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Professor Swidzinski
ENG 351
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Creative Project – Syllabus From Hell

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ENG 101: Every English Class

This course will explore vague themes, forms, and theories, past and present; it will examine writers, fiction, poetry, and drama. Throughout, we will work to deepen your ability to pretend like you read, think critically out of your ass, and write persuasively about literary works you don't have an opinion on let alone any understanding of, as well as hone your ability to analyze obscure and verbose background sources, practically incomprehensible critical responses from the strangest of academics, and historical events that only I care about in order to broaden your understanding of things you already know about but have to learn again anyway.

What books do I need to buy?

- A gigantic anthology that we'll only read three works from
- A book that is kinda racist
 - I will either be very adamant about my right as a white English teacher to say the N-word or I'll vehemently deny that that's appropriate, but it will be uncomfortable for everyone either way.
- A book that has racism in it/is about overcoming racism
 - Yes, these are different things. No, your classmates cannot tell the difference and it will make for some very annoying discussions.
- The textbook that I wrote
 - Yes, it's the most expensive one even though I own the rights to it and could give it to you for free. Stop asking so many questions.
- So many *New York Times* articles that you run out of free ones and have to beg to use your mom or dad's account

What are the major assignments?

- I. Daily readings
 - a. You will be assigned at least 50 pages of reading daily to be read by the next class.
 - b. Do not actually read a single word. Nobody ever does. Go read the SparkNotes, Cliffsnotes, Shmoop, Litcharts, or if you're really desperate, some high schooler's Prezi that has such fast transitions you get motion sick. When called on in class, just say something vague about themes or subtext or diction and you'll be fine. If you really want to intimidate your classmates, find a random quote or two and tack on a poorly worded version of whatever the internet said it represented.
- II. Reading Journal
 - a. A response to what you just read
 - b. You will never know if it's supposed to be a personal response or an academic one. All I'll say about this is that I want your honest, raw reactions. This will not be helpful.
- III. Creative Assignment
 - a. Probably at least twice during the semester I'll ask you to come up with an artistic representation of a theme or element of the novel. This has even less guidelines than the rest of the wishy-washy assignments, and it will make you so anxious you leave it until the last second and turn in some shitty poetry. We all do it, no shame.
- IV. Research Paper
 - a. The token giant assignment of the semester. It will inevitably be two or more pages too long to fill the page count, so I expect you to say the same thing at least five times through out the paper. Make a point about literally anything, madlibs style. Bonus points to the student with the most obscure topic. At least three scholarly sources just close enough to your topic to count are required to cherry-pick from. The rubric for this is very strict, so prepare to get marked down for the tiniest details that your exhausted, hungover brain missed as you write this the Sunday before it's due.

Is late work accepted?

I care about the mental health of my students, which is why I will accept no late work unless you recount every detail about why the assignment was late. It will be humiliating, and I will be incredibly condescending about it. Making this classroom a safe space is a priority for me, so I will also not grant extensions unless you go over my head and contact the Dean. Getting into intense email battles is a surefire way to make class the worst experience it can possibly be.

Reflection

Though this will appear to be a scathing satire on just this class, as I based my syllabus off of this one, this is a cumulative work based on every bad experience I or my friends have had in an English class. The English 351 syllabus was just the model to work off of, none of the ammo comes from this class (other than some light teasing, of course). I am going to be a high school English teacher, and I feel like I should know what my students might assume they can expect from the class. Classes in the past have driven me crazy with their vague assignment instructions, mountains of reading, and the general vibe that the teacher or professor would rather hear their own voice than anything their students had to say. I approached this satire as if it was an honest translation of an English syllabus, a sort of “No Fear Shakespeare” that got to the heart of what some English teachers “really mean”. It was hard to pick a topic at first, but I was working on my classroom management plan for one of my education classes at the same time as this, and the two combined in my mind. As a student, I hate when teachers had us “reflect” on the reading without telling us what angle to take, as I am always worried I’ll give them the opposite of what they want. But, as a soon-to-be teacher, I recognize the importance of seeing what your class thinks about a selection or text. My dual role has highlighted other interesting contradictions that exist in my thought process. I want to give my students creative freedom, but I want my teachers to tell me exactly what they’re looking for. Satire is a great way to deal with these opposing viewpoints, and so the syllabus from hell was born. If I can avoid some of these cliches and remember how things made me feel as a student, I believe I will be a better teacher. Also, writing this made me laugh, both at others and at myself. And isn’t that really all satire needs to do?