Dear Professor Leston,

As the semester comes to a close and I reflect back on all the work I’ve done this semester I can clearly see the experiences and lessons each class has given me. For our English 1710 though the things I’ve taken away are vastly different than all the others, while others have given me presentation skills or editing capabilities this class has taught me how to think. I say that not in the literal sense because thinking has gotten me thus far in life but in a deeper more alert sense of self. Reading for this class far exceeded what I expected and I was exposed to so much literature that usually never graces the syllabus of a college class.

I think my favorite pieces were “Why Johnny can’t dissent” and “Anti- Homeless Spikes” because they educated me on two issues I had no idea crossed paths with my every day life. Why Johnny can’t dissent opened my eyes to the endless hamster wheel that we are American consumers are on and how even when we think we’ve escaped “the man” we’re really part of a larger ploy to feed their beast. This blew my mind because when you really look at it, it’s true, it made me look deeper into ad campaigns and the story mass media paints around it. This has made me so much more aware of what being apart of a big name society means. Anti- Homeless Spikes was appealing to me for two reasons, one being I love taking scenic or landscape pictures so to be able to look at this things and identify what they’re for enhances my ability to take pictures. The second reason I loved this was because I really had no idea that cities took active measures to keep people off of infrastructure, the way they camouflage it is artistically sneaky. Since reading that piece I’ve noticed more and more of the shape and size of the buildings, benches and other architecture around Brooklyn.

On the flip side though there were pieces I didn’t enjoy, though they were limited when I didn’t like one I really didn’t like it. I think its no secret which one I disliked the most, White Anxiety. I honestly felt this piece was reverse racism and the pot calling the kettle black, how can you complain about being labeled and throw labels around so freely? This bugged me endlessly, but having to explain and articulate my frustration or disagreement in a diplomatic and educated way was something this class forced me to do. I wasn’t able to just say I didn’t like it; I had to explain why and back it up with facts and examples. The other piece I didn’t really enjoy was the Dada manifesto if for no other reason than reading it confused me and I could not comb through it or make connections to anything else.

Reading this wide variety of texts and having to answer questions or prompts about them is not new by any means, however, the detail that was required and the type of questions asked were. This class taught me to articulate not just with opinion, but with fact and conviction of my words. It, well mostly you Professor has also taught me to type slowly and proof read and not to serially use commas. I have taken a lot away from ENG 1710, debate skills, critical thinking and writing and how to collaborate without having a complete panic attack. Most of all though its made me a more aware human being, I’ve been exposed to the struggles, the realities, the lifestyles of people from all walks of life all over the world. I thoroughly enjoyed the room for change in the lesson plans and syllabus and the creativity the came from that room. Not being stuck in an ironclad routine was liberating and being able to take the discussion multiple ways was beneficial in so many ways. Allowing us to share our thoughts and ideas enabled us to hear out everyone’s point of view, and possible change our own. Not being subjected to just the professors view or method of teaching keeps students engaged and there was never a shortage of lively and viable conversation in our classroom.

Ever since the start of this semester I will read certain things in the news or online and immediately think, this is something wed talk about in Professor Lestons class. Additionally I’d read some ill written piece and think, this is not all true there are so many things missing here and in knowing that realizing that people are usually ignorant because they’re misinformed or uneducated on a subject. I’m so glad I got the opportunity to take and experience this class this semester with these peers and with Professor Leston. I feel it was the perfect storm of mind power to create an immensely successful semester. So thank you Professor Leston for empowering us with knowledge and teaching outside the box.

Sincerely,

Samantha Pezzolanti