***DEI Learning Outcomes***

**LO1: Compare complex categories of social group memberships as they relate to our local and national contexts, democratic traditions, and contemporary struggles. [red bold]**

*LO2: Recognize the relationship between contemporary diversity-related issues and U.S. history, institutions, practices, and policies [green italic]*

LO3: Examine the roots of cultural values and prejudices and how they influence behavior [blue underlined]

LO4: Identify the ethical and moral issues present in complex domestic (U.S.) situations and articulate informed responses to ambiguity and disagreement [purple small caps]

LO5: Demonstrate understanding of the key issues of the course by analyzing, proposing, or engaging in strategies that promote equity at the local or national level [yellow highlighter]

***Sample Assignment: Discussion Board Prompts and Posts***

**Prompt #1:** In "Why Don't Dystopias Know How to Talk About Race?" Angelica Jade Bastién argues that dystopian fictions largely ignore the place of race within their narratives. What are the problems of doing this? How do you see this manifesting in representations of dystopias you are familiar with? How can we push back against this?

**Student Response #1:** Being born and raised in the 60's, I can recall many things that were told to me in my youth. One specific thing that comes to mind was what you should and should not say in conversations. The subjects which were taboo to bring up were Religion, Sex and Politics. Though, I myself after becoming a young adult felt Race should have been added. For it held an unspoken taboo in itself. Discussions of the subject seemed to make people uncomfortable. So, I can understand why dystopias shy from addressing the subject. In America the subject of Racism has been a thorn in our history's side for far too long. Moreover addressing it in conversations, stories, books and movies tends to put a spotlight on a much uncomfortable subject matter. In the article, " Why Don't Dystopias Know How to Talk About Race?", it's stated that dystopias are a genre that's meant to illuminate and critique current societal problems by configuring them in an exaggerated, but somewhat plausible context. Yet in America, as in all things marketability is a driving force. Most Americans, heck most people read books and go to movies for a form of escape and entertainment. Bringing light to issues we already know as problematic isn't entertaining nor escaping. Sci-Fi novelist Aya Dawn states, "that the current crop of dystopias aim to create an escapism and not honesty. Whereas Daniel Jose Older sees the inhibition of including racism as a lack of creativity and imagination. Citing that the lasting power of racism being magically solved  as a failure of truth and a missed opportunity for a more deeper world. In many of the Dystopias that I'm familiar with, Logan's Run, Hunger Games and The Handmaids' Tale to name a few they fail to address to subject of racism to focus one a more universal issue. Ones such as the longing for eternal youth, our basic needs (ie. food) and reproduction, issues which we all can relate to and that don't invoke a militant undertone or cause for discomfort. Even though the article says that dystopias should invoke discomfort and entertain us and draw to question our roles in the issues they bring to the forefront. To me, I presume the issue of racism isn't an issue in the future as depicted in those stories because with the constant evolving of society and it's views and all and the mixing of the races and the blending of the family dynamics. There will no longer be a set and clear defining line between us anymore and there will only be the human race.

**Student Response #2:** In Bastién's article "Why Don't Dystopias Know How to Talk About Race?" she critiques dystopian literature's lack of recognization for race. She continues to emphasize the somewhat ironic idea of how Dystopian literature, in addition to its peers, film and television, speak of a social digression and future dystopias, while completely disregarding race in what those "dystopias".

Bastién includes a discussion with the television producer who created Twilight Zone, Rod Serling. Although the series aired in the late 1950's, Serling did not back to inadequacy of industry for the time, “Television, like its big sister, the motion picture, has been guilty of the sin of omission … Hungry for talent, desperate for the so-called ‘new face,’ constantly searching for a transfusion of new blood, it has overlooked a source of wondrous talent that resides under its nose.” I believe if Dystopian Fictitious literature continues to be not inclusive of other races, or cultures it will continue to be an issue when they become screenplays.

An example within the article is when Jen Yamato points out that in the novel, Ghost in a Shell, the asian characters are left to feel like props  in the overall theme of the book, in addition to the aesthetics of the culture being used as a prop. I believe that the forementioned issues of not casting POC and or writing respectfully of other cultures will be the demise of the genre. I very must enjoyed Alexandra Alter's "How Feminist Dystopian Fiction Is Channeling Women's Anger and Anxiety" for giving recommendations such as: Maggie Shen King's "Excess Male", in addition to, Bina Shah's' "Before She Sleeps".

**Prompt #2:** According to Alexandra Alter in "How Feminist Dystopian Fiction Is Channeling Women's Anger and Anxiety," "one of the things about looking at the world through a feminist lens is that we are already in a dystopia." Do you agree or disagree with her assessment? How do you see this quotation manifesting itself in our current climate?

**Student Response #1:** I'm going to start off by saying I don't completely agree nor disagree with Alter's statement in her article. I don't think we're exactly in a dystopia at this very moment, but we are most certainly heading into that direction. *Women's rights, which have been fought for for years and are still being fought for, are at stake of being lost*again*. A women's right to her own body could very well be taken away from her if the wrong people are put into positions of power, even though it seems like we just got this right to our*own*body. Women are not being paid the same as men, as if they are somehow less significant and/or useful than men.* *There are certainly movements and plenty of people who want to and are fighting for women's rights, but these old-fashioned ideals and the patriarchy are still standing and trying to spread these toxic notions.* We aren't in the world of The Handmaid's Tale (thank goodness), but something similar is unfortunately a very possible future if women's rights continued to be questioned and taken away from us. The fact that Roe v. Wade could be overturned is terrifying. The fact that we have to have Women's Marches to try and get our point across is equally as terrifying. It feels like our own government, which was put in place to serve and protect us, is doing everything it can to work against us. I do have faith that we can fight against these daunting threats to our rights and lives, but it is a haunting thought that there is most certainly a possibility we could find ourselves in the world of a nightmarish dystopian novel somewhere in the future if our lives are put into the wrong hands.

**Student Response #2:** How many of you have ever been on a dating app and unprompted, a man sends you an inappropriate, disgusting pick-up line? Way more frequently than you would want I am guessing. The most unsettling part about it is that the man actually thinks you would appreciate that. In at least my observations and experiences, men feel some sort of entitlement in what they can say and do to women with no consequence.  With that being said, I wholeheartedly agree with Alexandra Alter in her assessment that we are already in a dystopia. Looking at this from the perspective of the MeToo movement, the abortion argument, and the value placed on a woman's fertility this becomes clear. Thinking about Erika's description of dystopia in the Week One video, we do not necessarily live in a wasteland like one in which most dystopias take place, however we do have a big injustice that leads to suffering and a tearing away of humanity.

From the perspective of the MeToo movement, women are treated like objects. Since we will be discussing such topics all semester, I want to share that I am a victim of sexual assault. Sadly, this is a reality for countless women around the world. However, rape culture is so prevalent in our world that most perpetrators are never held accountable. As mentioned in Alter's article, we even have a Supreme Court Justice who was accused of sexual assault and the Republican Senate chose to overlook these allegations and put him in power anyways. Look at another famous example, Brock Turner, who was found guilty and was given only three months in prison because the judge was looking out for his future, while his victim was publicly shamed for being drunk. Consent is so often overlooked or ignored. This is by no means only an issue for women, as men also experience this, but women's bodies particularly are treated as objects. Women have to ignore harassment that they face daily due to the fear of repercussions or judgement. In an equal society, women could air their grievances and be treated as real human beings and I'm sure that every girl in this class can say that at some point in their life they have felt like an object, rather than a person.

Speaking specifically about the United States, a woman's right to choice is slowly being taken away. With out newest Supreme Court Justice, it is almost a guarantee that Roe v. Wade will be overturned in the near future. This is fundamentally dystopian. Regardless of one's personal beliefs regarding abortion, there is a constitutional right that women are allowed to have access to safe abortion. Taking away this right will not stop abortions, it will only increase the number of unsafe abortions. This is once again ignoring the humanity in a woman and seeing her as simply a "baby carrier" instead. Similarly, taking away the access to any form of contraception is inherently harmful to women. There are any number of reasons a woman may choose to use a contraceptive and taking away this right would only endanger and harm women. However, it appears that more conservative leaning people care more about the actual principle than the women they would be harming. Looking at the fertility aspect of this, by banning in vitro fertilization, as mentioned in the article, it is telling a woman that she is worthless if she cannot naturally make a baby. Infertility is an issue that many couples go through and no matter what avenue through which they choose to conceive, it makes that woman no less of a mother. Banning pregnancy without natural conception takes away a woman's humanity because it takes away her ability to choose. If a woman who suffers from infertility wants to have a baby, she should be allowed to. However, in other countries and potentially soon in the United States, this is banned. Making that decision would only further our slippery slope into dystopia.

**Prompt #3:** Discuss the function of disability in the text. Why are disabled people not more prevalent in dystopian fiction? You may want to draw parallels between this text and Parable of the Sower.

**Student Response #1:** Firstly, just like Parable of the Sower, I was unsure about Station Eleven, but as I delve deeper and deeper into this novel, I find myself even more entranced by it. It's such a phenomenal read, and, like Parable of the Sower, I've purchased this book from the bookstore. I'm so happy I've been introduced to some astonishing texts this semester!

As for the function of disability in Station Eleven and just dystopian fiction as a whole, I never really thought about how it rarely makes an appearance until I watched this week's video. Fortunately, I am an able-bodied person, and I don't take this privilege lightly. I find it easy for myself to forget how difficult easy tasks may be for some people, and it was very eye-opening to listen to the discussion of disability within the weekly video and to further think about its role (or lack thereof) in dystopian fiction. It was very refreshing to see two disabled people within Station Eleven -- Frank and Lily (the girl seeking antidepressants at the airport). Both of these people die -- Frank from suicide and Lily presumably dies, as she disappears and is never seen again. I will admit, I didn't like that Mandel killed off both of these characters, but I think she did it for a very unfortunate and realistic reason: it would be very hard for a disabled person to survive within a world like the one displayed in Station Eleven. It is certainly not impossible for them to survive, but there are many additional things to take into consideration that an able-bodied person does not. They don't have to worry about whether or not they'll be able to navigate their wheelchair, and they don't have to be concerned about what will happen if they don't have medications that they have to take. Like I said, I am an able-bodied person, but I do have a very serious mental illness (anxiety) that I require medication for -- the same medication that Lily was taking, actually. As someone who has dealt with the withdrawal effects of missing one of my doses, I can confirm how awful it is; I can hardly function for the day after my missed dose because of how awful I feel. I do think I would be able to make it through the medication withdrawal if I was in a situation like the one presented in the novel, but it's hard to say if I would be able to function well enough without it to survive a post-apocalyptic world. Before I started taking my medication, it was hard to leave my bed most days and take care of myself; I had trouble showering and eating because my anxiety was controlling my life. I've never really thought about what would happen to me if suddenly our entire world collapsed and I no longer had easy access (or any access) to my medication. I would like to think that I wouldn't meet the same ending as Lily, but it's hard to say.

As for why disabled people aren't more prevalent in dystopian fiction, I think it's, unfortunately, because they are far less likely to survive than able-bodied people, which makes me incredibly upset. Thinking about how characters act in these novels and even how people act now, more often than not, they have a "take care of yourself and no one else" mindset, which isn't a completely bad thing, but it makes the chances of disabled people able to find someone to help them something very rare. Most people in these novels wouldn't take the extra time and effort it requires to care for someone with a disability. They wouldn't want to take the longer route that is more wheelchair accessible. They wouldn't want to take the time to search for someone's required medication rather than looking for food. There are certainly people in our world and, I believe, in this novel that would do this (in Station Eleven, people tried to help Lily search for some medication for her), but I think most people wouldn't want to. I would definitely be someone to try my best to help them, and I understand that it takes a lot of time and effort to be able to help them in the ways that they need.

**Student Response 2)** The function of disability in texts, all kinds, especially dystopian fiction is barely there. In dystopian fiction, everything is already "bad". One would assume that the "first to go" in a dystopian setting would be those who are disabled. Survival is key in dystopian fictions and its survival of the fittest in most cases, especially in Parable of the Sower and Station Eleven. It's kind of upsetting because it's like fiction is also telling disabled people "You have no place here." In today's environment, there is a lot more representation found in texts and media compared to 5 years ago however, there is still a ton of room for improvement. And then another thought I had, disability isn't present much in utopian fiction. One would think that in a "perfect" world, those who are disabled can be treated with the best care available, considering it boasts how perfect a society it is. However, this is not always the case. In some utopian fiction,  people with disabilities are not present because they don't have any "real" contribution to the society. This isn't to say that people with disabilities always suffer this same fate of not being present. There are some cases in which generous care is given to them, in a utopian society. Going back to people with disabilities in dystopia fiction, it's clear that they are not more prevalent because it comes down to resources. They'd rather save the resources for those who can benefit the whole instead of the whole sacrificing for the one.

**Prompt #4:** "Yet it is their tears and anger, the trying of their generosity and the acceptance of their helplessness, which are perhaps the true source of the splendor of their lives. Theirs is no vapid, irresponsible happiness. They know that they, like the child, are not free. They know compassion." Discuss this quotation at the end of "The Ones Who Walk Away from Omelas." What does this mean within the context of the narrative? **Is it possible to have a happy/good/just society at the expense of someone else? (You may want to think about and relate this to current movements, such as BLM and Me Too.)**

**Student Response #1:** Throughout the story we are repeatedly given descriptions of what Omelas is like. We are also told again by the narrator just how joyous the people of this town are. The Narrator tells the story of fairytale like place; however, this idyllic town as the narrator mentions is not what it appears to be. We soon learn of its true horrors, literally and figuratively behind closed doors. A disturbing image is created of a single child who is essentially being tortured for the towns well-being is brought to the audience's attention. We also learn that even more disturbingly, the entire town knows of this horror. To the point where children, and teenagers are brought to the door where the abused child is just to show them some cruel moral lesson on how life is not "fair". Most to all of the townspeople, especially the youth are disgusted, enraged and want change for this issue. But, as we soon find out, there is truly no way to help - this child's abuse it what makes this society continue to grow and stay jovial. At the end of the story we are told of those people, both young and old who leave Omelas after discovery of this cruel, sickening act, "They leave Omelas, they walk ahead into the darkness, and they do not come back. The place they go towards is a place even less imaginable to most of us than the city of happiness..." We are told that the majority who stay after seeing the horrors of their society are taught compassion in the process, but I believe the ones that walk away are the ones who cannot simply learn compassion from such a cruel event. **To bring discussion 6 question in, I believe Ursula K Le. Guin was simply comparing our ruthless society to that of Omelas. When we think from this perspective it brings some real considerations into mind, how are we really okay to stay in our society that has so much cruelty and horror we are aware of, even if it makes us have "compassion"?**

**Prompt #5:** What parallels do you draw between this portion of *Parable of the Sower* and our current society? What parallels do you draw between this text and others we have read this semester?

**Student Response #1:** I loved this week's reading because even though our own society seems so far removed from this world in the 2020s, there really are so many similarities. And on an unrelated note, I love the author! I have never read a sci-fi book before that mentioned feminine hygiene. Never. Yet, in Parable of the Sower, Lauren makes sure to include tampons in her emergency grab and go kit. Usually in books of this genre, periods are never mentioned - but we all know they exist. I love that the author included this small detail, maybe in hopes of normalizing the female reproductive cycle, which is somewhat taboo in our society. Additionally, as a former Catholic who always questioned there faith, I really resonated with Lauren in her exploration and creation of a new belief system, something I actually did when I was around her age.

It was early on in the reading but one excerpt from this novel reminded me of the current society we live in. Just like in this novel, I am tired of the misconceptions about the homeless, the low-income, and those suffering from addiction. While Lauren does suffer from hyperempathy and she shows sadness for the people on the other side of the wall, she still sees them as dangerous. However, it seems that most of these people are "dangerous" because they were poor to begin with. She says that they get sick because they are dirty. But she acknowledges they cannot afford water. They are malnourished and skinny because they eat bad food or do not eat all. But she says they do not have access to food. So even though in her thought process, she can rationalize this, the blame still passes onto the people on the other side of the wall. That is so relevant in our society. We blame the poor and the outsiders for being different, but we are the cause of that (I am speaking for myself here because I am a privileged white girl who benefits from the oppression of others). We look in disgust when we see someone who is suffering and immediately question - "Oh, how could anyone ever let themselves get like this." However, it is our economy, government, and privilege perpetuating this system. Lauren's situation is somewhat different since it is dystopian, but we can still clearly see the remnants of our social and economic hierarchy. Instead of looking at our own lives and privilege as the reason for suffering and destitute of others, we blame them and then choices when more often than not, it was purely circumstantial that they ended up in that situation. Just like Lauren, we need to recognize that this could happen to any of us. We hit one stroke of bad luck and your entire life can be flipped upside down, even if it's not our own fault. Unless you are one of the grossly wealthy and privileged, all it takes is a couple days of terrible luck for you to end up in a terrible situation you might not be able to get out of.

**Prompt #6:** Very early in *Born in Flames*, Honey begins her radio station by stating: "A station not only for the liberation of women, but for the liberation of all." **How does the society depicted harm all citizens, not only women?** **You may want to also consider some of the displays of intersectionality we've discussed. How does this society unequally harm Black women and white women, for example?** What parallels do you see between the United States depicted in *Born in Flames*and our current society?

**Student Response #1:** This movie, Born in Flames by Lizzie Borden, was a much more difficult movie to watch than I was expecting. I have seen plenty of movies with intense scenes, but at points, this movie was much more graphic. However, I do have to say it was an extremely interesting film to watch, it had me captivated the whole time.

This film dealt a lot with radio and music and I believe they held an important purpose. From my understanding, I felt as though the radio and music served as an outlet for people to express themselves and speak their minds. These platforms also allow for mass communication, reaching the ears of anyone who cares to listen. With this ability to reach so many people, these two things, radio and music, in a way bring those who listen together as a community. A community is a group of people who have a particular thing in common, and in this case, the listeners of these radio stations and music share the desire to achieve equality and the fair treatment for all.

From the movie, Born in Flames, I also felt like there were some parallels with our current society. While some of the aspects of the film may be slightly more exaggerated, I do believe it is based on actual things that have taken place over time. Within this film, women are fired from jobs just because of their gender, and while this is not supposed to happen, it still does occur in our world. There are definitely times a qualified woman is passed up for a job or promotion that is given to a man. Also, women do not receive equal pay compared to men, which is just another example of how women are not treated equal. This is why the women in the film Born in Flames were fighting, they want equality.

**Student Response #2:** to Begin, I Found It Interesting How *Born in Flames*was shot in 1983. It’s message feels more needed and relevant today than ever. I feel as though issues of inequality are often swiped under the rug or seen as “because we live in America” not relevant. However, femicide is still an issue that’s faced here with not many people talking about its place within our society. This is similar to Adelaide’s mysterious death which took place under police custody but was written off as a suicide. This specific instance relates disturbingly similar to our current society. With cases especially among women of color ending up dead with little to no investigation. An eery similar example being that of Sandra Bland’s case, where she suddenly “committed suicide” under the watch of police. Vanessa Guillén again being a recent case where the military, a government institution was trying to cover up a death. Lastly, Breonna Taylor’s case, which got much needed attention was never served with justice. When we clearly see women being unjustly murdered and we aren’t outwardly enraged shows how well we are used to a corrupt system. What’s so terrifying and disheartening about reading science fiction/dystopian literature is that you are able to find so many commonalities in our current day society. I hope that police brutality/government cover ups of all people, but especially women of color will finally be able to be meant with justice and taken seriously in the future.