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Project 2

Dear Professor Belli:

# The idea of this project came to me after really thinking about what science fiction story left a strong mark on me. The Bene Gesserit’s litany against fear, “I must not fear. Fear is the mind-killer... I will face my fear. I will permit it to pass over me and through me. And when it has gone past I will turn the inner eye to see its path. Where the fear has gone there will be nothing. Only I will remain.” has actually gotten me through some tough situations. The last book that we read this semester was Woman on the Edge of Time by Marge Piercy made me think about what it means to be a strong woman in a science fiction story. It is supposed to be a strong feminist piece, but I couldn’t help but think about how weak the main character really was. So I wanted to discuss a group of women who I really think are strong women. The teachings and ideas behind the Bene Gesserit have always stood out in my mind, so I wanted to analyze them a little bit more. These are women who really know how to get what they want, generally, and show off how strong they can be. They have many ways to control others. The Dune universe has many plots going on at all times, but somehow the power struggle that is constantly going on always brings me back to thinking about how control affects everyone.

# To start off with research, I began where most people go nowadays, Wikipedia. From there I picked up some good leads on where to move my texts. After Professor Belli’s suggestion to view the theme of control a bit more in depth, I thought I might compare some of the Bene Gesserit’s powers to technologies and ideas that we see today. I spent a few hours in the school’s library and even met with a Research Librarian, who gave me some ideas on where to look for ideas. After writing a first draft, and having Professor Belli look it over, we came to the conclusion that I was focusing too much on describing the text as compared to giving examples from outside sources to back up my ideas. So I scrapped my first paper and went back to researching. I actually found that researching on my own but still using the schools online database gave me much better search results. Instead of focusing on all of their powers, I chose three aspects of their control techniques that stood out to me. The Bene Gesserit have a unique power, “The Voice” which allows them to control others. They use religious engineering to establish legends among young cultures to provide a future prospect for them to control and use. Finally, the Spice, a drug that extends life, but overuse does alter the user in different ways. Many form a reliance on it, and how control of its distribution is a huge source of power.

# One of my major problems with writing a research paper is the structuring of my writing. I tend to write more with a focus on getting what I want said down on paper, but often forget to focus making sure everything is in its proper place. I am hoping with this paper, there is an improvement from my last project. Being close to the end of the semester, it’s very hard to make sure that I put my best thoughts into this paper. I feel that it is a substantial improvement over my project 1.