**Introduction**

Top of Form

For me, personally, I have never really enjoyed writing, especially when it comes to writing assignments I have done in the past that follow specific prompts. English and literature classes have always been a struggle for me, because my strengths tend to lean towards science and math rather than to liberal arts. One of the main reasons why I have disliked writing may be because in high school, we were constantly assigned readings and when it comes to writing an essay, we are either restricted to following an outline a teacher has made or criticized for having a paper that is “too creative” that does not fit into a box, or in this case a rubric. Often times that box is so tightly shut students are constricted from being able to grow and break free from these restrictions, almost debilitating—one thing that is true for me is that I thought of writing in a very systematic and structured way, which is why writing was so boring and almost scary for me.

During high school, I took typical English classes, such as AP Literature and Composition and AP Language, both of which helped me develop skills related to rhetorical analysis and emerging arguments based on assigned readings. While it is understandable that my teachers had to follow an assigned curriculum, it restricted students from exploring readings outside of the traditionally assigned texts and caused me to write in a systematic way that did not allow my voice to be heard in my own writing. I clearly remember in freshman English when we were given a list of “banned words” that we were not allowed to use because they were too “boring.” Or having to count up the the number of words in each sentence in my entire essay because some sentences were too long or too short. I can understand why these methods were used, to use words we are not usually comfortable with and to be conscious of run-on or sentence fragments. But I felt extremely restricted, as these activities seemed like busywork when we could spend time on actually developing our own writing style.

Coming into this class, I had anxieties regarding how exactly the class would be structured compared to my previous experiences, especially since this would no longer be a high school setting where I could simply breeze through a paper and expect an A. When I first heard about the course theme being citizenship, I was honestly terrified; terrified because I did not think I could survive a whole quarter writing about a topic I was not interested in (or so I thought in the beginning), and later on alarmed at the overwhelming amount of freedom we were given, especially on the second sequence of assignments. Through several readings and research on my own line of inquiry that I have developed, I learned about the complexity that one word, citizenship, has—and found myself interested and deeply invested, to the point where I began researching my topic for Major Paper #2 whenever I had free time, and could not seem to pull myself away from this topic. I have had no regrets in taking this class not only because I have grown as a writer, but also because of the knowledge I have obtained regarding citizenship.

Though I still have much more to learn, in these past ten weeks, I felt like I have really developed as a writer and learned how to enjoy writing. Rather than thinking of writing as a chore I must complete in order to pass a class, I discovered how important writing is outside of a classroom setting. Whether I am writing a research paper or a simple email, these all take into account the four different outcomes we have focused on. For example, I am now more aware of my audience and who I am writing to, instead of always solely writing in an academic tone, I am able to adjust my writing style to target an audience. Also, the organization of my papers have improved, instead of haphazardly regurgitating evidence in my papers, I make a conscious decision regarding the order of my claims. These are just a couple examples of how my writing as improved, as I will go into more detail in each outcome. In order to show my improvement as well as mastery of these four outcomes, I will showcase several of my revised papers including, Short Assignment #1 for Outcome 1, Major Paper #2 for Outcome 2, Short Assignment #3 for Outcome 3, and Major Paper #2 again for Outcome 4.

* Outcome 1: Short Assignment #1 will demonstrate my ability to write to different audiences by using different rhetorical and writing appeals.
* Outcome 2: Short Assignment #4 will demonstrate my ability to use various kinds of evidence to support my writing.
* Outcome 3: Major Paper #2 will demonstrate my ability to make meaningful and complex arguments, by creating my own space on an issue.
* Outcome 4: Short Assignment #1 will demonstrate my ability to provide substantial and thoughtful revisions.

**Bottom of Form**

## Outcome 1

Top of Form

Outcome 1 focuses on using different writing strategies depending on who your audience is. For instance, changing the style, tone, word choice, and rhetorical appeals to suit the intended readers. Before even writing to target this outcome, there needs to be a clear understanding of who you are writing for and what would appeal to them. This is not only important when writing scholarly papers, but is also related especially outside of academic settings, when writing to a future employer to land a job to sending a text to someone you just met, you want to engage in appropriate language that gives the reader a memorable and suitable impression.

Short Assignment #1 demonstrates how I fulfilled this outcome, which includes a political cartoon and a writer’s memo. The genre translation from Berlant’s Citizenship to a political cartoon visually shows two different mediums and appeals to two different audiences as well. Berlant’s reading is an academic text that explains the complex issue of citizenship and questions what citizenship really is and who is affected by it. The tone she uses itself is appropriate for a scholarly audience who is researching the topic because she herself cites many sources as evidence to back up her claims. On the other hand, when translating this reading, I thought of using a cartoon to appeal to a larger audience that may not be so invested in the topic of citizenship (specifically middle class citizens with a high school education and higher). I purposefully chose not to use many words as I wanted my audience to interpret citizenship in their own way and then reflect on how that may contrast with Berlant’s ideas (1.1). The few words that I do use include the question “What is Citizenship?” to call upon the issue at hand and bring the audience to question their own innate biases regarding this topic. I also have a man on the right holding a paper that says “citizen of USA” to show his legal documentation to clarify any misunderstandings readers may have, as well as the man on the left stating “You already got what you asked for.”

By re-contextualizing Berlant’s text into a completely different medium demonstrates how I am able to write for audiences outside of the university classroom (1.2). By using a cartoon to target the public who generally read the newspaper compared to Berlant’s which is targeted towards a more academic audience shows how I took a more creative approach. In order to appeal to middle class citizens who, read the newspaper, I used few words that were easy to understand and a drawing of a scale (1.3). The reason why I titled the cartoon “What is Citizenship?” is because I did not want my cartoon to seem to harsh in accusing the America for inequality, but rather question what is wrong with our society, having people of different races and classes represented on the right side of the scale. As I stated in my writer’s memo “I assume most of the readers are educated and legal citizens” which is why I chose this medium to inform those who may not be impacted as much by this topic, so I want them to question citizenship rather than accuse any privileged citizens.

In the writer’s memo I discuss the reasoning behind drawing some figures in order to reflect Berlant’s claims in my translation (1.4). For instance, I state I drew a “poor woman of color who has yet to be acknowledged, as she is not anywhere close to being on the scale, as equal counterparts especially regarding woman’s suffrage and reproductive laws” to demonstrate for every person I drew in my cartoon, I consciously thought of which smaller claims were being represented to my audience.

This was my favorite assignment because of the freedom given and how creative we were able to be. The writer’s memo helped me to think intentionally about each word I wrote and each part I drew and how it contributed to my translation as a whole. The audience is one of the most important components to think about when writing, otherwise, if the writing is not careful, then the entire paper would be a waste because the audience would not want to spend time reading it. Overall, this made me more aware of my audience whenever I am writing and to actively question what writing strategies to use.

## Outcome 2

Top of Form

Outcome 2 focuses on analyzing and synthesizing different kinds of evidence in order to support your writing. The ability to use diverse sources of evidence (primary and secondary sources) and citing them in MLA format will give credibility to your audience, knowing that the writer has done their research and invested a lot of time in their writing. Additionally, using evidence can also help to develop claims and challenge any biases the writer may have had in the beginning to look at different points of view.

This outcome was especially important to me because whenever I research or try to find evidence to support my papers, I tend to focus solely on the evidence that can backup my claims, rather than taking into account different sources that can help me develop a more complex argument. For this outcome I chose Short Assignment #4, my annotated bibliography, to demonstrate my ability to use different sources to support my claim (later used in Major Paper #2). The purpose at hand was the issue of Asian Americans in Hollywood, so I researched and found the secondary scholarly sources of one case study, an interview, and an article all related to Asians in the movie industry (2.1). The texts I used were strategically used in that I re-contextualized the ideas to relate to my argument and also challenged my claim. Being that my original claim was merely there is an underrepresentation of Asian Americans in the media, to a more complex claim “Asian Americans are underrepresented in Hollywood which has lead to the misrepresentation and stereotyping of Asians, whitewashing Asian-specific roles, and the erasure of Asians as a whole in America” (2.2). In my new argument, there are sub-claims that have made my writing more complex. The first entry talks about whitewashing, but there is something more significant than whitewashing itself, but the privilege it comes with that disregards Asians as equal counterparts to play roles that are non-Asian. This has challenged me to look beyond diagnosing the problem, but to see the bigger picture is why my writing even matters.

In this assignment I had trouble creating dialogue between my sources to support my argument; after receiving your feedback and recommendations, I wrote an abstract to bring all my sources together (2.3). In my abstract I give my overall thesis and later explain how these texts relate to my claim. For instance, I state how the last source “relates back to the fact that white people have representational power over minorities,” relating it back to the first entry and how many Asian-specific roles are whitewashed. By connecting the sources, it helps to create a flow of ideas and also helps my audience to understand why I chose these sources as evidence to back up my claim.

As for the type of evidence, though they are all secondary scholarly sources, each one is different in their own format (2.4). The first entry, Lee’s case study talks about the many people she interviewed as well as the history of Asians in Hollywood. Similarly, the second entry is an interview of Jennifer 8. Lee, but because Lee was quoted word for word instead of being paraphrased in the first source, this could be considered a primary source. Lastly, the third entry is an article which includes extensive research surrounding the controversial issue of The Last Airbender. All these sources are cited in MLA as it is important to give the authors credit for their work (2.5).

This assignment helped push me out of my comfort zone especially because before this class I have never used the UW Library or even looked at secondary scholarly sources before. Outcome 2 allowed me to look at different sources to challenge my thinking instead of relying on what I already know and frame evidence around my biases. Research of evidence is very important because it will not only help you realize what has already been discussed before you, but also what you can add to the conversation and to the bigger picture.

**Bottom of Form**

## Outcome 3

Top of Form

The main focus of Outcome 3 is to create complex, thoroughly researched arguments that are backed up with analysis of relevant evidence from a line of inquiry that includes counterarguments, resists binary thinking, and is strategically organized. This is one of the most important outcome as the bulk of your argument is from analyzing and persuading readers to understand your point of view. Additionally, this outcome causes you to actively think when writing or reading whether a text is really providing all the evidence or taking into account other opinions.

I chose Major Paper #2 to be showcased for outcome 3 because this assignment went through a lot of thought from of a line of inquiry I have had for a while (3.1). My argument is complex because I have several sub claims within my thesis, stating, “The underrepresentation of Asians has lead to misrepresentation and stereotypes, the whitewashing of Asian-specific roles, and the erasure of Asians from America, as they are seen as expendable” each of which will be expanded upon in my further body paragraphs.

Throughout my paper I explain the stakes and why this issue matters (3.2). In my thesis I already state one of the reasons being that Asians are seen as disposable because of this misrepresentation. In the third body paragraph I explain how whitewashing in not only bad because Asian actors are already limited in what roles they may be casted for, but how there is a message sent out that “Asians are not good enough to be in this industry,” almost as if they are looked down upon in Hollywood. In my conclusion I elaborate the stakes, discussing how stereotypes are reflected on people in real life and can have psychological affects on those being labeled and categorized. By being able to discuss the stakes, my audience will explicitly know why they should care about my what I am writing and possibly spread what they have learned.

My argument is backed up with analysis of relevant evidence and reasons in that throughout my whole paper I include sources to back up assumptions and larger set of claim being that there is underrepresentation of Asians in the media (3.3). For example, I use the statistic that 12% of directors are of a minority group, and though I did not find any specific number for Asian directors, I used that evidence to show how there is even a smaller percentage of Asian directors in Hollywood. Showing how there is not only an underrepresentation of Asian actors, but also directors and producers who create these opportunities.

I take into consider several counterarguments and refute them in order to make my argument stronger (3.4). I state “In the eyes of many directors, Asians are not ‘bankable’” and go against that by discussing the limited roles Asian actors are given and discriminatory casting that specifically looks for white actors. Another counterclaim is that “Some justify the whitewashing of Asian-specific roles by saying that well-known actors casted for these roles will increase box office ticket sales” which is rebutted with statistics to show how some well-known actors did not bring in the expected sales. I did find myself looking at another point of view, trying to figure out why some white actors who played Asian-specific roles won Oscars. But the answer was simple, the audience helped support them and this went against my initial claim that only casting directors and producers were to blame. As a result, I modified my claim so that I included audiences as a large part of how Hollywood has been shaped today.

Lastly, for my organization (3.5) I start by contextualizing the issue and explaining why this issue is relevant and then a thesis to describe the issue and why it matters. Then my first body paragraph includes some history of immigration laws because that directly ties into stereotypes. After discussing the stereotypes, I wanted to relate it back to the limited roles Asian-actors are given and are limited because of whitewashing, and I continue with this flow until I reach my conclusion and explain why this problem matters. As for transitions, I state at the end of my second body paragraph, “white people are able to transcend and play any role, while Asians are still struggling to be casted in Asian-specific roles” and in the next paragraph tie it into how some justify whitewashing and how it is not necessarily bringing in more sales.

Overall I had the most trouble with this outcome, particularly with developing a complex claim from a line of inquiry. This may be because in the second sequence of assignments, being given so much freedom, I was unable to hone in on a specific argument, and wanted to cover more than I could handle. This outcome is not only important in academic settings, but also outside in the real world. From trying to persuade someone that you are suited for a particular job to convincing your friend to buy you a pet corgi, you may never know when this skill may come in handy.

## Outcome 4

Top of Form

Outcome 4 is centered around the revision process, responding to issues raised by the instructor as well as peer reviews, as well as lower order concerns that include grammar and punctuation that may interfere understanding of the writing. This is important because not every paper will be perfect the first time it is written, and there is always room to improve. With this mindset, by taking into account issues raised by instructors and peers, this will substantially improve your writing, even if it means tearing about your original work and creating something completely different.

For this outcome I want to showcase my Short Assignment #1, genre translation, again. I am most proud of what I have revised in this assignment because I feel like after editing the political cartoon and writer’s memo, the translation is clearer is easier to understand and I think clearly articulates Berlant’s claims (4.1). Before revising, I knew I needed to be more specific in representing Berlant’s claims, so I reread Berlant’s text in order to get an idea of what those sub claims were. Once I got an idea and what details were missing, I added three extra figures on the right side of the cartoon, each person representing a different group of people affected by citizenship and how they were struggling to stay on or get on the scale. Unlike my original drawing which only had a man, which did not clearly portray Berlant’s reading because she specifically talked about women as well that are affected by citizenship and people of color.

Responding to some recommendations given by peers and instructors (4.2), it was mainly to be more specific in portraying Berlant’s claims as well as being more explicit in my writer’s memo, regarding who my target audience is. Before revision, I simply stated my audience as being people who read the newspaper and political cartoons, by after receiving feedback, I went into the specifics concerning the age group, socioeconomic class, and more. I also included the American flag cape on the man on the left as suggested by you to make the man seem more patriotic and a “true” American, to show the irony in how everyone in the cartoon are citizens, but apparently not deemed American enough to be granted the full rights of citizenship that a white male counterpart may have.

There was no grammar, punctuation, and mechanical errors (4.3) needed to be fixed for my actual political cartoon as there is not much text there in the first place. But for my writer’s memo I made sure to proofread and use spell check to make sure of there are no errors.

Before when revising or giving feedback, I usually put more concern in lower level concerns, such as grammar and spelling. But I realized that it is not a bad thing to be revising whole parts of my paper in order to get a better end product, even if that means deleting something completely. High order concerns, such as the clarity of an argument which may affect the whole paper or organization that could confuse the reader must be tackled first before looking at the more insignificant issues that may not distract the reader as much. I found out after reading many comments and peer review that I need to work on high order concerns, such as being more specific in my claims, stating assumptions so I do not confuse my reader, and trying to be more organized in my ideas.

## Final Reflection

Top of Form

First off I want to thank you for taking your time to read my whole portfolio! Secondly, I want to thank you for being a thoughtful instructor who cared about your student’s success in your class. I first entered this class scared and dreadful, but after completing English 131 I have left not only a lot of knowledge surrounding the many outcomes and citizenship, but overall how to actually enjoy writing, which is mainly by writing about issues I personally care about, but I never know I cared so much about citizenship until after I came into your class.

Through this class I have learned to be more articulate in my writing and how to clearly express my ideas by supporting them with evidence and analysis. Even though some of the assignments were difficult for me because of the unfamiliarity of the outcomes and freedom given, I struggled and I think I have improved as a writer, but also a reader. I know now, when reading (almost anything) what to look for in persuasive and analytical texts.

Outcome 1 and my translation has allowed me to be more aware of my writing strategies depending on the writing context and audience. Outcome 2 and Short Assignment #4 has allowed me to research different kinds of sources to support my writing by analyzing, challenging, and contextualizing texts. Outcome 3 and Major Paper #2 pushed me to produce a complex and multifaceted argument that explored a line of inquiry I had. Lastly, Outcome 4 and Short Assignment #1 again allowed me to appreciate the art of revision and how I have learned to discern high order concerns from lower order concerns.

I definitely do plan on applying what I have learned in this class to papers I may write in the future. As I do intend to go in a science related field/career, I hope I can participate in research. Hopefully I will write research papers someday and have them published. But on a more realistic note, I will definitely use these skills when writing cover letters for jobs and even for when I apply to my major if they require a personal statement to demonstrate my credibility using the outcomes.

All in all, I think I honestly may have learned more in these 10 weeks in English 131 with you as an instructor more than any of my English classes all combined. I am truly thankful to have had you as my English instructor because I can tell you genuinely love English and care about the progress of all your students (also thank you for always treating us to sweets in class). I wish you the best in your new position in the English department and hopefully we will meet again in the future!

Cheers and I bid you adieu!

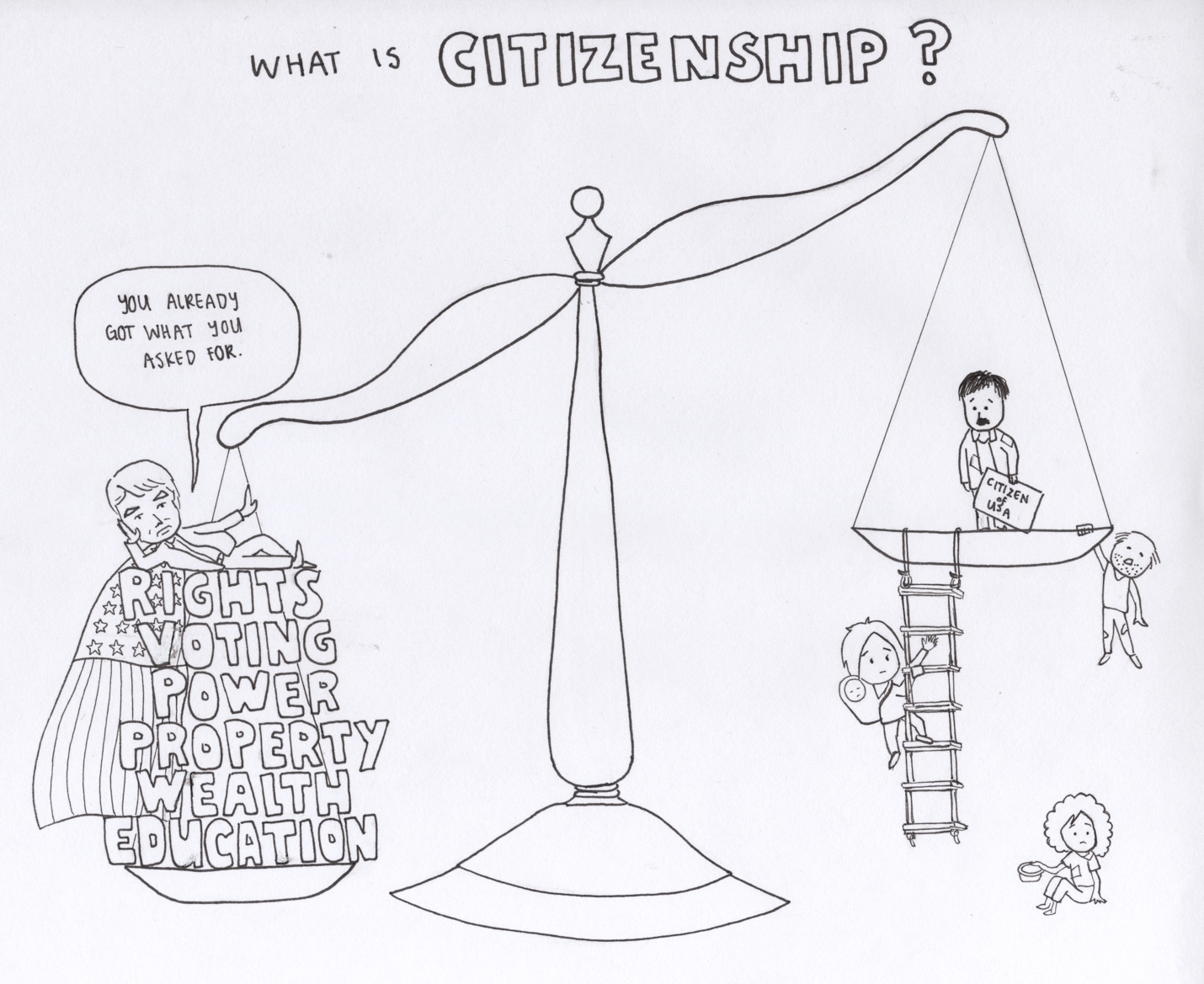
STUDENT

INSTRUCTOR

English 131 Y

3 April 2016

Genre Translation in Berlant’s “Citizenship”



Writer’s Memo

For this assignment I decided to translate Berlant’s reading, “Citizenship,” into a more accessible medium, a political cartoon. One of the reasons why I chose this first reading is because it was this the most difficult text (in my opinion) that we have read so far in class and also because the difficulty causes there to be a narrower audience. With the political cartoon, I wanted to allow a broader and larger range of people to know of Berlant’s ideas.

The cartoon that I drew only has a few words, but I know that Berlant’s central ideas consisted of finding out what exactly is citizenship, who is affected and who has access to certain privileges of citizenship. I think by having less words, it allows the audience to interpret what citizenship means to them, but also realize how citizenship is more than just a legal documentation and includes social, cultural, and economic spheres of influence. In Berlant’s reading, there was no one sided argument, answer, or definition regarding citizenship, which is what I want my audience to actively think about as well. Additionally, political cartoons, being a visual, is welcoming to more people, but not necessarily everyone. But compared to Berlant’s text, I think generally people who keep up with current events or who read the newspaper would be the audience of my drawing—specifically middle aged people who have had basic (high school) education and is of a middle or higher socioeconomic class. This is because those of a lower class may not have the free time or luxury to read for fun compared to those of a higher class. Berlant’s audience is more academic because the length in itself is most likely for those researching the topic of citizenship. Sources are cited and historical evidence is used to back up her claim which allows Berlant’s text to be scholarly. Contrasted with my translation, which is mainly more visual because my broader audience may not have the interest or time to read an entire essay on the topic of citizenship, so my cartoon allows readers to have more of an overview of Berlant’s reading.

In the cartoon, a man is placed above a handful of words. The reason why I chose the words, “education, wealth, property, power, voting” is not because all immigrants do not have those things, but because a majority of legalized citizens do not have equal access to them and as a result, limits their rights. The different kinds of citizens that Berlant mentions are influenced by those specific words, which is why I drew an immigrant holding documentation of their citizenship as well as other groups of people who have yet to even make it on the scale. One woman is struggling to climb a ladder to gain the full legal rights some men already have while carrying a child on her back. The woman and child emphasize the state’s control over woman’s rights, specifically limitations regarding “women’s marital practices, age of consent, marital rape, reproduction (e.g., abortion, surrogacy, and adoption), and child protection” and how little control some women have over these issues. Also, a man (of color) who is clearly of a lower class is hanging on to the scale to show how many immigrant’s citizenship status depends on the “…fluctuations in capitalists’ needs and white racial anxieties about disease and moral degeneracy…” and there is an idea that poor immigrants are “stealing” jobs from true Americans. Lastly, I have a poor woman of color who has yet to be acknowledged, as she is not anywhere close to being on the scale, as equal counterparts especially regarding woman’s suffrage and reproductive laws as well as the “material experience of sovereignty” that has been limited from the poor (Berlant). So it does not matter if someone is simply a legal citizen if they are not a cultural, consumer, sexual, or global citizen because all in all, there is more to being a citizen than just having a legal documentation.

Lastly, the comment the man states on the left, “You already got what you asked for,” contributes to the reason why citizenship is not discussed about more in our society. Many people assume that immigrants who gain citizenship legally, automatically have all their problems solved and should not be complaining for more rights. He also has an American flag cape on to show how he is a “true” American, being a white man who has been granted all of the privileges he rests on, having “rightfully” deserved them. Most people who are citizens never give the topic a second thought, which is why I added the comment for my audience, as I assume most of the readers are educated and legal citizens as well, who may not give this issue a second thought. Many people do not see a problem in our system which is why I chose this medium, in order to inform the people who are not as affected and who can make a difference regarding citizenship.

I think I did well on getting Berlant’s main idea across, which is thinking about citizenship and what it means and who may be positively affected or negatively affected by our system. I resisted binary thinking because rather than having legal vs illegal depicted in my cartoon (just like how Berlant did not take sides and stayed away from binary thinking), I showcased both sides as legally being citizens but there are still some inequalities shown that most people do not know of or think about. But to challenge myself, I can work on being more elaborate and detailed, if I do draw another political cartoon in the future.

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STUDENT

INSTRUCTOR

English 131 Y

6 May 2016

Annotated Bibliography

Abstract:

Asian Americans are underrepresented in Hollywood which has lead to the misrepresentation and stereotyping of Asians, whitewashing Asian-specific roles, and the erasure of Asians as a whole in America. The disproportional amount of Asians in lead roles in the movie industry is only representative of society as a whole and how there is still this thought that Asians are “alien” to America and not a part of the history that has brought the US to this day. The first source will help advance my claim by describing the issue of Asian actors not being given the opportunity to play lead roles or even some Asian-specific ones as well. Going beyond the idea that whitewashing is bad and questioning why white actors have the privilege to play any role regardless of the character’s race while Asians are still stuck with stereotypical roles. The second source complicated my argument in that Hollywood is not the main reason to blame, but Asians have to take into account their actions as well and how they are contributing to the movie industry is they want to see change. The last source discusses *The Last Airbender* and the unjust casting decisions, but also relates back to the fact that white people have representational power over minorities. If Asians are unable to tell their own stories, how can they expect to play a bigger part in Hollywood at all?

Lee, Joann. (2001). ASIAN AMERICAN ACTORS IN FILM, TELEVISION AND THEATER, AN ETHNOGRAPHIC CASE STUDY.*Race, Gender & Class, 8*(4), 176. Retrieved from http://search.proquest.com/docview/218857051?accountid=14784

In this text, the main arguments are how most Asian Americans are not even given a chance to be in Asian-specific roles and how often times white actors and actresses are given those roles because they already have a name made for themselves. Even though the lack of roles given to Asians for Asian-specific roles are extremely important because there is already underrepresentation of Asians in the media, it is also important to give Asian actors a chance in lead roles as Asian-specific roles are limited and only have to do with the race and ethnicity of a character. With underrepresentation there is misrepresentation, because Asians are often portrayed as “stereotypical parts as Korean grocers, gangsters, immigrants, computer geeks, kung fu experts, and foreign businessmen” resulting in roles that have no three-dimensionality or complexity for these actors to grow.

Lee is an Associate Professor and Co-director in the Journalism at Queens College. The information given is reliable in that Lee completed a series of ethnographic case studies, interviewing about 20 or more Asian American actors, but did state how the people he interviewed do not represent all Asian American actors in the movie industry. The evidence Lee uses is mainly the opinions of Asian American actors, not so much of hard data, which may limit the credentials since those interviewed by Lee state their feelings surrounding the topic to back up Lee’s claim. Additionally, a lot of research was done regarding the history of Asian actors in Hollywood, including specific movies that that have been whitewashed and stereotypical Asian roles throughout history to modern time (2000s).

I want to use this paper to broaden my claim and the importance of the issue by using evidence from the actors interviewed. For instance, one actress stated she felt a “…role was demeaning, and it didn't allow for much growth” which will backup my claim on the limitations of Hollywood. Before, my claim was mainly about how Asian American actors should be given Asian-specific roles, but I will expand by stating how lead roles are even more important because Asian-specific roles are limited in scope and there is only “…little opportunity to go beyond that.” Additionally, I want to address the topic of who exactly would be appropriate in an Asian-American role- does the type of Asian matter. What exactly is considered Asian?

Lin, Q. (2011). As all-american as general tso's chicken: An interview with jennifer 8. lee. Asian American Policy Review, 21, 67-70. Retrieved from http://search.proquest.com.offcampus.lib.washington.edu/docview/1239519921?

In this text the Asian American Policy Review interviews Jennifer 8. Lee, in which Lee talks about Asian American women in particular and how they are portrayed in the media. Lee first talks about how she decided to go into the media, as she is a journalist and is the author of the best selling book, *The Fortune Cookie Chronicles*. Lee discusses Asian Americans in the US media, and how it is complex in that there are two questions to be asked: “Is it because the talent pool is too small? Or is the talent pool being blocked by prejudices against Asian Americans?” as well as the different kinds of medias being considered. There are many factors in why Asians are underrepresented and rather than putting the blame on someone, people should start taking action.

The Asian American Policy Review (AAPR) is comprised of Public Policy candidates from Harvard, while Lee is a journalist who has previously worked for the New York Times. Since this was an interview, there was not much information regarding AAPR, but Lee talks about her own experiences being in the Asian American Association at Harvard College as well as her opinions on Asian Americans going into the media. The purpose of this interview was mainly to get Lee’s thoughts on Asians in media in general, one being that “I've observed by watching YouTube is that the channels that get the followings are often those of Asian American singers/songwriters.” The interview is purely opinionated and does not include any logos, but there is ethos in that Lee has been involved in the media industry for a while and knows what issues are at hand.

I want to use Lee’s ideas to make my claim more complex in that Hollywood is not the only one to blame for the underrepresentation of Asians, but Asians themselves need to step forward and take a risk to be in media if they want to represented. As Lee stated herself, “It struck me at that moment that this is a creative generation of serious Asian American talent” but are these talented people disciplined enough to go into such a risky field? This interview will help my essay into getting people to take action and know that they are accountable, whether it is watching movies with Asian actors or trying out to be in the movie industry itself. People cannot expect stereotypes and flat-characters for Asians to go away if we do not take action into our own hands.

Lopez, L. K. "Fan Activists and the Politics of Race in The Last Airbender." International Journal of Cultural Studies 15.5 (2011): 431-45. Web.

The article discusses the controversy of casting in *The Last Airbender* and fan activism that can potentially foster civic engagement regarding representation of minorities and Asian American identities. Lopez goes beyond the argument that the casting in *The Last Airbender* is wrong, but develops and examines why race is such an important issue to the fan activists and draws questions about the authenticity of Asian culture versus what the movie portrays. I want to focus on the casting issue as it was noted that “Caucasian or any other ethnicity” was used when looking for actors, and also develop my argument on who really is appropriate for Asian-specific roles (as there is not a definitive answer)? Why are white actors able to transcend beyond their whiteness to play any character while Asians are almost always limited to Asian-specific roles?

Lopez published this article from the University of Southern California and is apart of an Asian American advocacy organization as his goals are politicization and advocacy for Asian Americans. Lopez explicitly states the drawbacks and benefits from this research because he was not only a researcher but also a community activist, thus he could not have been an outside observer throughout the whole study. Lopez was seen as “…an equal participant rather than an authoritative academic…” which most likely shaped the answers received when interviewing activists apart of the research. Lopez mainly focuses on tracking a website (racebending.com), looking at statistics of the website, the discussions online, conducting formal interviews of those in charge of the organization Racebending.com, and recounting the history of whitewashing Asian characters.

Dyer stated, “this property of whiteness, to be everything and nothing, is the source of its representational power” and is the main issues of minority representation in the media. I want to use this source to look at the bigger picture and the sources of outrage for many fans. Essentially, the systematic structure of our society that benefits white people is what causes there to be a mainly white Hollywood. Before, I was largely focused on Asian Americans fundamentally “deserving” Asian-specific roles, but Asian Americans deserve equality in casting opportunities for all roles as do all minorities do. The message, “In an ideal world, John Cho could play George Bush and Keanu Reeves could play Martin Luther King Jr. But I think we can all agree that we are not there yet. People of color are still not being allowed to tell their own stories” helps to explain why there is controversy of whitewashing in the first place, which will help people understand why representation is important as well as realizing what privileges you may have, is a big step in fighting this issue.

STUDENT

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Is Hollywood Racist? Asian American Representation in the Movie Industry

Every year when The Academy Awards comes around the corner, the controversy of the Oscars being “so white” is brought up. The problem with this issue is that it is only discussed once a year and is later forgotten when the Oscars are no longer relevant. Additionally, The Academy Awards is not to blame; as Viola Davis said, "You can't win awards for roles that simply aren't there." Asian Americans as well as other minority groups are often overlooked and not given more prominent roles in Hollywood because of biased casting directors and racial stereotypes that have limited roles for minorities. The Oscars should be the last to blame because there simply is not a sufficient amount of Asian Americans casted in movies, which stems not only from Hollywood’s producers and casting directors but also audiences themselves who may be feeding this cycle of underrepresentation. Asian Americans have constantly been underrepresented in the movie industry because there is a historical root cause that Hollywood has perpetuated to this day; a legacy of racial inequality, not just in casting but in America as a whole. The underrepresentation of Asians has lead to misrepresentation and stereotypes, the whitewashing of Asian-specific roles, and the erasure of Asians from America, as they are seen as expendable.

Asians are typically stereotyped in two extremes, one being the model minority and the other being through yellow peril, which relates back to the history of Asian immigration laws. Throughout history there has been “…cycles of acceptance (motivated primarily by the desire for cheap, rootless, and dependable labor) and rejection (fueled by racial prejudice and fear of economic competition)” against Asians (Hing). Because of this exploitation of Asians, today’s framework and perceptions of Asians has ultimately been influenced by these laws, thus reflected upon Hollywood as well. For example, the most typical view of Asians are stereotypical roles, including “Korean grocers, gangsters, immigrants, computer geeks, kung fu experts, and foreign businessmen,” none of these roles having actual substance that furthers character development or show the complexity of a character (Lee). Because Asian actors are stereotyped and categorized, they are seen less than human and more as a device to simply move a story along. Being portrayed as an immigrant and foreigner usually goes along with yellow peril, depicting Asians as a threat and being villainized or on the other spectrum, being shown as the model minority, the archetypal Asian nerd. In the film *Rising Sun*, Asians are shown in a negative light, as being foreigners that need to be gotten rid of, which is a prime example of yellow peril in Hollywood (Yuko). Similarly, in *The Last Airbender*, the casting of the four main characters was initially all white, but was later changed so there were three white actors, as the heroes, and one Asian actor—who was casted as Zuko, a villain. Thus Asians are utilized in Hollywood, almost as disposable, either in degrading or insignificant roles.

Asian actors are typically given stereotypical or one-dimensional roles, which already limits many acting careers of Asian Americans, but also, whitewashing of Asian-specific roles continues to reinforce white privilege as being extendable beyond racial boundaries. Whitewashing is the practice of deliberately changing the race of a character (in this case Asian) to that of a white person. Whitewashing is inherently bad because there is discrimination against minorities to purposefully cast someone white and only trivializes the importance of ethnic minorities, as they are usually given supporting roles. Recently, it has been announced that Scarlett Johansson will be playing the lead role for *Ghost in the Shell*, which is an adaptation of a Japanese animation about a cyborg named Makoto Kusanagi. Supposedly the director chose Johansson for the role because her name would attract a large audience to this unknown anime adaptation, allowing them to spend more money on the production. But the problem with this casting is whitewashing an Asian character and not giving a new actress to breakthrough Hollywood. What makes this issue worse is that Paramount acknowledged experimenting CGI visual tests (computer-generated imagery animation), but supposedly on a background character—which apparently makes it more acceptable than testing it on Johansson—to “shift the ethnicity” of the character (Sampson). This shows how there is white privilege in Hollywood as white people are able to transcend and play any role, while Asians are still struggling to be casted in Asian-specific roles.

Some justify the whitewashing of Asian-specific roles by saying that well-known actors casted for these roles will increase box office ticket sales, but statistics do not seem to support that. Why change the ethnicity of an actor when you could simply cast an Asian actor for the role? If Hollywood really is worried about making the most money, instead of spending millions of dollars on visual effects an Asian actor should be given the opportunity to break through in the industry. *Aloha* which starred Emma Stone as a character with Hawaiian and Chinese heritage, created a huge controversy about whitewashing. *Aloha* was made for about $40 million, but grossed about $20 million, which is a “poor figure for one starring Stone, Bradley Cooper, Rachel McAdams and Bill Murray, from the writer/director of Jerry Maguire, which grossed over $150m in 1996” (Smith). This supports the fact that audience members, once again, do have power when it comes to box office sales, in this case *Aloha*, was most likely caused by the negative reviews and controversy surrounding Stone’s casting to resulting in such low figures.Additionally, after criticism, Stone realized there is an “…insane history of whitewashing in Hollywood and how prevalent the problem truly is” showing how many people are not conscious of white privilege because they may not know the experiences minorities go through (Smith). Thus, audience feedback as well as consumer power does make a difference and how we can make an impact with what we choose to watch. If viewers do not want to see a whitewashed character in Hollywood, why is it that casting directors to this day cast white people in Asian specific roles? Bigotry and racism do play a part in whitewashing, but it also has to do with audience criticism and what has worked well in the past. To prove this point, Luise Rainer has won the Oscar for Best Actress in her role for being a Chinese woman, O-Lan, in the movie “The Good Earth.” Also Linda Hunt who won the Oscar for Best Supporting Actress for acting the role of a Chinese-Australian man in “The Year of Living Dangerously” (Fitzpatrick). Both Rainer and Hunt played a part in whitewashing these Asian-specific roles. Directors and producers rely on what has worked in the past, but now that audiences are more aware of the implications of whitewashing and recent films such as *Aloha*, *Dragonball Evolution*,and *The Last Airbender* receiving negative criticism, hopefully there will be a change. When white people are casted in Asian specific roles, there is a message being sent out that Asians are not good enough to be in this industry. White privilege is truly powerful in that white people dominate not only Hollywood, but our society as a whole.

Media representation of minorities is extremely important in that our views are profoundly influenced by what we see around us. Without representation there continues to be an erasure of minorities which feeds what Patel describes as the 'nationalist narratives' of America, undermining the importance of minorities and only prolongs this unfair treatment. The nationalist narrative, that is embraced by many, is typically the myth of America being the land of freedom and equality, while also having the American Dream, that anyone can accomplish through hard work (Patel). This nationalist narrative is false simply because Asian Americans are not given equal opportunities in Hollywood and the work does not add up to the results thus proving meritocracy in America as a myth. Many people may think meritocracy is rewarding, shown by the model minority and Asians who are educated, but is there really equal access for Asians in all platforms? By erasing ethnic minorities from being represented, this contradicts any equality America may have and show how the American Dream is not necessarily attainable, at least for minorities. Hollywood and the media shows how racism is still prevalent in America because the media is a direct reflection of our systemic structure, how our government is shaped as our society and how it has been built to influence our actions. It is also notable that there is a disproportional amount of Asian directors in Hollywood. In a 2014 report, a pie chart showed there being about 12% of minority directors compared to 88% of directors being white (Hunt). Of the 12% minority of minority directors, there is an even smaller percentage of Asian directors. These racial stereotypes along with underrepresentation implies how Asians are seen as “aliens” and not a part of American society.

In the eyes of many directors, Asians are not “bankable” because most Asian actors are not given the opportunity to build a box office track record. An instance of when an Asian actor was not even given an opportunity to audition is when Edward Zo tried out for the role of Light Yagami in the U.S. adaptation of *Death Note*, and was told to his face that they “were not looking for Asian actors” for that specific role (Zo). Thus, they casted someone else, specifically a white actor. In this case, this had nothing to do with Zo being incompetent for the casting, but rather race was the determining factor, which is blatant racism. This, unfortunately, happens to many Asian American actors, especially when it comes to multifaceted and complex lead roles. Thus, Asian actors cannot be blamed for not having the experience or track record because they are brushed aside in Hollywood and have to work twice as hard, if not more, to build a track record worthy of being casted for. Another example is when Wong Fu Productions, a company that started on Youtube, wanted to produce a film, so they went around to different production companies asking for help, but were told by several companies that “they did not want to make this movie because [Wong Fu Productions] wanted Asian American leads.” The production companies justified their statement saying “it isn’t a good business choice” and “there’s no market for it” (Wang). All of this was proved wrong when Wong Fu Productions decided to produce a movie by themselves, *Everything Before Us*, showing how people did want to see a movie with mainly Asian actors and how the audience is able to look beyond the race of Asians to enjoy the movie. Though it is true there is discrimination when purposefully casting a Caucasian actor over a minority, even when an Asian actor is casted, there is usually only “…little opportunity to go beyond that” (Lee). In an interview Lee had with Asian American actors, one actress stated she felt a “…role was demeaning, and it didn't allow for much growth” which is usually the result of being casted as the comic relief, stereotypical Asian, or token character. These roles are limiting because there is no character development to show the three-dimensionality of Asian Americans and are only used to move the plot along. Though some may argue that Asian actors are not fit for this industry, there is blatant discrimination in casting actors, as well as the power of audience members, who tells us otherwise, that would not mind seeing Asian actors in lead roles.

Media representation of Asian Americans as well as other ethnic minorities is extremely important because what Hollywood displays, subconsciously becomes a part of you. For instance, the model minority stereotype could have “…psychological, emotional, and social costs for Asian American students, such as studying harder and longer, enduring loneliness and alienation, and experiencing extreme depression and stress” (Zhang). The model minority specifically causes there to be an expectation of all Asians to be smart, and when it is not met, one may not seem “Asian” enough. Thus, when you constantly have visibility and are given representation, you have the privilege to be shown that you are an important part of society, which is what white privilege is. On the other hand, ethnic minorities are seen from a limited scope, not seen as an individual, but generalized as a whole. As a result, there is a perpetuation of stereotypes that maintains the status quo and ensures that there is little opportunity for minorities in the movie industry, which is why diversity is important in lead roles. Thus, by whitewashing Asian-specific roles, as well as blatantly discriminating Asians when casting actors, this leads to not only an underrepresentation of Asian Americans in Hollywood, but sends a message that Asians are not worthy of being represented by complex characters and seen as a tool that can be disposed of. The structure of our society was built by many immigrants, which includes white people. There is an idea that ethnic minorities are the only immigrants in America, and almost seen as “aliens” while white people have been in American from the beginning, which is not true as Native Americans were the first people. Because often times ethnic minorities are alienated in supporting roles or brushed aside when not even considered for a role, the message being sent out is— we like the culture you come from, just not you. If people of color are not allowed to tell their own stories, in Asian specific (or any ethnic minority) roles, how does someone expect there to be lead roles for Asians at all when white people have the privilege to take any story and claim it as their own?

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