**Inquiry 3: Personal Canon**

*Canon: a list of works considered to be valuable, worthy of study, and of high quality.*

Now that we’ve explored how audiences receive texts, and how contexts shape those receptions, you can start to think about what types of texts you personally value and how your own contexts have shaped the way you think about the texts you like. For this project, you will **create your own canon of texts** you feel should be celebrated, but perhaps aren’t, working towards understanding **why you perceive these texts as having value.**

Your canon should include **at least 10 texts** (books, short stories, movies, albums, songs, video games, TV shows, comic books, graphic novels, images, etc.). For each, you should provide a brief summary and describe what it is about this text that you value, and why you think it deserves a spot in your canon (**minimum 100 words per text**). You can almost think of your canon as an annotated bibliography of texts that unite to reveal something about what you value or think should be valued in texts. In inquiry 1, your goal was to reveal something new or unseen about the text to your reader. The goal here is similar: what’s special about this text, and why is it valuable, in your opinion? What is it that resonated so deeply with you? How would others benefit from being exposed to this text?

For example, perhaps the show *Breaking Bad* affected you in its treatment of greed and power while changing the way you thought about TV shows because of its divergence from traditional serialized television story-arcs. In this case, you would briefly summarize the plot of the show and describe why and how *Breaking Bad* affected you, thematically or otherwise, and what others could learn from watching this show.

Your canon will be accompanied by an **800-word minimum writer’s reflection** in which you discuss how your personal experiences and the contexts you live in affect the way you receive texts or make choices about what kinds to consume. It’s important to make reference to specific contextual aspects of your life—i.e. geographical (national, cultural), where you go/have gone to school (educational), the time-period you grew up in (historical)—in relation to how they contribute to how you receive texts.

Questions to consider for your writer’s reflection:

* What might this list reveal about what you personally value in texts?
* How might it be representative of one or more of your contexts?
* What has this inquiry revealed to you about the Western canon or “high culture?”
* What have our discussions on traditional canons revealed to you about the types of texts that are taught in schools or widely talked about in relation to your own canon? How are they different, and why might account for these differences?
* What do you think a canon should *do*? In other words, what sort of experiences or lessons should a reader encounter in texts? What sort of experiences or lessons as represented in texts are necessary?
* How does your canon align or diverge from traditional notions of the canon?
* Have you preserved any sort of traditional canonical texts? How does your canon change or expand traditional notions of what the canon should include?

You will have 5 minutes to share one of your favorite texts with your classmates, explaining why you like it and what sort of value it holds to your life. You may choose to bring the text to pass around the class. These presentations are both brief and informal.

**Grading**

Personal canon: 80 points

Writer’s reflection: 100 points

Presentation: 10 points

Rough draft/peer response: 10 points

**Total: 200 points, or 20% of your overall grade in the course**

**Important Dates**

April 10th: Rough draft due for peer response

April 15th & 17th: Presentations

April 24th : Final draft due

**Some Tips**

While this is an opportunity for you to share your likes and preferences, keep in mind that you should be selective in the texts you include in your canon, meaning you should include texts that affected or changed your life, changed the way you thought about something, or spoke to you in an important way. For example, I love the movie *Anchorman*, but it hasn’t changed me in a profound way or added value to my life beyond entertainment. **Don’t simply select texts you like**—rather, approach the project in a way where you’re thinking about what texts have affected your life and how these might be beneficial for others as well.

Your writer’s letter is your opportunity to reflect **honestly and critically** about some of the concepts we’ve explored in class this semester, like context and canons. Your grade for this portion will largely have to do with how deeply you’ve engaged with any or all of questions listed above.

You only have enough time to present one of the texts from your canon-- pick the one you’re most excited to share and think your classmates would benefit from knowing about.

Please practice what you plan to say for your presentation—**while these are informal, you only have a firm 5 minutes**. It’s a good idea to time yourself so you don’t run the risk of being cut off.

A good way to ensure you’re on the right track with your project is to meet with me to discuss your work. I’m here and happy to help!