word: Bisexuality in Contemporary Film and Television dissects the exclusion of bisexuals within the spectrum of homosexuality in film and Queer Theory. Leading with the question, "Why is the female lead (or leads') bisexuality only faintly acknowledged, an elision with significant consequences for that film's interpretation?" (15). Filippo's work is useful in my analysis of *She's Gotta Have It* protagonist Nola Darling, and her relationship with Opal Gilstrap. Nick David in "Closet Dramas: Masculinity and Claustrophobia in William Friedkin's Films," dissects masculinity and homosexuality into three parts: masculine-coded genres; the scrutiny of one-dimensional characters and film formalities. David's argument in relation to perpetuated stereotypes in film, support related studies concerning masculine coded characters that assume the role of macho in conversations of patriarchal identities and one-dimensional characters. Lastly, Mercer Kobena in "Dark and Lovely Too: Black Gay Men in Independent Film" discusses the burden of Black representation in film, and the importance of creating a community that inspires queer creators to speak with the voice that was previously silenced in mainstream cinema. Kobena states, "We habitually think of identity in mutually exclusive terms, based on the either/or logic of binary oppositions. As Black lesbians and gay men we are often asked, and sometimes ask ourselves: "Which is more important to my identity, my Blackness or my sexuality?" (742). I use the scholarship of Kobena in this project to engage conversations of multifaceted Black identities and to combat the ridiculousness that suggests Black bodies are holistically unable to celebrate different aspects of identity—specifically Blackness and sexuality. By examining the work of Dyer, Filippo, David, and Kobena, I will synthesize a queer critique of mainstream cinema through the case study of Spike Lee's *She's Gotta Have It*.

PART 1: HYPERMASCULINITY AND THE ABSENCE OF THE BLACK LESBIAN: NOLA DARLING IN SPIKE LEE'S SHE'S GOTTA HAVE IT

Whereas the focus of Black sexuality plays central to Nola Darling and her sexual conquests, it is the presence of men in Nola Darling's life that provides an illustration to the complex nature and visibility associated with hypermasculine characters. As audiences were introduced to Mars Blackmon, Greer Childs, and Jamie Overstreet in 1986, Spike Lee utilized his film She's Gotta Have It to introduce three distinctive Black male characters, amid a time in American when Lee felt that Black men served as the object of ridicule for Black women and white men. During a 1986 Film Comment interview by Marlaine Glicksman, she questioned Lee concerning the motive behind his 1986 Brooklyn based film She's Gotta Have It. As Glicksman asks, "Is this film about blacks or men and women?" the 29-year-old independent pioneer states:

> I think my love of women is reflected in the work. But I think this film should be the antidote to how the black male is perceived in *The Color Purple* […] Jamie is a full-bodied character, unlike Mister in *The Color Purple* and the rest of the film's black men, who are just one-dimensional animals[…] because if you read Alice Walker's work,

> that's the way she feels about black men. She really has problems with them (Spike Lee: Interviews, 9).

Black female creators vocalized their opinions and lived experiences through the lens of being a Black woman in America. The responses from Black men were exchanged through various forms of artistic expression such as music, poetry, art, and literature, as illustrated within the works of Richard Wright. To this end, Black women such as Toni Morrison, Zora Neale Hurston, Octavia E. Butler, Maya Angelou, bell hooks, and Alice Walker, have increasingly expanded the discourse concerning the Black female experience. Therefore, in 1985, as the adaption of Alice Walker's novel *The Color Purple* transcends through the artistic direction of Steven Spielberg and the Black bodies of Danny Glover, Whoopi Goldberg, and Oprah Winfrey, Spielberg's film *The Color Purple* became a revered spectacle among audiences. Furthermore, Danny Glover's character "Mister" evolved into an archetype alongside the Black Brute, Jezebel, and Zip-Coon, which provoked Black men together with Spike Lee to vocalize their disdain regarding the unflattering narratives of Black men. Perhaps the elongated silencing of the voice of women elicited the urgency for narratives, which mirrored the reality and lived experiences of Black women in America. The voices of these women, once ignored, created a ripple in the soundscape of Black male voices. The voice of a Black man who refuses to see the substance of a Black woman is a potential threat to the language and existence of women. One could argue that Lee's despisal of Walker's characterization of men in *The Color Purple* hypothetically provoked the rape of Nola Darling in the 1986 film *She's Gotta Have It.*

A deconstruction of the film's title engages a conversation about the meaning of "It"—that "She's Gotta Have." In her 1979 book *Pornography: Men Possessing Wome*n, Andrea Dworkin, states, "Sex, a word potentially so inclusive and evocative, is whittled down by the male so that, in fact, it means penile intromission. Commonly referred to as "it," sex is defined in action only by what the male does with his penis. Fucking—the penis thrusting—is the magical, hidden meaning of "it" (23). An echoing of the previous statement from Dworkin lingers in the words of the 1986 film's character Jamie Overstreet, as he proclaims to Nola, "You don't want me to make love to you. You want me to fuck you" *(She's Gotta Have It*, 1986). The scene continues, as Nola Darling and Jamie Overstreet engage in what audiences shortly identify as rape. A patronizing Jamie Overstreet continues to force himself upon Nola Darling as he repeatedly asks her, "Is this the way you like it? Huh?" (*She's Gotta Have I*t, 1986) In reference to the previous interview as Spike Lee proposes his film *She's Gotta Have I*t is the "antidote to how the Black male is perceived," I counter this proclamation by asking: how do Black men perceive this imagery as, the antidote? And what is the response to this archetype of masculinity?

Before embarking through a noble saturated list of Black scholarly responses on the treatment and visibility of Black women in mainstream cinema, it is noteworthy to include the discussion by scholar Jared Sexton on the relationship between Black masculinity and social perceptions. In his book *Black Masculinity and The Cinema of Policing* (2017), Sexton argues that the images of Black men are persistent casualties to a society that recites upon stereotypes to speak to its current perception. The consequences of media inclination in America have produced a profound instability toward the accurate depiction of Black imagery. Sexton states, "The appearance of blackness in an antiblack world produces a crisis of category; the lines between and among the most salient binary oppositions become unstable, subject to inversion or oscillation or indistinction, including: cop/criminal, citizen/slave, white/black…and so on" (161). Therefore, as evolutions of the Black Brute stereotype continues to label Black men as criminal components in the public eye, stigmas are distributed as deterrents for prominent racial

congruency. As gender norms and social implications for men are automatically perceived through the patriarchal lens of masculinity a question arises, what does the image of Black masculinity in connection to its relationship with slavery say about Black men? Within strategic procedures of emasculation within the media, Black men are continuously subjected to humiliation and mental traumatization from their normal contexts. Sexton acknowledges the need for positive reaffirming images of Blackness, masculinity, and sexuality in film. Sexton then illustrates reinforced stereotypes within his analysis of Berry Jenkins' 2016 film *Moonlight*. In the powerful narrative of self-discovery and identity, Sexton notes how Jenkins valorizes Black masculinity and its defining images of Black male bodies. Lead male characters Juan (Mahershala Ali) and Chiron (Alex Hubbert; Ashton Sanders; and Trevante Rhodes) perform within the narrative of self-perpetuating power inscribed within the patriarchal system of masculinity. I believe that Moonlight presents audiences a multitude of Black identities that serve within the function of heterosexual Black masculinity. Juan's identification functions in the displacement of the Black motherly figure, as the reverse placement of the fatherly figure works accordingly to theorize the absent Black mother thus allowing audiences to view the anti representational structure of Black motherhood in Black cinema. As Chiron's character functions within the coming of age story, his mother demonstrates her resistance to the Black queer identity, which subsequently produces an absence of maternal love. The lack of ontological position of the Black femme allows the protagonist to seek proxies in Juan. Therefore, within the spectrum of Black male bodies, Moonlight's Chiron and Juan exemplify multifaceted versions of Black male images while demonstrating the inclusiveness of Blackness and sexuality as both men assume positions within the functionality of Black masculinity.

In connection to the previous discussion of masculinity, it is imperative to include the discourse of Laura Mulvey in association to Spike Lee's devotion to Black male characters. In films including *Do the Right Thing* (1989), *Jungle Fever* (1991), *Mo' Better Blues* (1990), *Malcom X* (1992), and *He Got Game* (1998), Lee's recurring male characters prevail as dynamic functions affiliated through the infrastructure of Black masculinity. This consideration allows an application of Mulvey's argument from her groundbreaking 1975 essay "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema." In her work, Mulvey illustrates the patriarchal strategies of mainstream cinema, as she notes that, "the spectator identifies with the main male protagonist, he projects his look onto that of his like, his screen surrogate, so that the power of the male protagonist as he controls events coincides with the active power of the erotic look" (41). Therefore, the aforementioned films starring Wesley Snipes, Denzel Washington, Samuel L. Jackson, and Isaiah Washington, each offers male audiences an identifiable image to project the gaze of the relatability to the Black male. For example, as the 1992 premiere of *Malcom X* shadowed the 1992 Rodney King LAPD (Los Angeles Police Department) acquittal, Lee gained an audience that sought representation and answers to the problems in society. During the riots of 1992, Black communities were actively seeking retribution for their mistreatment. As art imitates life, film has the ability to examine society and strategically place constructed heroes as the surrogate for desired identities. Lee's fixation with images of Black male bodies allowed Denzel Washington's character in Malcom X to firmly assert powerful ideologies of Black male bodies as a beacon to restore the vandalized image of Blackness. Recently this display was shown in Black communities around the world during Marvel's release of Ryan Coogler's film *Black Panther* in 2018. As *Black Panther* broke records across the country, the predominantly Black cast, led by Black director Ryan Coogler, provided the culture a sense of pride and dignity through the visibility of Black empowerment. While some compared their emotions to the

inauguration of president Barack Obama, others responded by embracing their African heritage during a political climate that fails to respect the lived experiences of people of color. Both *Malcom X and Black Panther* illustrate the power in reaffirming narratives. However, contrastingly, the images of hypermasculinity as illustrated through the male characters in She Gotta Have It demonstrate Black male images in alliance with excessive aggression and stereotypical behavior. While examining the historical presence of Black masculinity post-slavery, the liberation of Black bodies coexisted in the patriarchal system of hypermasculinity. In the discussion of sexual abuse and masculinity, Richard Wright demonstrates the synonymy of Black images associated with sexual criminality and hyper-Black masculinity. In his 1940 novel *Native Son,* Wright offers his protagonist Bigger Thomas as the embodiment of the Black Brute stereotype as Bigger Thomas utilizes rape as a psychological device for fear and patriarchy. Bigger thereby perpetrates societal implications used to demonize Black masculinity and sexuality. This examination permits an application of the work by Robert Jensen, as he notes in his essay "Patriarchal Sex" that, "Sex is fucking. In patriarchy, there is an imperative to fuck—in rape and in 'normal' sex, with strangers and girlfriends and wives and estranged wives and child. What matters in patriarchal sex is the male need to fuck. When that need presents itself, sex occurs" (63). As illustrated in Native Son, the mirroring of patriarchal performativity in Bigger Thomas illustrates the hypermasculine response to the "imperative to fuck." As the novel contains two-separate occasions in which Bigger Thomas absorbs self-empowerment through the physical act of rape, an insertion of the work of bell hooks can be used to emphasize the general association between sex and power. bell hooks asserts that, "Equating manhood with fucking, many Black men saw status and economic success as synonymous with endless sexual conquest […] patriarchal sex was not only the medium for the assertion of manhood; it was also reconceptualized in the space of Blackness as entitled pleasure for Black males" (*We Real Cool: Black Men and Masculinity*, 66-67). For this reason, the dominant imagery associated with male characters in Native Son and She's Gotta Have It works similarly to display concepts associated with the kinship of manhood, sexuality, and masculinity.

The discourse of Black bodies has ventured through the scholarship of experts to examine the structuralized categories of Black narratives. In the physical realm of the body, scholar Judith Butler describes the construction of self and identity as performative actions and language. In her 1993 book *Bodies That Matter,* she discusses the social construction of identity as her main argument stems from the ideology of self. Butler demonstrates through the analogy of childbirth and notes how "[. . .] the use of language is itself enabled by first having been called a name, the occupation of the name is that by which one is, quite without choice, situated within discourse" (122). Butler asserts that humanity enters the world as a blank canvas with the functionality to adapt exclusively by language. The concept of name is then used to warrant a sense of identity and ownership of self, while extracting from the construction of gender. In the preservation of identities associated with the construction of Black bodies, language is constructed within the soundscape of Blackness to escape the inscriptions provided by others. This endeavor is currently shown in the present-day language of Black culture as reaffirming language is sought to replace negative connotations in society. Language and imagery akin to Black bodies is highly restrictive within the use of Black sensibilities. Case example of restrictive language is the consecrated use of nigga, as its redefined usage in Black culture exemplifies the power of language and communal use within the soundscape of Blackness. Michael Dyson describes Butler's performative theory in relation to the inherent language and speculations created on the foundation of the Black enslaved body. During slavery white slave owners fetishized the Black

bodies of men and women by emphasizing the size of the Black male penis and sexualizing Black women in acts of rape. Michael Dyson notes that, "[. . .] black sexuality was cloaked in white fantasy and fear. Black women were thought to be hot and ready to be bothered. Black men were believed to have big sexual desires and even bigger organs" (*The Michael Eric Dyson Reader*, Dyson). In consequence, much of the language associated with Blackness is prescribed as tactic to diminish the image and language of self. Butler addresses this in *Bodies That Matter*, as she notes "This "I," which is produced through the accumulation and convergence of such "calls," cannot extract itself from the historicity of that chain or raise itself up and confront that chain as if it were an object opposed to me, which is not me, but only what others have made of me" (122). To illustrate the social assignment of language and its effect to the canvas of self, examining the first sequence in Spike Lee's 1986 film *She's Gotta Have* It demonstrates the ramification of sexualized language, as Nola Darling's first words in the film state, "I want you to know the only reason I'm consenting to this is because I wish to clear my name […]. Some people call me a freak. I hate that word. I don't believe in it. Better yet, I don't believe in labels" (*She's Gotta Have It*, 1986). The sequence briefly describes the detrimental power in ascribed language since viewers are reluctant to disassociate the labels due to the associated actions of the character throughout the film. Parallel actions are performed by male characters in the film, which activate systemic language and conventions associated with the Black male body.

As performative actions and language require maintenance to sustain roles adopted by societal implications, gender performativity caters to the name and representation inscribed in the identity of masculine and feminine bodies.Thus, the characterization of natural and unnatural governs the idea of creation and maintenance, creation being the biological product of sex as maintenance caters to gender and the state of being preserved through social constructions. As previously discussed through the scholarship of Judith Butler and the analysis of Michael Dyson's work, Black bodies have functioned through systemic designations of language, which inadvertently forces oneself to succumb to an ideal role in society. I have demonstrated with Richard Wright's character Bigger Thomas of Native Son that his ultimate demise is constructed by the narrative of the Black Brute because he has accepted the language, thus preserving white-patriarchal-systemic coded binaries for Black bodies to promote fear. Therefore, the language incorporated in Spike Lee's film *She's Gotta Have It* illuminates the misogynistic language associated with masculinity. With the inclusion of catcalling and sexualized language in the film, audiences are subconsciously referred to the social construction of gender binaries as the interpretation of sexual language translates fixed ideas and notions about masculinity and femininity. In the film, Nola Darling describes two types of men, "The decent ones and the dogs," as, she adds, "It seems that men are taught not to be in touch with themselves" (*She's Gotta Have I*t, 1986). The ideology of hegemonic masculinity attempts to provide an all-inclusive structure for the patriarchal system of maleness. Black scholars have worked adamantly to integrate Black masculinities in the conversation of literary scholarship. Due to the lack of accurate inclusivity, cultural and historical discrepancies were found in corresponding gender studies as hegemonic masculinity proposes the notion that masculinity is central to the image of boy/man. However, examining Black male bodies in juxtaposition to white male bodies means that language emphasizes invisibilities of separative cultural experiences and the historical image of the Black male body.

Previously I have associated masculinity portrayed and embodied by the image of Denzel Washington in Spike Lee's 1992 film *Malcom X* to provide context surrounding the importance of actively placing desired identities within the context of constructed heroes and reaffirming

images in Black culture. To this end, Michael Dyson states “Malcom X is the unifying cultural signifier for the powerful premise of an overhauled black masculinity within a broad variety of contemporary black cultural expressions, the vibrant hero of a black juvenile cultural imagination seeking to contest the revived racism and increasing social despair of American life” (*The Michael Eric Dyson Reader*). Scholars in gender studies often suggest that masculinity is comprised through gender roles deemed appropriate, or essential, for the adolescent boy transitioning to manhood. Black scholarly interpretations of masculinity have generally deemed it impossible to incorporate the Black male body into the hegemonic cannon of gender studies due to the ‘narrow’ representation of maleness and masculinity that excludes the physical and physiological barriers inscribed through slavery and racism. From the initial conversation of Lee’s 1986 *She’s Gotta Have It*, the overall personage of Mars Blackmon, Jamie Overstreet, and Greer Childs, is strictly based upon Black lived experiences, languages, and expressions of Black masculinity challenged by pre existing infrastructures. The rooted purpose of the rhetorical language inscribed in slavery was to erase the concept of self while degrading the image of Black bodies. In *Scripting the Black Masculine Body: Identity, Discourse, and Racial Politics in Popular Media*, Ronald L. Jackson II argues that, “devaluation and objectification of Black bodies arrested any agency to define the Black self, but also intercepted any public valuation of Blacks as subject. Subjectivity was owned by Whites” (14). This passage provides leverage and understanding to Lee’s preoccupation with the Black male body. It is essential to briefly discuss the state and condition of Black masculinity after slavery before coherently allocating the presence of hypermasculinity in relation to the male characters in Spike Lee’s 1986 film *She’s Gotta Have It*. It is imperative to articulate the exclusion of Black bodies associated with visibilities in society. As the abolishment of slavery prompted the nation's need for reconstruction one must evaluate the ambiguities associated within this period. The Black bodies of men and women were deconstructed from the image of slaves (as previously deconstructed from the image of self), they inadvertently transitioned into the realm of self-discovery. To this end, the subjective process of dehumanization enforced upon Black bodies allows an application of performative language as prescribed within the system of white patriarchy. In the 1967 book *Black Skin, White Masks,* Black philosopher, psychiatrist, and activist Frantz Fanon investigates the relationship of Black bodies to their oppressors to clarify concepts of inferiority complex and its function within the adopted language that emulates development of self. Fanon states, “[…] the black man is presented with a problem: how to posit a “black self” in a language and discourse in which blackness itself is at best a figure of absence, or worse a total reversion?” (xv). The importance of language associated with Butler's concept of a name provides leverage to the discourse of self and representation. Fanon vocalizes that the desire to be considered and the reluctance of oppression is the key to recognition. He continues by stating that, "Man is human only to the extent to which he tries to impose his existence on another man in order to be recognized by him. As long as he has not been effectively recognized by the other, that other will remain the theme of his actions" (168). Fanon’s ideology permits an examination of performative actions, subjected language, and ideas inscribed by oppressors to support the relatedness in acts of rape and sexual demonizing behavior within the structure of Black masculinity. I would like to quickly refer to a passage from Michael Dyson in which he asserts the functionality of white fear and fantasy created the language and imagery surrounding beliefs that, “Black men were believed to have big sexual desires and even bigger organs” (*The Michael Eric Dyson Reader*). Therefore, agreeing with Fanon’s ideology of Black bodies in slavery, I suggest Black masculinities were performatively confined by language, ideas, practices, and behaviors ensued

in slavery, thus projecting this resentment in the defiance of the Black female body to obtain a sense of self.

I have contended to explore the lasting effects of emasculation techniques applied to Black male bodies merely in preparation to examine the ramifications of the dehumanized subjectivisms of Black female bodies. When taking into consideration why Black bodies were stripped of their essence in slavery, I wish to link Judith Butler's theoretical concept of self and performativity to Jacques Lacan's 1936 concept of the mirror stage to suggest that Black bodies imitated the language and behaviors ensued through slavery as they sought a new conception of self. The functionality of the mirror stage illustrates the fundamental process of recognition and misrecognition. This development of self is referred to in Lacanian scholarship as "I," as The Works of Jacques Lacan: An Introduction (1986) states that this ideology "inaugurates an identification with other human images and with the world the subjects share with them" (58). Authors Bice Benvenuto and Roger Kennedy continue stating that, "The primary conflict between identification with, and primordial rivalry with, the other's image, begins a dialectical process that links the ego to more complex social situations" (58). In the context of slavery, the foundation of America elicited exclusions of equality for Black bodies, thus the commentary applied to Black bodies illuminates an absence of recognition in complex social situations. However, in the context of enslaved and post-slaved bodies, social complexities surrounding Black language in soundscapes of whiteness validate the invisibilities of Black bodies at all times. Psychoanalysis describes social identities as both learned and practiced, thus subjected performative conditions of Black bodies during enslavement allows the insertion of the unattainable object of desire *(objet petit a*). Applying the notion of unattainability adjacent to the concept of self further promotes discourse of hegemonic exclusion as applied to Black bodies. History illustrates the disenfranchisement of Black bodies (specifically Black male bodies), therefore the creation of the Black brute stereotype (post-slavery) exemplified the white societies fear of Black male otherness. In *We Real Cool: Black Men and Masculinity*, bell hooks responds to the universal imagery and language connected to the identity of the Black brute arguing that, "At the center of the way Black male selfhood is constructed in white-supremacist capitalist patriarchy is the image of brute—untamed, uncivilized, unthinking, and unfeeling. Negative stereotypes about the nature of Black masculinity continue to over determine the identities Black males are allowed to fashion for themselves" (x). As hooks notes that "white-supremacist capitalist patriarchy" created the language and caricatures to vilify Black bodies, Spike Lee's work then derives from the lived experiences of Black men and the totality of Black culture. Narratives that revolve around the seriousness of Blackness provide visibility to Black masculinity, sexual politics, and subjugation of Black women. Lee has worked diligently to create multifaceted versions of Black male bodies, as previously inspired by his disapproval in Alice Walker's Black male characters in *The Color Purple* (1985). However, as Lee previously referred to the men in Walker's novel as "one-dimensional animals," he appears to imitate Walker in his composition of Black female characters.

The moral philosophy of Spike Lee's work is continuously assessed by film critics and scholars. In the1987 March edition of *A Women's Liberation Magazine*, Karen Alexander scrutinized the visibility of Black female characters in Lee's 1986 film *She's Gotta Have It*. In her editorial "She's Gotta Have It," Alexander questioned the lack of depth shown to Nola Darling's relationships with other women in the film as she notes, "We get little or no information about Nola and her existence outside of her relationships […] Why is she shown receiving little of no support from her women friends, one of whom, a lesbian, is 'cheaply'

represented making 'advances' to Nola when she is in a low emotional state" (32). Alexander highlights problematic elements in the narrative concerning the women in Lee's film. Identifying the characters' lack of organic chemistry amid other women denotes stereotypes and performative language associated with Black female bodies and their speculative incapability to maintain stable relationships with other Black women. Summoning Lee for his "cheap" representation of the of Black lesbian, Alexander considers the language used in connection to Opal Gilstrap to be conflicted and also nurturing to negative stereotypes. The meticulous detail in the absence of female relationships exemplifies the independent woman archetype. Darling's estranged relationships with women tend to revolve around her relationships with men and work. In another analysis by Felly Simmonds, the attempt to define the visibility of Black female bodies in Lee's film is investigated in the performative language and actions of Nola Darling. In her article, "She's Gotta Have It: The Representation of Black Female Sexuality On Film," Simmonds examines the language and images designated to Black female characters as she notes that "Nola is curiously isolated, not only from other aspects of her life—her job, her family—but also from genuine female friendships. Her independence excludes female solidarity and female politics. The film does not allow us to establish why she chooses not to have female friendships" (16-17). Deconstructing female presence in the context of a romantic comedy illustrates a pictorial of reinforced stereotypes acclimated within the function of signifying images. In the introduction of my project, I have briefly described Mark Reid's position in relation to race and genre, and discussed his sentiment when he states that, "laughter is not evoked through an objectified racial other but might objectify other groups, such as women, homosexuals, and certain social classes" (93). This remark provides a gap of measurement to examine the images and language associated with Lee's romantic comedy alongside a cookie-cutter example of romantic comedy and female relationships. One of the best examples provided by mainstream American cinema, is without any doubt the 1953 *Gentlemen Prefer Blondes*. Employing Howard Hawks' film in this discussion of Lee's *She's Gotta Have I*t allows the examination of racial cinematic normalizations associated with the signifying notion of woman. One of the best examples that can be looked upon is the relationship between Marilyn Monroe's character Lorelei Lee and Jane Russell's character Dorothy Shaw. Analyzing the surface image of Lorelei Lee, and Dorothy Shaw, both women are structured to present the exterior/interior image of femininity. Therefore, within the binaries of gender and social norms, neither character is suggested to disrupt the natural order of desire due to their heteronormative fixation toward men. However, the missed moments in the film occur when the mask of womanliness is removed by Dorothy Shaw while masquerading as Lorelei Lee's protector and during the ending wedding sequence as her wife. Film scholar Jane Gaines suggests that a queer viewing of the film would indicate a romantic relationship between the women as they are "only for each other's eyes." White privilege in mainstream cinema permits characters to actively explore sexuality without the constraints of society. This example from the 1950s further displays sexual liberations afforded to white women, while illuminating restrictions of race, which is exemplified in a film during the 1980s. Due to race relations in mainstream cinema in the 1950s, Lorelei Lee and Dorothy Shaw are permitted functional relationships with each other while the illustration of Nola Darling's estranged relationships with women gratify invisibilities associated with Black female bodies.

The previous analysis juxtaposed narratives of each film in the differentiation of performative actions, language, visibilities, race, and sexuality—as a queer reading of Gentlemen Prefer Blondes acknowledges the presence of lesbianism between Lorelei Lee and Dorothy

Shaw, the narrative surrounding the absence of female relationships in *She's Gotta Have It* provides the leverage to thoroughly examine Nola's delicate relationship with Opal Gilstrap. Before delving into a discussion on the queer approach taken to analyze the relationship of Nola Darling and Opal Gilstrap, it is necessary to refer to the discourse of Black queer studies to explore modes of presentation and language as associated with the politics of Black bodies. In *Black Queer Studies: A Critical Anthology*, E. Patrick Johnson and Mae G. Henderson explore the narratives of Black sexuality and its manifestation in gender-sex hierarchy as they state, "Given the status of women (and class not lagging too far behind) within black studies, it is not surprising that sexuality, and especially homosexuality, became not only a repressed site of study within the field, but also one which the discourse was paradoxically preoccupied" (4). The saturated paradox of Black masculinities is visible enough to encompass homosexual identities —despite the distain associated in Black language that oscillates the acceptance of queer Black men. An example that demonstrates the performativity associated with Black masculinity can be found in Berry Jenkin's *Moonlight*, thus allowing the narrative to display the inclusivity of Blackness and sexuality. The adolescent Chiron is punished by the kinship of hypermasculinity due to his characteristics of weakness and feminine qualities. However, once Chiron is arrested for exhibiting aggressive and disruptive behavior his identity transposes within the subjective performative language associated with Black masculinity. This functional process allows the acceptance of his homosexual existence through the masquerade of hypermasculinity.

Referring back to the scholarship of Johnson and Henderson, I would like to note the authors state, "One must learn to be a man in this society because manhood is a socially produced category. Manhood is a performance, A script. It is accomplished and re-enacted in everyday social relationships' ' (192). I further contend that the notion of performativity predates the movement of Black studies as enslaved Black bodies functioned within the narrative of performative actions and language. The Black man's need for affirmation inadvertently causes the Black women in their lives to provide the provisions of performative actions and words of support that function within the patriarchal system of gender and sex. It is thereby his constant need for affirmation and performativity including sex and reproduction that poses a threat to the existence of the Black lesbian. In connection to Lee's film, Opal Gilstrap's sexuality produces a threat to the male characters due to her performative language that announces her dismissal of the phallic symbol. As the character's first expressions in the film declare, "At a young age, I knew where my preference was and I pursued it" (*She's Gotta Have It,* 1986), this notion of performative language functions as a threat to the male gaze while producing a sense of fetishism to the male audience. In *The B Word: Bisexuality in Contemporary Film and Television*, Maria Filippo illustrates what she refers to as missed moments concerning the unexplored archetype of the bisexual character. This is often left without representation in the realm of mainstream American cinema as I recently described discussing the missed moments between Lorelei Lee and Dorothy Shaw in *Gentlemen Prefer Blondes*. Lacking the depth to provide contextual relevance in the film, Gilstrap's character self-identifies as lesbian and functions accordingly within the binaries of homosexuality and heterosexuality. It is the relationship she shares with Nola Darling that ensues missed moments of unexplored Black female sexuality. To this end, Filippo questions, "Why is the female lead's (or leads') bisexuality only faintly acknowledged, an elision with significant consequences for that film's interpretation?" (15). Implying that the identity of the bisexual character is invisible allows Filippo to apply the scholarship of Judith Butler as she argues that, "The illusion of a sexuality before the law is itself the creation of that law"—bisexuality is rendered (in)visible, to conceal the challenge it poses to monosexist

assumptions'" (15-16, Filippo). Before further examining the challenges of Black masculinity as associative to the presence of the Black female lesbian, it is necessary to refer to the scholarship and works done by Laura Mulvey to assist the deconstruction of fear associated with Black masculinity in response to the queer Black woman. I have previously asserted that Mulvey's male gaze helps illustrate the projection of Blacks' looks in connection to desired identities and reaffirming images of masculinity. Mulvey's male gaze also helps illustrate the projection of Black looks in connection to patriarchal strategies of mainstream cinema. In "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema," Mulvey further describes the devices and distinctive modes of the male gaze, such as scopophilia, voyeurism, and fetishism, which are vital to the concept of to-be-looked-at-ness. In connection to Lee's film, I borrow from Mulvey's notion of the male gaze as a dynamic device allowing viewers to see the effectiveness of psychoanalysis incorporated between the active male, and passive female. Therefore, the essential essence of Nola Darling depends heavily on Mulvey's concept of to-be-looked-at-ness in the lesbian presence of Opal Gilstrap, as her sexuality assumes the position of the male gaze. This exposure of Opal Gilstrap illustrates the image of a woman who poses a threat to the male viewer by her lack of penis (Mulvey, 42). Hence the language of Opal Gilstrap signifies associations to an unhindered sexuality and promotes castration anxiety that is resolved through the demystification of the female object. Her sexuality thus provokes activation of the male gaze, and audiences become surrogates of the screen as she momentarily possesses the instruction and power of the male lead.

Punishment and forgiveness co-exist within the visibilities of Black queer characters. Although privy to all images and languages associated with the spectrum of queerness, I am interested in examining the lack of multifaceted Black queer women as related to representation in mainstream media as well as the subjectivisms of punishment and forgiveness through acts of religious rebirths. Michel Foucault, generally associated with theories addressing the essence of mankind, examined human behavior when exposed to punishment and reform. In his 1975 book Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison he states that "In discipline, punishment is only one element of a double system: gratification-punishment. And it is this system that operates in the process of training and correction" (180). The narratives of Black queer women echo the sentiments vocalized by Foucault. As the visualization of "training and correction" is demonstrated frequently amid the presence of Black queer sexuality, director Jordan Peele briefly illustrates this sentiment in his 2017 film *Get Out*, as the film's missed moment exists in the relationship of Georgina (Betty Gabriel), and Rose Armitage (Allision Williams). Throughout a large portion of the film, Georgina solely identifies to audiences as the Black female house attendant to the Armitage family, but in the last sequence of the film the audience learns that Georgina was once romantically involved with Rose Armitage. In a queer viewing of the film, this minor detail illustrates a layered form of punishment that incorporates Foucault's idea of "training and correction." The Black queer woman is punished several times within the film. Once in the initial betrayal by Rose, again as her queer identity is stripped, and lastly as her Blackness is stolen and corrected with whiteness. Inevitably, Georgina's demise fulfills the prognosis of Black queer punishment—despite Chris' attempt to save the "guilty object." Georgina's queer narrative thus enables the sentiment of Foucault, as she is punished through the procedure of "training and correction." The connection to Black lesbian characters and their demise or absence in mainstream cinema suggests a correspondent between patriarchal punishment and the previously explained notion of castration anxiety.

Corresponding to the rape of Nola Darling in the 1986 film *She's Gotta Have It*—it is necessary to employ Michel Foucault's concept of "training and correction" in response to reasoning behind the sexual assault of Nola Darling by Jamie Overstreet. In prefacing the feminist scholarship of Laura Mulvey combined with the post-structuralist stance of Michel Foucault, I am able to assess the functionality of the male gaze and how it operates as a measurement of correctness in spaces of other. For the purpose of my argument, I will assign queerness to the concept of "other" in order to explain how queerness is related to power in a patriarchal society. An individual who assumes the role of "other" governs their identity separate from the notions of societal constructs and binary laws. Having the authority of choice and desire creates a destabilizing other who challenges the subjectivity of fixed identities. This specifically promotes fear in patriarchal societies that thrive within structure and rule hence the other contains a destabilizing power that threatens the existence of classifications and fixed binaries. For the heterosexual male, his power lies within his preoccupation of the phallic symbol. Once the other reject the penis or threatens it by lack of desire, Mulvey states, "The male unconscious has two avenues of escape from this castration anxiety: preoccupation with re-enactment of the original trauma (investigating the woman, demystifying her mystery), counterbalanced by the devaluation, punishment or saving of the guilty object" (42). Deconstructing the visibility of Black queerness through Foucault's theory of "training and correction" creates a connection to the edifying language and operations associated in Black religion and punishment.

Earlier within my project, I referred to an episode of the Netflix series Master of None, where Black queer creator Lena Waithe—producer, screenwriter, and actor, demonstrates the narrative of the Black coming out story. I purposely denote the narrative of Blackness, as it is often necessary to apply Black as a functioning adjective for experiences. In juxtaposition to hegemonic stories of queerness, Black queers find commonalities in the language and stories associated with the Black church and Black communities. While Waithe demonstrates the value of religion in associated images and performative function of gender normalcies, she creates a sensible narrative that illustrates the coming of age story of a Black queer girl. As I examined the variances in storytelling from the perspectives of the Black queer, to the conservative perspectives of other, I came across an article by Richard Dyer titled "Gays in Film," where he confronts heteronormative principles associated with gay representation in film. He states, "We have tended to condemn images of gayness in the name of aesthetic concepts and values that are highly problematic. We've tended to demand that gay characters and themes be represented according to certain ideals" (15). These words by Dyer illuminate two main principles of my argument. First, the rhetoric and ideals associated with the Black church condemn queer images of Blackness in film based upon its disruptive nature to Black masculinities and fear associated with castration anxiety. Secondly, the visibilities of Black bisexuals and feminine lesbians are slightly visible in film based upon the masquerade of conformity in their appearance. As femininity endorse the spectacle of to-be-looked-at-ness, sexuality does not prohibit the distinctive modes of the male gaze i.e., scopophilia, voyeurism, and fetishism unless the mask of womanliness has been removed, thus, provoking castration anxiety.

To this end, I would like to point out another cinematic work, *Master of None*. In its "Thanksgiving" episode, queer writer and producer Lena Waithe, illustrates the narrative of a non-conforming other through the queer development of her character Denise while demonstrating organic depictions of Black queer visibility and the disruptiveness of the

unmasking of femininity. Audiences first view Denise fashioned in a pink dress and matching hair bows. In that regard, I think it is necessary to briefly refer to Judith Butler in association to the performative function of clothing. Butler notes that, "Gender norms operate by requiring the embodiment of certain ideals of femininity and masculinity, ones that are almost always related to the idealization of the heterosexual bond" (176). In correlation to the narrative of "Thanksgiving," the storyline demonstrates the rejection of femininity as Denise disrupts her gender allegiance with society as she refuses to wear a dress. Denise adopts the role of "other" and transposes from a dress to an oversized shirt, baggy-pants, sneakers, and backward hat. Denise thus removes the mask of femininity and assumes the position of her desired role, while accommodating her concept of self. Therefore, the masquerade of gender specific clothing permits ambiguous associations with sexuality and language. I would like to clarify that I use the term masquerade in reference to how film scholar Mary Ann Doane applies the concept of masquerade when she notes that, "Womanliness is a mask which can be worn and removed" (427). Doane also adds that, "The masquerade's resistance to patriarchal positioning would therefore lie in its denial of the production of femininity" (427). As the character's relationship with clothing help signify performative actions, her relationship to the masquerade functions within the realm of gender constructions. This is seen in society as it associates gender-signifying symbols- to items of clothing to punctuate gender roles. Insomuch as queer ambiguities are frequently discussed within the scholarship of queer studies, they are regularly utilized in queering communities to categorize both identity and sexual preference.

Because identity labels often mirror heterosexual hegemonies, I want to briefly examine the visibilities of Black queerness in film, specifically the juxtaposition of Black femme queers, and Black masculinized queers, as shown in mainstream cinema. Examining the character of Opal Gilstrap from Spike Lee's *She's Gotta Have It* demonstrates an image that works in accordance with concepts of femininity. Despite her locality in preference in women, Gilstrap's visual presence evokes the distinctive modes of the male gaze. I refer again to Mulvey in this passage to conceptualize the focus of the male gaze as it applies to the female body. When deconstructing the physical appearance of the Black masculinized queer, it is evident that all attributes of femininity and frailness are stripped from the subject in order to adopt roles of masculinity. In most cases this performative function includes the binding of her breast and camouflaging her natural curves to remove the mask of womanliness. In the mirroring of heterosexual performativity, Spike Lee's character Jamie Overstreet illustrates the heterogeneous response to the knowledge of Opal's sexuality. Although Opal's identity does not warrant the removal of womanliness, the character resides in the realm of visibilities accessible to Black bisexuals and feminine appearing lesbians. Ronald L. Jackson II refers to this notion when he affirms that "Black men have the ability to be oppressor and oppressed, so the value of their bodies is often argued to be greater at times. The double-bodiness, involving race and gender, of Black women requires extra work to meet social expectations. I would contend that the resistance to positive representations of Black women in American popular media is very intense" (70). In connection to the visibility of Black queer characters, this narrative is often visible in mainstream cinema and television as the characters coexist alongside the patriarchal structure of masculinity that reveals a preoccupation with female's lack of penis. Applying this concept to a prominent infrastructure such as the Black church illustrates akin notions associated to the patriarchal structure of masculinity. I want to briefly employ the knowledge of castration to the doctrine of Rev. Adam Clayton Powell, Sr., as his rhetoric generated fear in

Black communities as he alludes queerness to abandonment. In an essay by Angelique C. Harris titled "Homosexuality and The Black Church", she provides a passage from Powell's 1939 autobiography, that refers to his sermon in 1929 that stated, "[. . .] men leaving their spouses for other men, and women choosing to never marry and instead engaging in relationships with other women"(262). These ideologies mimic concepts of castration in Black narratives of queerness. Illustrating the effects of hypermasculinity as the male character is threatened by the existence of Black queer bodies functioning without the desire and need of the penis. Black women who embody masculine images are considered extremely disruptive to the modes of the male gaze, rarely seen apart from the inclusive space provided in independent film, as their image stifles hypermasculine characters due to the threat against normalized concepts and values. That being said, the exceptionality in which these images appear in mainstream cinema are often associated to a narrative, which exhibits formalities of punishment and correction i.e., masculinized queer is murdered, or raped.

In the social narrative of Black queerness, there must be an ally that understands the importance in the aesthetic of representation. In the beginning stages of this project, I was motivated by two important factors, 1) my lived experiences as a Black masculinized queer and, 2) the lack of visibility given to the spectrum of individuals akin to myself. James Baldwin once said, "The American idea of sexuality appears to be rooted in the American idea of masculinity. Idea may not be the precise word, for the idea of one's sexuality can only with great violence be divorced or distanced from the idea of the self" (*The Price of The Ticket: Collected Nonfiction*). During the political climate of today there must be continued progress toward the inclusion and visibilities of all forms of self. There is not an agenda to force queerness in spaces unwanted—there is only an agenda to give voice to the images of the murdered, beaten, raped, and silenced. There must be a shift in society that abolishes "the American idea" and consumes the idea of America. I believe the topics discussed throughout this project are central to future storytellers of tomorrow. As young men and women, both Black and White, assume the responsibility of capturing the narrative of society, they must also display the complexities of self. I used Spike Lee's *She's Gotta Have It* because it is an essential piece to the soundscape of Blackness. Although I may disagree with some of Lee's choices in the past, the comparison of his 1986 film and his 2017 Netflix series *She's Gotta Have It* demonstrates growth in the continued progress of representation through his redemptive changes made. To this end, for my last analysis of the film I ask, does the "It" described in the title of Spike Lee's 1986 *She's Gotta Have It*, omit Nola Darling from forming a romanticized relationship with Opal Gilstrap? As I have previously demonstrated with the quote by Andrea Dworkin that, "[…] referred to as "it," sex is defined in action only by what the male does with his penis" (23). As this project utilizes Mulvey's concept of castration anxiety to describe the fear associated with the Black queer other, Opal Gilstrap's lack of a penis illustrates the disruptiveness that provokes Jamie Overstreet to punish and demystify Nola Darling through the act of rape due to her association with the other. While Overstreet's escape from castration controls the narrative of the film, his actions contend that rape functions as a psychological device of punishment and correction. Examining each sequence preceding the rape of Nola Darling illuminates problematic elements in the narrative of the 1986 film. While Nola Darling is fetishized and subjected to the oversexualized patriarchal structure of masculinity, much of the language and actions associated within the film diminishes the image of Black women and integrates their need for sexual liberation. The film promotes a false sense of choice and desire as displayed within Nola's selection of Black bodies including:

Jamie Overstreet, Mars Blackmon, Greer Childs, and Opal Gilstrap. This idea is based upon the contingency that Nola was ultimately unable to choose anything other than the place in which she wanted to have sex. I intentionally focused on Jamie Overstreet due his position in the narrative with Nola Darling, Opal Gilstrap, and his embodiment of hypermasculine visibility. Jamie Overstreet is the only character in the film to exhibit fear in association with Opal Gilstrap, as he frequently questions Nola about her relationship with Opal. Therefore, the missed moment in the film occurs when Nola Darling rejects Opal Gilstrap after engaging in a moment of desire. I argue that during this sequence Nola Darling inherits the masculine position of the male gaze, thus implying modes of fetishism to demystify Opal Gilstrap and the lack of her penis. Secondly, as Nola instructs Opal to leave, the missed moment between the two trigger Nola's castration anxiety, and her need to masturbate alone. As Nola Darling desperately summons Jamie Overstreet to correct the failed displacement of the penis, Nola is raped and punished for the image of Black queerness. As the invitation of Black hypermasculinity invokes the concept of punishment and correctness, Nola actively seeks the approval of Jamie Overstreet as he encompasses the "It" referred to in the title of the movie, *She's Gotta Have It*.

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Second Part of the Project:

Director: Ishimine Goins
Writer: Ishimine Goins
Editor: Ishimine Goins
Music by: Epidemic Sound

Director: Ishimine Goins
Writer: Ishimine Goins
Editor: Ishimine Goins
Music by: Epidemic Sound

Script

NARRATION
VISUALS
SOUND

ISHIMINE V.O.

I think it's important to engage in conversations pertaining to Black bodies in relation to sexuality, identity, and visibility.

(beat)

It's often believed and vocalized through various mediums and social platforms that people have to compartmentalize these factors that uniquely make us who we are.

(beat)

Ishimine I don't believe that.

(beat)
Yes, I am Black. And yes, I am Queer. But, as an individual—I am whole, I don't see a need to separate the two in order to define myself.

(2 beats)

Ishimine V.O

When discussing Black visibility in mainstream film and television, generally in the past most conversations ended with the inclusion of Black female and male lead characters. And I emphasis past because there's definitely a prominent movement taking place.

(beat)

But-- when you dissect Black queer characters there seems to be an archetype that plays along the line of gender conformity, stereotypical exaggeration OR an association with punishment.

Ishimine
So, for someone who specializes in performing arts, do you notice these things?

Ishimine
(Contingent upon response)

How has the social construction of Black masculinity affected you and your identity as a Black queer male?

But first let me ask, how do you identify yourself? Because I sometimes have issues using certain labels to describe myself.

Ishimine V.O

Dr. Davis, can you tell me your research pertaining to Masculinities and Men's Development? And what sparked your focus in this scholarship?

Ishimine
(Contingent upon response)

Has your researched supported the ideas and theories surrounding the works of bell hooks? As she posits there is a separation in the scholarship of masculinity when the focus is on Black males.

Ishimine
(Contingent upon response)

What are your thoughts on Hyper-masculinity? Do you believe it exists? If so, how did the 1984 research of Donald Mosher and Mark Sirkin change the way we think of men and masculinity?

Ishimine
(Contingent upon response)

Have you viewed Berry Jenkins' 2016 film Moonlight?
(Contingent upon response)

How do the main characters (Juan and Chiron)reinforce stereotypes associated with Black masculinity? And how does Chiron's sexuality function within the patriarchal system of masculinity?

Ishimine

Was there any fear associated with your coming out to family and friends? And if so, was any of that fear associated to religion or the things you may have heard from friends and family growing up?

ISHIMINE

My coming out story is rather simple. Primary, because I had an ally—or better yet, I had my own version of Olivia Pope on my team which was my Auntie, who was like a second mother to me. But basically, I knew nothing of the disappointment "for lack of a better word" and heartbreak that took place among the immediate members of my family. Like my mom, and my granny, and other aunts and whatnot. From that description alone you can see that I grew up in a house of women— Black women at that. So, yeah—with me being the eldest granddaughter, I can empathize with what they must have felt. I grew up in the Black church, my granny is an Evangelist, and I'm the oldest of three girls, so yeah.

But as I said, I knew nothing about nothing. I first came out to my auntie, and her response was smirk, and she said "I already knew—I was just waiting on you to say it."

And that was that…

I guess I'm spoiled in a sense, because I left it to my Auntie to spread this information to inquiring minds. About several years ago we had a conversation about the immediate reactions from my mom, and everyone else. And there were tears, and "where did I go wrong?" and "Woo Wap Da Bam,"—but none of this was relayed to me. I was never made to feel like I didn't belong or like they no longer loved me.

(beat)

Ishimine V.O

But—that's not the case for everyone.

Ishimine V.O

As a parent, when it comes to children—are there certain situations that you try/ or maybe are able to prepare yourself for? Such as, a response or acceptance for different outcomes?

Ishimine
(Contingent upon response)

I know that's a layered question, and I ask that based on the coming out stories I've heard from friends, things I've read, and my own story. Also, with social media, and platforms like Twitter, and Facebook especially— it's common to see post from people who aren't parents that'll say things like—"If my child ever tells me they're___" And that blank space is filled with some type of hypothetical situation relating to sexuality and identity.

(beat)

To that end, I've seen really positive things, and I've also read really disturbing things, that go as far as stating they would inflict harm on the child—especially if it's a boy. And I see those responses are often from men— So, how have you navigated yourself through social-media in a time where unwanted opinions, parental advice, bullying and negativity floods our screens on a daily basis? And does it ultimately affect you any?

Ishimine V.O

So honored to sit down again with Dr. Kishonna Gray—we have so much to catch up on so let's jump right into it.

Ishimine

Dr. Grey, tell me what initially motivated you to pursue research in digital media? Specifically focusing upon Black identity, and visibility in cyberspace?

Ishimine
(Contingent upon response)
Speaking more on Black narratives and visibility—in my research I illuminate the lack of visibility afforded to Black queer bodies mainstream cinema, specifically women whose identity disrupts the conformity of social binaries. To this end, as you also specialize in Gender and Women's Studies—how important is visibility and representation for Black queer bodies in those media spaces?

Ishimine
(Contingent upon response)
I want to talk for a second about your book, Race, Gender, and Deviance in Xbox Live: Theoretical Perspectives from the Virtual Margins—in section 2.4 GENDERED DEPICTIONS WITHIN VIDEO GAMES, you deconstruct the imagery of Lara Croft as you discuss how female character tend to be highly sexualized in their presentation in comparison to male characters—specifically, I want to focus on the integration of Laura Mulvey's Male Gaze, in which you use while discussing Croft, because I also use Mulvey in my project, especially while discussing Spike Lee's She's Gotta

Have It, and the female characters Nola Darling, and Opal Gilstrap. So, in connection to Black bodies in mainstream cinema and gaming, what is the overall threat to masculinity in having strong, visible, female characters, who may also exhibit masculine traits of their own?

Ishimine V.O

What's a common preconception people have about you before they know you?

Ishimine
(Contingent upon response)

Do those things affect how you present yourself? Or cause you to pre-disclose certain things to avoid prejudgment?

Ishimine
(Contingent upon response)

So let's talk about masculinity in connection to patriarchal identities. I once read a book by bell hook titled Black Looks: Race and Representation— and, in a section of the book, she talks about the first time she noticed a difference in the way her father raised her brother in contrast to her, and describes how they were subject to gender norms at an early age in their childhood, for instance she was told to be ladylike, and her brother was to taught to be tough and fearless.

(beat)

Were any ideals of masculinity instilled in you as a child, and how does that social construction shape a man as he grows older?

Ishimine V.O
(Contingent upon response)

So, when it comes to identity-- how would you describe yourself?

Ishimine
(Contingent upon response)

So, I know your favorite movie is I Love You, Man—the 2009 film by John Hamburg.

(beat)

I like the film, because it illuminates themes concerning masculinity and friendship—so, can you tell me what it is about this film that you love so much? Because you've been able to write about it in different perspectives ranging from the lens of queer theory—to a film analysis view point, and everything you bring to light I'm also interested in how you got there, so, again, for you—what do you love about it?

Ishimine V.O

Prior to coming to the United States from Zimbabwe, did you ever form an opinion about African America's based certain films you may have watched? Or study any film in preparation for your move?

Ishimine
(Contingent upon response)

As graduate student, you attended a film course titled "Women and Film,"— I attended the same course, and it's funny because we ran into each other in the grocery store last summer, and you were telling me how much you enjoyed the course, and how you thought I would enjoy it —which I did.

(beat)

But, what was interesting to see during the class, was actually the reactions and remarks students made toward the films we watched. Specifically, the 1999 film All About My Mother, directed by Pedro Almodóvar, and the 2005 film Transamerica, by Duncan Tucker.

Can you tell me about your response to those films in connection to your experiences here, and the people you have met?

Ishimine
(Contingent upon response)

In Zimbabwe, can you tell me about the feelings toward the themes presented in those films I mentioned? Are these things still considered as taboo topics in relation to religious beliefs?

Ishimine
(Contingent upon response)

Apart from university discussions, do you often engage in conversations pertaining to Black bodies in relation to sexuality, identity, and visibility?

Ishimine
(Contingent upon response)

Since we've known each other, we've discussed my identity and sexuality—-you have asked me certain questions, and frequently expressed that a lot of this is new to you. So, what are your feelings about queer identities? And have you become more openminded about certain things, and the way people live their lives?

Ishimine V.O

I want to start the conversation off with a quote from The Fire Next Time by James Baldwin as he states, “Hatred, which could destroy so much, never failed to destroy the man who hated, and this was an immutable law.” What do these words mean to you in connection to the current climate of today?

Ishimine V.O
(Contingent upon response)

Having someone like Trump in office that visibly promotes hatred toward people of color, women, queer communities, immigrants, and the list goes on and on… what affect does this have in the classroom as you teach courses like Queerness and Normativity, and The Harlem Renaissance, which is also deeply rooted in Black sexuality and liberation?

Ishimine V.O
(Contingent upon response)

The required text in your course, Queerness and Normativity—incorporates the works of Judith Butler, Michel Foucault, Sigmund Freud, Jack Halberstam, and other important scholars—-when building the curriculum for a course like this, how do you decide which text are imperative for a student relatively new to the discourse of Queer Theory? And have you often received opposition or resistance in response to the content or theories presented by these authors?

Ishimine V.O
(Contingent upon response)

In any point of your life , was there a time when you suppressed your voice or identity-- or were you always transparent about who you are and your stance on certain issues in society?

Ishimine V.O

Who is Merrill Cole? And when did you become the man you are today?

Ishimine V.O
(Contingent upon response)

Growing up, were you ever challenged or feel pressured by social conventions pertaining to gender normalcies?

Ishimine V.O
(Contingent upon response)

Can you tell me about the first encounter you had with someone in the queer or trans community?

Ishimine V.O
(Contingent upon response)

Can you talk about your experiences in San Francisco and Settle Washington during the 90s, and what was visibility for queer culture like back then?

Ishimine V.O
(Contingent upon response)

Where do you feel like society is today in the acceptance of queer culture?

Ishimine V.O
(Contingent upon response)

Do you think queer visibility will ever be properly displayed in mainstream cinema and television? And why is it important that this happens?

Ishimine
(Provides an overall response to the interviews, and gives conclusion about the importance of identity and visibility)

INT. BEDROOM – DAY

ISHIMINE is looking in her closet for something to wear.
She is standing on tiptoes, reaching for a box of sneakers in the top of the closet.

CUT TO:

INT. BATHROOM

Ishimine is looking in the mirror. She has taken off her hat and is brushing the sides of her hair.

FADE TO:

WHITE

FADE IN:

INT. LIVING ROOM -White backdrop

(shakes head) Ishimine sits on stool centered of backdrop.

SUPER:
Title (The Black Other)
CRAWL: (Interviewees' title)

CROSSFADE:

BLACK (title remains)

FADE IN:

ESTABLISHING SHOT:
Outside Local Coffee Shop
(Title building name and location bottom left corner)

EXT: Cars passing, people walking into the building

CUT TO:

INT. Inside coffee shop – DAY
People talking; studying; Ishimine sits at table near window drinking coffee, and waiting.

CLOSE ON:
Barista making coffee and pouring into cup.

INSERT:
Shot of blueberry muffin on plate and coffee on the table.

INTO FRAME:
ANTHONY H. Enters coffee shop.

ACTION:
Ishimine stands up to greet Anthony H., shakes hands, as both sit down at the table.

FADE TO:

INT. Local Coffee Shop — DAY
Ishimine and Anthony are sitting across from one another, separated by the coffee table in between them.

CLOSE ON:
Anthony while he answers the question.

SHOT: Wide camera shot of both Ishimine and Anthony at the table.

CUT TO:

SHOT: Over Anthony's right shoulder as Ishimine talks.

CUT TO:

SHOT: Over Ishimine's left shoulder to Anthony's expression as she talks.

CLOSE ON:
Anthony while he answers the question.

CROSSFADE:

CUT TO:

ESTABLISHING SHOT:
Outside Center for the Study of Masculinities and Men's Development at WIU.

EXT: Horrabin Hall-Day
Students walking, students going into building.

CUT TO:

INT: Dr. Travis Davis' office.
Dr. DAVIS sits at his desk.

PULL FOCUS: Books, desk, and paperwork

SHOT: (Rule of thirds) Dr. Davis left centered.

CLOSE ON: Dr. Davis while answering question.

SHOT: Wide camera shot of both Ishimine and DR. Davis at desk.

CLOSE ON: Dr. Davis while answering question.

CUT TO:

SHOT: Over Ishimine's left shoulder to Dr. Davis' expression as she ask the question.

CLOSE ON: Dr. Davis while answering question.

CUT TO:

SHOT: Wide camera shot of both Ishimine and DR. Davis at desk.

SHOT: Over Ishimine's left shoulder to Dr. Davis' expression as she ask the question.

CLOSE ON: Dr. Davis while answering question.

CROSSFADE:

ESTABLISHING SHOT:
Outside Local Coffee Shop
(Title building name and location bottom left corner)

EXT: Cars passing, people walking into the building

CUT TO:

INT. Local Coffee Shop — DAY
ISHIMINE and **ANTHONY** are sitting across from one another, separated by the coffee table in between them.

CUT TO:

SHOT: Over Ishimine's left shoulder to Anthony's expression as she asks the question.

SHOT: Over Anthony's right shoulder as Ishimine talks.

SHOT: Over Ishimine's left shoulder to Anthony as he responds.

CLOSE ON:
Anthony as he further answers the question.

CROSSFADE:

WHITE

FADE IN:

INT. LIVING ROOM – White backdrop
Ishimine sits on stool centered with backdrop.

CROSSFADE:

WHITE

FADE IN:

ESTABLISHING SHOT: SIMPKINS AERIAL SHOT

INT. OFFICE- DAY (ask Dr. Kathleen if we can use her office with the yellow couch)

INTO FRAME: **BARBRA LAWHORN** walks into frame and sits center of the yellow couch

PULL FOCUS: Unique details in the ceiling, book-shelf, and plants.

SHOT: (Rule of thirds) Barbra Lawhorn centered.

CLOSE ON: Barbra Lawhorn as she answers questions.

CUT TO:

CLOSE ON: Ishimine as she replies, and asks new questions.

INSERT:
TWEETS/FACEBOOK POST RELATING TO THE CONTEXT OF THE CONVERSATION.

CUT TO:

SHOT: Over Ishimine's left shoulder to Barbara's expression as Ishimine asks the question.

CUT TO:

CLOSE ON: Barbra Lawhorn as she answers questions.

CROSSFADE:

BLACK

FADE IN:

ESTABLISHING SHOT:
Downtown Chicago-Day

EXT: People walking, cars passing by.

CUT TO:

EXT: University of Illinois at Chicago-Day/students walking.

FADE TO:

INT: Dr. Kishonna Grey's office (or other provided space)
DR. KISHONNA GREY sits center camera, background blurred.

CLOSE ON: Dr. Gray as she answers the question.

CUT TO:

SHOT: Wide camera side shot of both Ishimine and DR. Gray.

CLOSE ON: Dr. Gray as she answers the question.

CUT TO:

SHOT: Wide camera side shot of both Ishimine and DR. Gray.

INSERT: Picture of the book, Race, Gender, and Deviance in Xbox Live: Theoretical Perspectives from the Virtual Margin

INSERT: Picture of Lara Croft

SHOT: Over Dr. Grey's shoulder as Ishimine talks.

CUT TO:

CLOSE ON: Dr. Gray as she answers the question.

CROSFADE:

WHITE

FADE IN:

ESTABLISHING SHOT:
EMPTY ROOM IN SIMPKINS (3rd Floor library)

INT. 3rd Floor Library- DAY

INTO FRAME: **NICK** walks into frame and sits on chair in front of arranged background setting—Loft like interior)

CLOSE ON: Nick as he answers the question.

SHOT: Over Nick's shoulder as Ishimine talks, and asks new question.

CUT TO:

CLOSE ON: Nick as he answers the question.

INSERT: Pan view of the room.

CLOSE ON: Ishimine as she talks.

SHOT: Over Ishimine's shoulder to Nick's expression as she asks the question.

SHOT: (Rule of thirds) Nick center shot.

CLOSE ON: Nick as he answers the question.

SHOT: Over Nick's shoulder as Ishimine talks, and asks new question.

CUT TO:

CLOSE ON: Nick as he answers the question.

CROSSFADE:

BLACK

FADE IN:

ESTABLISHING SHOT: MALPASS LIBRARY

INT. Library 3rd floor – DAY

CHRISTIVEL sits in leather chair surrounded by shelves of books and plants.

INSERT:
Shot of books by Black authors that discuss Black sexuality

CLOSE ON: Christivel as she responds to the question.

SHOT: Over Christivel's shoulder as Ishimine talks, and asks new questions.

SHOT: Over Ishimine's shoulder to Christivel's expression as Ishimine asks the question.

SHOT: Wide shot, both subjects in frame.

INSERT: Theatrical release poster of All About My Mother

INSERT: Theatrical release poster of Transamerica

CLOSE ON: Christivel as she responds to the question.

SHOT: Over Christivel's shoulder as Ishimine talks, and asks new questions.

CUT TO:

SHOT: Over Ishimine's shoulder to Christivel's expression as Ishimine asks the question.

CUT TO:

CLOSE ON: Christivel as she responds to the question.

SHOT: Wide shot, both subjects in frame.

CLOSE ON: Christivel as she responds to the question.

SHOT: Wide shot, both subjects in frame.
SHOT: Over Ishimine's shoulder to Christivel's expression as Ishimine asks the question.

CLOSE ON: Christivel as she responds to the question.

CROSSFADE:

WHITE

FADE IN:

ESTABLISHING SHOT: SIMPKINS BUILDING

INT. CLASSROOM-DAY

DR. MERRILL COLE sits on top of a desk in the front of a room filled with empty desk

INSERT: Book Cover for The Fire Next Time

SHOT: (Rule of thirds) Dr. Cole centered to the black board.

CLOSE ON: Dr. Cole as he responds to the question.

SHOT: (Rule of thirds) Dr. Cole centered to the black board.

CLOSE ON: Dr. Cole as he responds to the question.

SHOT: (Rule of thirds) Dr. Cole centered to the black board.

CLOSE ON: Dr. Cole as he responds to the question.

SHOT: (Rule of thirds) Dr. Cole centered to the black board.

CLOSE ON: Dr. Cole as he responds to the question.

DISSOLVE TO:

ESTABLISHING SHOT:
EMPTY ROOM IN SIMPKINS (3rd Floor theater room)

INT. 3rd Floor Library- DAY

Dr. Cole, sits center on the couch by the window.

SHOT: (Rule of thirds) Dr. Cole centered to the window frame

CLOSE ON: Dr. Cole as he responds to the question.

INSERT: Shots of objects in the room.

CUT TO:

SHOT: (Rule of thirds) Dr. Cole centered to the window frame

CLOSER ANGLE: Zoom camera in slowly on Dr. Cole
CLOSE ON: Facial reactions and mouth.

CUT TO:

SHOT:
(Rule of thirds) Dr. Cole centered to the window frame

CLOSE ON: Dr. Cole as he responds to the question.

SHOT: (Rule of thirds) Dr. Cole centered to the window frame

CLOSE ON: Dr. Cole as he responds to the question.

CROSSFADE:

WHITE

CUT TO:

SHOT: Aerial shot of long road, pan tilt into the clouds.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. LIVING ROOM -White backdrop

Ishimine sits on a stool centered in the backdrop.

SUPER:
Title The Black Other

CRAWL: Credits and special thanks

CROSSFADE:

BLACK (title remains)

MUSIC:
Chipper Classical

FX: Ambiance of nature and birds chirping

MUSIC: Fade out

MUSIC: Faint Jazz

FX: Cars passing. Door opening with door bells

Natural ambiance (coffee shop)

FX: Faint Keyboard stokes and conversational laughter.

FX: Pouring sound into cup.

MUSIC: Fade out

FX: Door bells
FX: Approaching footsteps

Continuous Ambiance (coffee shop)

Continuous Ambiance (coffee shop) fades out

MUSIC: Chipper Classical

FX: Ambiance of nature and birds chirping

MUSIC: Fade out

MUSIC: Faint Jazz

FX: Cars passing

MUSIC: Fade out

Continuous Ambiance (coffee shop)

Continuous Ambiance (coffee shop) Fade out

MUSIC:
Chipper Classical

MUSIC: Fade out

MUSIC: Chipper Classical

MUSIC: FADE OUT

Continuous Ambiance (window open)

Continuous Ambiance (window open) END

Continuous Ambiance Street sounds

FX: Traffic noise

MUSIC: Faint Jazz

Continuous Ambiance Street sounds END

FX: Tomb Raider sound effects

MUSIC: ENDS

MUSIC: Chipper Classical

MUSIC: Fade out

MUSIC: Faint Jazz

MUSIC: FADE OUT
MUSIC: Chipper Classical

MUSIC: Fade out

Ambiance of moving furniture around; laughing and talking in the background as the scene is set up.

MUSIC: Chipper Classical