George Gordon

Professor Robert Leston

ENG 1710

December 19, 2015

Dear Robert Leston,

At the beginning of the semester I had no idea what would await me ENG 1710. When it came to social issues, I honestly didn’t care one bit about them. I am a very apathetic person, there is not much I care for, be it people or issues. However, by the end I learned to give issues their credit. I can honestly say this class was an experience I enjoyed, even if I wasn’t the most active participator in the classroom.

For the first paper, the tech lit narrative, I know it wasn’t great. I didn’t put much effort into as I had become a slacker, something I picked up on back in high school. Even here in college, most classes didn’t expect much and it was simple enough to hand in a paper that had minimum effort and still get an A or a B. I did the same for Professor Corbett’s class as well and I was called out on it.

However, due to the comments you left and the comments from Corbett, as well as, their grades, I realized I needed to step up as a student and writer. I started to actually care about the writing I was doing because I didn’t want to receive negative feedback in areas where I knew I could be doing better. I will say that it sort of brought my spirits down for a while but it also hardened my resolve. I knew I had to do better in my classes and this was the wakeup call I needed. From there, I noticed a change in myself by the work I was doing and it was evident in my work for the exploratory paper.

For the issue paper, I can’t say much to justify it. I left it till the last minute, due to projects in my other classes, which isn’t an excuse for how it came out. One of things I noticed I needed to work on was time management, as I have never had so much work to juggle in college before. My paper was rushed, combined with a lack of effort from my part, and it turned out the way it did, not terrible, but not particularly good either. However, I did learn more about privacy through it and I will continue to research this issue after this class, so it wasn’t all a loss here.

I found the creative detournament project to be particularly interesting, this was something I didn’t know about before this class. While I had never used a photo editor before in my life, which is something I aim to teach myself during the break, I believe the project came out well, aside from the issue of the pictures being too small. These allowed for a more creative method to discuss issues than a standard paper as I had done in all other classes. With the right message, the proper skills, and enough creativity a creative detorunament can be a powerful image.

When I saw the presentation on the syllabus I immediately thought it would be something I’d hate doing. Partially because I had no idea what social issue I would tackle since there was nothing I cared about to discuss and partially because I’m not great at giving presentations. However, by what we were learning in class, I dug around and came across this dark web topic and was inspired to tackle it based on the horrific things I had found. This is the first time I have liked a presentation I had to do and didn’t feel like it was just something I was being forced to do.

When it comes to the readings, I can say I enjoyed the majority of the readings we had, as many of the readings dealt with topics I never thought about or cared for. From the moment I read the first passage which delved into Postman and technocracies, I knew they would be interesting at the very least. I had no idea what Occupy Wall Street was about before reading the piece by Manuel Castells, I never knew that the Zapatistas even existed, and I had never thought about using artworks as a form of resistance. This class has made me interested in learning more about these topics and reading about other topics I would normally ignore.

The last reading we had, from Stephen Duncombe, was a very interesting read as well. I am avid video gamer and I’ve always been a supporter of how we can use this medium to learn and teach. Games aren’t just for children anymore, although they are the ones with the most time to spare for them. They can be used to help change perspectives and the way our world works. I was speaking to Ahmad and he mentioned how the game, Gone Home, turned him away from his homophobic mentality. With me, I can thank this class and my others for sort of helping branch out, but I have to also credit the game series, Persona. These games focus entirely on the relationships we create with others and by the end of the games, I wanted relationships on the level these characters had. While I still may find it difficult to do this, I was much more of a loner before this semester and I may not have not taken huge leaps forward yet, the fact that I’ve made a friend in Chris, spoke to other peers more than a nod of acknowledgement, and actually participated in class marks a start for me.

Another thing I’ve noticed is that I’m more aware of the things I see when I’m outside now. A month ago, I went to Manhattan and I noticed a piece of artwork on a building and thought about what it was trying to say as opposed to just ignoring it like I usually do. I used to think that they were nothing more than graffiti and not something that could bring forth a message. More recently, I noticed the shape in which the seats in my neighborhood were made. They have a wavy format, which I thought was just the design, but now I realize they were made in such a way to prevent people from sleeping on them or being comfortable for an extended period of time. There are tons of things happening outside and one just needs to take the time to notice these things.

The blog posts were an aspect of this class I had never done in another class before. They were a way of making sure we were reading the material needed by responding to them in various ways. I liked the prompts given as they made me actually process the information I was reading rather than simply read it. For some posts, I had to re-read passages to be able to respond properly. Another benefit to these were that since these would be posted online, we could read our peers work as well. This allowed me to see various perspectives and opinions on the same topics and helped to expand my mentality on the topics we were covering.

With the blog posts, I also felt as if I was contributing more to the class, since I am not the type who will speak up during class. I have gone through classes where I never speak to the professor or another student the whole semester, I just do my work and pass the class. This leaves me thinking how I did nothing for the class at all and here, I was able to feel as if I could contribute without necessarily speaking up. Although, by the end of the semester, I was starting to become more comfortable and tried to speak up more. This is something I will continue to work on after this class as well.

Overall, I can say that this class was worth the time and money I put it in to it. Through this class, I’ve been educated, my mind has been opened up, and I have begun to make changes within myself and what I do. Thank you Professor Leston and good luck with your book and sabbatical.

Sincerely,

George Gordon