TAP English 5: The Danger of a Single Story  
Sections A & C Fall 2018

In an interview given in 1998, American Nobel Laureate Toni Morrison stated that “racism is a scholarly affair.” In her 2009 TED Talk, Nigerian writer Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie spoke passionately about the “danger of a single story.” Utilizing these two statements as guiding principles, the class will read a variety of contemporary texts -- novels, short stories, essays -- written by and about non-hegemonic groups living in the United States today that explore the intersections of race, class, socioeconomics, racism and institutionalized racism.

Over the duration of this TAP class, students will consider the questions of race and racism through both Morrison and Adichie’s ideas – and will work toward a more comprehensive view of the role stories play in the perpetuation (and challenging) of stereotypes and the connection between what we read and how we as a culture view race.

Most weeks there will be a writing assignment due in class on Tuesdays; in small groups or as a class we will workshop those pieces and talk about the choices writers make. These pieces are works in progress and will be responded to as such.

The course will include a service-learning component that will allow students to interact with the larger Burlington community and extend our class work beyond the walls of the classroom.

Attendance Policy: 
You are expected to attend and participate in every class; if you are ill or need to miss a class, please email me to explain your absence. After three unexcused absences, your grade will be lowered by one half-letter grade/absence i.e. if you miss 4 classes, a B becomes a B-. Religious holidays and athletic or academic team commitments are, of course, acceptable but must be documented at the beginning of the term.

Academic Integrity:
Any form of academic dishonesty including plagiarism, cheating on exams, or misrepresentation of your own work will result in an F for the class. The university may take further action. Make sure to properly cite all sources.

Required Texts:
Toni Morrison’s *The Bluest Eye*  
Firoozeh Dumas’ *Funny in Farsi*  
Alison Bechdel’s *Fun Home*

Various articles and short stories available through Blackboard – these readings are to be printed out and brought to class to enable discussion. Moreover, you are to bring the book we are discussing to class each day; the excuses “it’s too heavy” or “I forgot it” are not acceptable.
Requirements:
Active Participation: 20%
Weekly Writing: 30%
Group Work: 10%
Final Project (Group Grade): 20%
Final Paper: 20%

Course Schedule (subject to change):

28th August: Course Introduction
30th August: Adichie’s TED Talk
4th Sept: *The Bluest Eye & Uncensored* video
6th Sept: *The Bluest Eye*
   *“How Does it Feel to be a Problem: Being Young and Muslim in America”* lecture by Moustafa Bayoumi at 7:00 pm in the Livak Ballroom
11th Sept: *The Bluest Eye*
13th Sept: *The Bluest Eye*
18th Sept: Workshop day: Letter to Toni Morrison
20th Sept: Intro to Group Project: Read “For Young Latino Readers, an Image is Missing” (BB) & “Wakanda and Spotlight on Women”
   Brainstorm possible ways to categorize books
25th Sept: **Library Day – meet in BH library foyer**
27th Sept: **Writing Center Tour – meet in BH library foyer**
2nd Oct: Workshop day: Second ‘draft’ of Morrison letter due
4th Oct: *Funny in Farsi*
9th Oct: *Funny in Farsi*
11th Oct: *Funny in Farsi*
16th Oct: Workshop: Response to Dumas’ “Muslims in the media do Americans a disservice”
18th Oct: Read “Books by Immigrants, Foreigners and Minorities Don’t Diminish…” (BB)
23rd Oct: Read “Latina College Student…” & “What Kids are Really Learning about Slavery”
25th Oct: Read “Where are all the YA Writers of Color: Finally Riding High on Bestseller lists” & “Nikki Rosa” (BB)
30th Oct: Group Project Check-in: how are library visits and categorizations going?
   Rough drafts of book lists due
1st Nov: Review of General Requirements and pre-registration brainstorming
6th Nov: No Class: Advising days (individual meetings in my office)
   *Ta-Nehisi Coates Public Lecture TBD*
8th Nov: No Class: Advising days (individual meetings in my office)
13th Nov: **Class with Alison Bechdel in JDL (10:05) – read Fun Home in preparation**
15th Nov: *Fun Home*: bring five typed questions to class & grammar quiz
20th Nov: Thanksgiving Break: No Class
22nd Nov: Thanksgiving Break: No Class
27th Nov: Critical Thinking: Evaluate the readings from the class through Adichie and Morrison:
29th Nov: Workshop day: bring your laptops and work on group project presentations
4th Dec: Workshop Day: bring drafts of your final papers
6th Dec: Last Day of Class: Fantasy Booklist Presentations (each group will have 15 minutes)  
7th Dec: Final Papers Due in my office by 4:00pm

**Important Dates:**

Add/Drop ends: 10th September  
Fall Break: 8th October  
Last Day to Withdraw from a class: 29th October  
Register for Spring Classes: 16th November

**Service Learning Component:**

This is the first year of a multi-year project that partners students with Burlington’s Fletcher Free library in order to evaluate the library’s holdings and thus contribute to the library’s ongoing commitment to the community to continue to diversify its collection and be truly representative of Burlington’s various and ever-changing identity groups.

We will work with Rebecca Goldberg, the youth services librarian, who does outwork work with the community at large and is the book buyer for the children’s section of the library.

Using both Morrison’s idea that “racism is a scholarly affair” and Adichie’s insights regarding the “danger of a single story” as the organizing principle, this project moves you out of the classroom and into the greater Burlington community and asks that you assess the holdings of the Fletcher Free library in terms of representation and diversity.

What this means is that each of you (working in a group) will visit an assigned site and literally count and categorize one part of the library’s holdings (in our case, the pre-reader children’s lit section). Before you visit the library, as a group you will decide how you want to organize and assess the holdings, which will then allow you to see what the library should add to its holdings.

You might look at the race/ethnicity/identity/ability of the authors, or you might look at the characters within the books through the same. Questions to consider might include: 1. Are all the authors white? 2. Are all the characters straight? 3. Are all the families two-parents? 4. Are all the ‘homes’ single-family houses? 5. Are any of the characters people with disabilities? 5. Are the characters mono-lingual?

After you have categorized all the books, you will create a “fantasy book list” for the library; this will be based in part on the work you started when we visited the UVM library and looked at the various websites that list/assess/discuss children and YA literature. As a group, you will generate a list of 20 books that best reflect what you feel the library should have on the shelves.

**Final Project:**
There are two components to your final project: the first is the group presentation on the last day of class; and, the second is an individual paper detailing the five books you personally chose for your group’s fantasy book list and your own personal rationale for each of those texts.

Part 1: At the end of the term, each group will present this list to the librarians and the rest of the class; in this presentation, be prepared to talk about the parameters your group used to assess the books and then explain the rationale for the book selections. In a sense, you are “pitching” your list to the library/librarians as they will ultimately choose one of the lists presented and add those books to their shelves. Keep in mind the fact that the projects should not criticize or attack the library or the choices made by the librarians; instead, the projects should respond to both Morrison and Adichie’s concerns and connect the chosen texts those principles.

Part 2: In this paper, I expect to hear your own strong “I” voice – as these book choices should reflect who you are and why you feel they are important for a library shelf. You might look back to the free-write you did in the first week of class (the one when you were asked to list books that had relevance to you as a child/YA); did your own reading experiences as a child or as a student resemble the books you and your group ultimately chose? Why might this say about your own experiences as a reader? How will the books you chose work to respond to Morrison and Adichie’s concerns?

We will discuss this in much greater detail once the class actually starts and we have finished our day with the reference librarian.