

Majerus general proposal (inspired by all group proposals in combination)

Big goals and priorities:

“A class in which everyone is passionate, prepared, and comfortable. We want good discussion to be a foundation of the class. Everyone, even those who may not be as comfortable with discussion, will be invested in the class material.”

“Goal of the class: The promotion of critical thinking, creativity, and student engagement while maintaining a relatively low-stress environment.”

“Main ideas: The effects of music on learning, class participation and its importance, and alternatives to reading quizzes to gauge participation.”

Elements that are sure to be part of our plan:

- Some element of reading aloud in class
- Time outside at least once a week
- Some movement each day
- Nap time at least once a week
- Independent reading
- Minimal personal device use in class
- At least 3 alternative-first-five-minutes activities at the start of class
- Plants, fairy lights, more color/art in 205

Other elements/ideas under consideration:

Environment:

Plants ✓✓✓✓ (“Green space in class/Walks outside”)

Fairy lights

Art; Colorful Decor

Quiet background music ✓

Flexible seating (alternative chairs, beanbags, cushions and/or rugs; “no rows, small pods and large circles are good)

Pets/animals/stuffed animals; Therapy Dog

Clean-up/organize the space

Desks in a circle

Friendly

Grow a garden or a plant

Policies and habits:

Minimal technology?

- “Low-tech attendance”
- “NO READING ON COMPUTERS OR PHONES AT ALL”
- “Technology-free reading and/or napping day”

Pass/fail grading √√ (“less than 70% is a fail, above 70% is a pass”; “receive either an A or D in the class dependent on effort”)

Movement every day/movement flexibility (“Not sitting for the entire class period//Option to stand or sit on the floor”)

Open door policy

Food is to be allowed.

Activities:

Alt first-five min of class:

- “Job rotation”
- [Laughter yoga?](“Laughing...is good for the heart and helps alleviate stress”)
- What did you do over the weekend? on Mondays
- [Announcements one day]
- [One day for individual scheduled-but-optional show and tell/short “this I believe”/recommendations or denunciations]

Question box [<3]

Reading out loud √√

Outdoor discussions & activities √√√√ (“no matter the weather” vs “if the weather isn’t nice, then we go to the lounge or somewhere else”; “Green space in class/Walks outside”)

Independent reading √√√√√ (“Library for independent reading days”; “Independent reading has many benefits, and there is research which backs it. However, it doesn’t seem you need to be convinced as you already believe so yourself. We do too! Let’s make this one happen!”)

Snack time √

Nap time √√√ (“Technology-free reading and/or napping day”)

Movies and shows related to books (Shrek? Handmaid’s Tale?) √√

Whole-class journal

Journaling from reading

Craft days

Cooking days

Low homework / “Minimize hw given outside of class” √

Class blog? Individual blogs? ✓✓ Ideas:

- “We make one blog as an entire class and each person makes one solid blog post”
- Blog posts in place of essays

Audiobooks [could be in place of out-of-class reading, since reading aloud is already an idea several groups have proposed?]

Assignments:

In-class reading and other in-class assignments

Other short readings (short stories, historical background, essays, philosophy)

Project ideas:

- Flexible projects (projects that have creative and essay option; group or individual options; short story option)
- No required papers; instead, 2 fairly open-ended group projects (student chosen groups)
- Group projects at the end of the quarter, can choose book
- Emphasis on projects instead of essays/exams
- Open-genre projects (option of group projects or individual projects) ✓✓
- Revision option for students who write essays [Status-quo in all Majerus classes]

Connect discussions to 2019 and our lives to address life skills

Reading each book in a different way (See Cocoa, Alex, Jack, Brandon, Dante proposal; also Ayah proposal: Read the entire book in class for 1-2 weeks; at the end of each day, each student takes 5 minutes to write down thoughts in their notebooks on what they just read; can discuss briefly in small groups; end with a three-day open class discussion)

Quiz ideas or alternatives:

- Group grades (if 80% of class gets above 80%, everyone gets an A?)
- Pass/fail quizzes
- Quizzes replaced by in-class short notecard response
- 3-2-1 (3 details you remember, 2 questions you have, 1 opinion about a character or event)
- Open-ended reading quizzes ✓ (“instead [of quizzes] we could do a sort of questionnaire handout that we fill out after we do the reading that asks about what we thought was interesting, what we want to talk about in class, etc.”)
- Kahoots with food incentive
- No pop-quizzes
- Games ✓ (“ie. Kahoot, Jeopardy, Snakes & Ladders”)

“Maybe” things that I have some reservations about:

- Clickers for class discussion (“adding an interactive/competition aspect to topics that others deem boring”) [research article based on science education, not sure of usefulness in literary/cultural discussions]
- Extra credit [This idea seems to contradict many of the other ideas expressed repeatedly regarding a possible pass/fail system, or at minimum less of an emphasis on grades. It also seems to me as a teacher extremely traditional]
- The games ideas for alternatives to quizzes [I’m interested in this but concerned that many of the suggested games—e.g. Kahoots—aren’t suited to reading quizzes of complex literature, and I’m also wary that we’ll spend more time and energy in class than a traditional reading quiz would take. I am, however, very open to new ideas for relatively efficient—possibly newly invented—games that would actually offer a meaningful way to engage with the reading for the day/week. I am entirely open to many of the other alternatives-to-quizzes ideas that have come up.]
- Therapy animals [I’m totally open to stuffed animals. Actually living animals would need to be OKed by the Uni powers that be, and I would also want that to be an occasional rather than every-week thing. If we have therapy animals in class, we would need a small crew of volunteers to arrange that, so if anyone has therapy dog connections, let me know.]

Basic Weekly Schedule

Still a work-in-progress. See “**Weekly schedule suggestions**” at the bottom of this doc for a digest of weekly schedule ideas from groups that proposed them

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday

Student roles:

Digested priorities:

Leaving the classroom at least once per week for various reasons; Going outside for walks and discussion

Regular independent reading (+ nap time?) with no technology

More open-ended reading quizzes/choice during quizzes

Reading background stuff/short stories

If we do creative projects, have an accompanying shorter paper connecting it to the book

Little work outside of class: fewer essays/readings and more projects

Comfortable in-class environment: snacks and green environments

Low-stress environment with pass-fail system: freedom to be creative

Classroom aesthetics: plants, fairy lights

No written homework

Reading out loud in class and discussions

Reduced emphasis on grades and formulaic assignments

Independent reading

Multimedia projects

Discussions are good

No homework outside of class

Having Green Space

Reading the whole book before discussing it (for just one book)

A physical class journal

Pass/Fail Grading

Having stuffed animals in the room

Therapy dogs

Independent Reading days

Alternatives to quizzes

‘Open genre’ type projects

Experiential Learning Days

Small Group Discussion

Blogs

Change in scenery

Games rather than quizzes

Food

All group proposals in their entirety

Fourth period:

Raine, Hadiyah, Betsy, Aminah, Bridget

Official Proposal

Our physical environment:

Plants: They make for happier environments. There's research to back this up: <https://www.phsgreenleaf.co.uk/the-benefits-of-plants-in-schools-and-educational-facilities/> and <https://public.wsu.edu/~lohr/pub/2010LohrBenefitsPltsIndoors.pdf>

"Flexible seating:" We'd fill our space (which, depending on other factors, could be the room we're in now, Uni Gym, or some other room) not only with desks but with various types of chairs, beanbags, cushions and/or rugs. We believe this will help encourage discussion, as it creates a more comfortable, natural space. There's not much research, but it seems like it's a step in empowering students:

<https://www.edutopia.org/article/flexible-classrooms-research-scarce-promising>

Also, it can look quite nice:

<https://www.edutopia.org/article/high-school-flexible-seating-done-right>

Low-Tech Attendance: Everyone puts their phones at the front of the room in the beginning of class. From there, they can be counted to take attendance.

Habits and Practices:

Job Rotation: For the first ~5 minutes of class, we have a job rotation (elementary school style). Potential "jobs" could include meditation, watering the plants, preparing snacks finish the reading, chat/share how your day is going, write a note to someone who goes underappreciated in our Uni community (janitor, etc.) Managed by a rotating list (clothespin list, rotating dial). Research shows that this helps kids feel more involved in the class: <https://www.responsiveclassroom.org/classroom-jobs/>, <https://www.scholastic.com/teachers/articles/teaching-content/classroom-jobs-all-your-student-helpers/>

Tests, Assignments, Projects, and Quizzes

Question Box: Majerus reads your question, asks it to the class. Also could write observations

Tests: We're thinking that we shouldn't have major tests, as that's been the case for our previous English classes and it works well.

Assignments: We'll have days on which we have reading homework, mostly so we can finish the book in a realistic amount of time and be prepared for discussions. Other assignments???????? We could have "in-class" assignments of notebook prompts which could help people collect their thoughts and be prepared for a discussion.

Projects:

Possibly projects with a “creative” option AND an essay option. Possibly group or individually.

Quizzes:

Occasional reading quizzes, as an incentive to do the reading? Quizzes could potentially be graded in a group manner (ex, majority of class gets over an 8/10, everyone gets an A)? Quizzes with the option of answering quiz questions or a prompt. You could also write details you remembered from the reading for some credit (depending on the amount of detail). Write questions on the syllabus (that would be on the quiz or similar) so students feel prepared if there is a quiz. More detail here

Our Overall Goal:

A class in which everyone is passionate, prepared, and comfortable. We want good discussion to be a foundation of the class. Everyone, even those who may not be as comfortable with discussion, will be invested in the class material.

Annette, Tori, Matthew, Sam, Ethan

Main Ideas

- Reading out loud→ depends on book, which ones lend themselves to being read aloud? Short stories, poems, day to day activities, background info, history, philosophies - **Sam**
 - From personal experience: I've been a part of a reading group, that meets every week and reads aloud, since 6th grade. I think there are many benefits to reading aloud, even if some efficiency is sacrificed. Three things reading out loud helps from my experience:
 - Pronunciation: I've found that I, and I believe I am not alone in this, have a vocabulary that is strong on paper; I know what the words mean, but I don't use or say them, so I don't actually know how to pronounce them. Reading out loud teaches pronunciation for vocabulary that students may or may not know.
 - Comprehension and pacing: I think many people read too fast, racing through the pages for the plot or “important information” and losing sight of the details and nuances that make writing great. I think in some way, school has trained us into this mode of reading. Reading aloud forces the pacing to slow down, to the rate that language is communicated and writing is meant to be consumed. I've found that it greatly helps with understanding and comprehension of the text.
 - Discussion: Connected to comprehension, reading aloud lends itself to discussions. I propose that we sit in a circle, and each person who wants to can read a paragraph. Whenever an idea or question comes up,

discussion can ensue right then and there, as we are speaking aloud anyways. I advocate for unfettered discussions, and stories and tangents that may take us far away from the material in the book.

- Overall, I find reading aloud with a book a meaningful and productive way to read. It would be hard to do for an entire book, but I propose a schedule, in which every Wednesday we read aloud. That way, we can read on our own over the weekend when we have more time, and discuss, and then read aloud Wednesday.

- Outdoor discussions, no matter the weather - **Matthew**
 - <https://www.theatlantic.com/education/archive/2018/04/early-childhood-outdoor-education/558959/>
 - Nature reduces stress
 - Outdoor discussions would be especially powerful if we were in a biology class that actually studies nature, but this is Utopias and Dystopias.
 - https://greatergood.berkeley.edu/article/item/the_surprising_benefits_of_teaching_a_class_outside
 - “Kids can actually pay better attention in class after an outdoor lesson,” she says. “This is nice for teachers, because you don’t have to stop teaching and you still get that bump in attention.”
 - Students focus not only during the outdoor class session, but when they attend their next class inside, they’re more focused.
 - Less distractions (usually less electronics) and more interactions
 - “The Restorative Power of Nature”
 - Alleviates stress
 - Increases “intrinsic motivation” to learn
 - Make students happy and carefree!
 - Personal Experience:
 - Fresh air allows me to think clearer. When I had independent reading day outside for sophomore english, I felt like I could read forever.
 - For Nonfiction Writing, our class would go on walks outside to discuss essay ideas and topics. It was an amazing experience. Casual but meaningful conversations. Most importantly, it wasn’t boring! The combination of talking and walking is perfect.
 - Going outside (at least for me), forces me to become more attentive and active.
- Free reading time: independent reading for the whole period, outside, Fridays - **Annette**
 - http://www.ala.org/aasl/sites/ala.org/aasl/files/content/aaslpubsandjournals/slr/vol3/SLMR_IndependentReading_V3.pdf
 - “The amount of free reading done outside of school has consistently been found to relate to achievement in vocabulary, reading comprehension, verbal fluency, and general information.”
 - https://www.heinemann.com/unitsofstudy/assets/uos_msr_samplechapter_2.pdf
 - The more you read, the better you get at it (more skillful, versatile, engaged) so independent reading would make us better class participants
 - Independent reading also helps students improve at reading because they do it at their pace (more personalized)
 - “Learners need support reading information books and building a knowledge base and academic vocabulary through information reading.”

- Nonfiction is important for developing knowledge about the world. Maybe students can be required to read at least one nonfiction book/article/whatever.
 - Reading 90 minutes a day would be a good minimum goal, according to research. That's impossible for us, but we can still come at it with a "the more the better" type attitude. Definitely no less than 45 minutes a week.
 - Having access to a variety of books is important.
 - Perhaps there can be an allotted amount of time (5-10 minutes) at the beginning of Reading Day, during which students can visit the library? Just to make sure students aren't grabbing a random book, and that they actually read something they'll enjoy. Having some books in the class would also be good.
 - "Learners need opportunities to talk in response to texts" "both written and oral"
 - Maybe not for every Reading Day, but every month or three weeks or whatever, we can write in our journals about what we read. Or, we can get into smaller groups/partners and discuss briefly.
 - NO READING ON COMPUTERS OR PHONES AT ALL. If it's allowed in class, we won't actually read. We'll do other stuff instead (homework, games...).
- Quizzes replaced by in-class short notecard response→starting point for discussions - **Tori**
 - Book-to-book experimentation, traditional quizzes for one book, Kahoot for another
 - <https://chroniclevitae.com/news/315-we-should-give-students-more-tests-seriously>
 - If we give many, mini quizzes, students will get used to them and won't have to cram for big tests
 - Testing helps retain information and material
 - Valuable teaching tools
 - <https://chroniclevitae.com/news/719-they-haven-t-done-the-reading-again>
 - Testing students is a good way to ensure they have done the reading
 - An alternative to quizzes are handouts with discussion questions to prepare the students for the next day
 - Maybe instead of quizzes we have a couple questions to answer about the reading and bring to class the next day
 - Or make students answer questions about the reading at home and turn it in the next day
 - <http://web.b.ebscohost.com/ehost/pdfviewer/pdfviewer?vid=2&sid=ae8d326a-c33e-4408-8369-7e041b545de8%40pdc-v-sessmgr01>
 - writing assignments can also increase reading compliance
 - More likely to read when the assignments are shorter

- We could do short readings for every other day (no quizzes), and longer readings for the weekend and get quizzes for those
 - An alternative to quizzes: 3-2-1
 - Students write 3 things they remember from the reading or important events that happened or character observations
 - Then write 2 questions they have
 - Then write 1 opinion about a character
 - Bingo
 - Students make a board with character names or events or themes or archetypes provided by the teacher
 - Teacher then asks questions with the bingo spots as answers
- **Other Readings:** In addition to reading the four novels we should have occasional discussions about short stories, historical background, and philosophy. These readings would be short enough to read in one night or in class and have a self contained discussion which relates to utopian or dystopian ideas.
 - Utopian/Dystopian short stories: An example would be 2BRO2B, a short dystopian story by Kurt Vonnegut. This could be read in one sitting, and discussed in one class period.
 - Historical Context: In class Ms. Majerus could explain the time period and how the novel is relevant. Alternatively we could read sources such as this news article. <https://www.bbc.com/news/magazine-21337504>
 - Essays by the Author: Before or during the reading of a novel our class could spend a day reading essays written by the author concerning the goals and style. An example is George Orwell's Why I Write.
 - Lastly we could read philosophy pieces related to utopian/dystopian ideas. We could read pieces by modern philosophers about totalitarianism, fascism, politics... such as Hannah Arendt.
- These discussions should incorporate Freire ideas, and other pedagogy of problem-posing. They could be structured as typical english discussions with a stress on asking questions. Both students and Ms. majerus should pose questions such as "How is this related to a utopian ideal", "what is the philosophical basis"

Other Ideas (highlighted are our favorites/more developed):

Learning environment

- Plants in the classroom!

- Art
 - Finger paint wall based on reading
- Quiet background music, nature sounds
- No rows, small pods and large circle are good
 - Sit on desks

Activities

- Snack time, someone brings snacks for the whole class each week

Assignments

- Free writing, for homework, respond based on reading, discuss in class
- Class blog, one person posts per week, at the end of the week
 - Leave comment every week no comment word limit, must leave comment but don't have to be profound
 - Response to discussions
 - Or thoughts on the book
- Every individual writes a short story, then gets critiqued by their group
- Group projects for the end of the quarter→ depends on readings
 - Write in style of author
 - Write alternative ending to story
 - Make a utopia a dystopia and vice versa
- Do reading at home over the weekend, then do in-class reading on Tuesday and Thursday
- Discussions:
 - Connect to 2019 and our lives in an attempt to teach "life skills"
 - History and politics to get background info

Catalin, Tim, Lili, Minji, Leslie

Learning environment

- Green space in class/Walks outside: green space is incredibly important in academic environments and could greatly improve our learning
 - (<https://news.stanford.edu/2014/04/24/walking-vs-sitting-042414/>)
 - Steve Jobs and Mark Zuckerberg 🍷
 - Walking has been proven to improve creativity and encourage critical thinking
 - Even for only 5 minutes, thinking is improved during and after walks
 - Not necessarily the green space, but just the act of walking, so we could even just walk around the hallway!
 - <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC5663018/>
 - Green space improves mental health
 - Green space should be incorporated into community spaces to encourage well-being
- Plants and fairy lights in classroom

- Fairy lights are softer lights, which provide a more calming environment than bright, fluorescent ones
 - https://www.huffingtonpost.com/entry/lighting-boost-learning-concentration_us_5720cb14e4b0b49df6a9b73e
 Researchers in Korea tested different lightings in classroom environments and tested how lighting affects students performance, they concluded that cool, bluish lights that mimic natural daylight are best for intense academic activities, but that warm lighting is best for calming activities
 “The researchers concluded that the 3500 K warm lighting may provide a relaxing environment to support recess activities, whereas the 5000 K ‘standard’ lighting may be applied for reading activities, and 6500 K dynamic lighting supports students’ performance during intensive academic activities.”
- <https://education.cu-portland.edu/blog/classroom-resources/welcoming-classrooms-better-students/>
 - Study that shows that students that were in an aesthetically pleasing and comfortable classroom learned better-- it felt more “homey”
 - Things like fairy lights definitely add to both the aesthetically pleasing and comfortable feeling of a classroom, which is proven to be beneficial for students to learn
- <https://www.edutopia.org/blog/why-learning-space-matters-ramona-persaud>
 - Average American school is over 50 years old: while teaching methods and technology are changing, physical learning spaces aren’t developing
 - Students need to comfortable to learn: this includes well-designed artificial lighting, and other furnishings

Policies and habits

1. Pass/fail grading system (less than 70% in a fail, above 70% is a pass)
 - a. Less stressful for the students
 - b. Allows students to step outside their comfort zone and take risks when doing assignments
2. KAHoots for Quizzes (Food incentive)
 - Not graded because stress is bad:
<https://fosteredu.pennfoster.edu/3-ways-stress-negatively-affects-student-performance>
 - But! Still incentive because students are competitive
3. Pass/fail quizzes (no quizzes on Mondays because people could read the reading earlier in the weekend and not be able to remember specific details)
 - So you can demonstrate knowledge of the reading without failing if you miss one question

Activities

- Naptime: Naps during the day help to “reset” the system, leaving people more energized. Even just a 20 minute power nap is effective. More than 20 minutes can help boost creativity and memory. *Why is naptime especially beneficial for us?* Teenagers are more often than not sleep-deprived (especially Uni kids!). We go to bed late, wake up early, and overexert ourselves throughout the day.
 - <https://www.webmd.com/balance/features/the-secret-and-surprising-power-of-naps#1>

- <http://healthysleep.med.harvard.edu/healthy/matters/benefits-of-sleep/learning-memory>
- <https://childmind.org/article/teenagers-sleep-deprived/>

- **Snacktime**

- Have one person (or a couple) bring snacks one day a week for the class
- <https://healthyeating.sfgate.com/benefits-children-eating-snacks-during-school-4999.html>
 - Snacks provide important nutrients that students need in between meals
 - Students should have a nutritious mid-morning and mid-afternoon snack at school, to meet the needs we have as our brains and bodies are still growing and developing

- **Movies and TV Shows for books + discussing them afterwards**

(<https://journeysinfilm.org/for-educators/teaching-with-film/>)

- 65% of people are visual learners
- Especially in this generation, lots of students take in information better visually because they are constantly visually stimulated outside of the classroom as well
- Provokes good discussion
- Different mediums allow for alternative interpretations which are valuable for further discussion and insight on how the book displays utopias/dystopias.
- Most students want to watch movies, and they learn better when they are more eager
- Alternative movies and tv that are still utopias and dystopias but aren't the books we read in class
- Shrek, Shrek 2, Shrek Forever After
 - In Shrek Forever After there is a dystopia; in Shrek Forever After, Shrek signs a contract from Rumpelstiltskin that makes his life into a living nightmare, he is transported to a world where ogres are hunted like criminals and his wife, Fiona, doesn't remember him anymore and Rumpelstiltskin rules with an ironfist. In today's age, we can do more than read a book to discover how dystopias are displayed. For instance, we can watch a Shrek movie, something childish, but with darker undertones. There are juniors in this class, so it would help keep them innocent and furthermore some people are visual learners. Seeing something on a tv screen may help stimulate their learning capabilities. - Dr. Leslie Anukwu
- (<https://www.oversixty.com.au/entertainment/movies/watching-movies-is-good-for-you>)
 - Laughing, which can be caused by funny movies, is good for the heart and helps alleviate stress
 - Showing movies to children helps make them more creative and has shown to improve their test scores
(<https://www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2012/03/120320115140.htm>)
- Movies decrease anxiety and up relaxation, because they divert attention to other activities (<https://exploringyourmind.com/film-therapy-benefits-watching-movies/>)

- **Discussions in class**

- Have a designated discussion day, or change schedule to have a discussion day if people want to discuss something
- Discussions help students actually understand the reading, because often readings can be confusing and students reading it quickly will not pick up on everything
- **Class blogs (we make one blog as an entire class and each person makes one solid blog post)**
 - Class blogs are an easy way to have people discuss the books, but an issue is that if blogs are throughout the whole semester many people run out of ideas of topics to post on, having a class blog and the person writing a post rotate would relive the issue of running out of ideas and be a nice way to people to interact
- **PETS**
 - A classroom pet >>> OR just bring in different pets once a month (like therapy dogs):
 - **BENEFITS**
 -
 - Taking care of a pet instills a sense of responsibility
 - Presence of an animal lessens tension
 - Pets strengthen social skills, and can help kids do better in school
 - <https://www.petsintheclassroom.org/benefits-of-classroom-animals/>
 - Pets make a class feel like home
 - <https://www.weareteachers.com/high-school-classroom-pets/>
 - Therapy animals have so many benefits including: lowering physical pain, releasing calming endorphins, lowering blood pressure, relaxation
 - <http://www.redbarninc.com/blog/benefits-therapy-animals/>

Assignments

- **Little outside work**
 - Few essays, projects instead
 - A project for each book
 - Essay option (minimum number of essays you have to write)
 - Class time for reading, so little reading at home
 - One day an in-class reading day
 - Homework is not proven to be beneficial for students and takes away time that is better spent with family, friends, and doing things that students enjoy. Studies show that after a certain amount of homework a night, homework becomes useless and methods of testing show a decrease in scores. Homework is useless after spending a long day in school, therefore for this class we propose to lower the amount of time spent on it outside of class.
 - <https://www.lincnet.org/cms/lib05/MA01001239/Centricity/Domain/108/Homework.pdf>
 - <https://www.apa.org/monitor/2016/03/homework.aspx>
 - <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/pdf/10.3102/00346543076001001>

Weekly schedule

- Week schedule:

- M: Reading day / Work day (if a project or essay is coming up)
- T: Kahoot quiz; Walking outside + discussion
- W: Discussion
- Th: Discussion then nap (vice versa?)
- F: Snack day / Movie day / Nap day
- Flexible

Cocoa, Alex, Jack, Brandon, Dante

- **Goal of the class:** The promotion of critical thinking, creativity, and student engagement while maintaining a relatively low-stress environment.
- **Weekly schedule**
 1. **Monday**
 - a. In class reading day specifically for the books for the class. Each book is read in a different method as explained in the Reading section.
 2. **Tuesday**
 - a. Discussion of readings during class.
 3. **Wednesday**
 - a. Outdoor day (normal class activities but taking place outdoors)
 4. **Thursday**
 - a. Discussion of readings during class.
 5. **Friday**
 - a. Technology-free reading and/or napping day.
- **Learning environment**

Outside discussion day
<https://www.frontiersin.org/articles/10.3389/fpsyg.2017.02253/full>,
<http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=ulh&AN=132768307>)
 Reliance on natural light like we have been doing thus far
https://www.washingtonpost.com/archive/politics/1999/11/26/study-says-natural-classroom-lighting-can-aid-achievement/776b9d19-05e8-417a-8591-3053063ad8be/?utm_term=.deeb26d497e8)
- **Policies and habits**
 1. A pass/fail grading system (receive either an A or D in the class dependent on effort) would produce a lower stress environment, promoting creativity and experimentation. It limits the competition that is all too prevalent in modern education, while simultaneously encouraging self-evaluation. There have been

very few studies of pass/fail systems in high schools in recent years, but a 2006 study showed that a pass/fail system (in medical school) produced similar student performances, while reducing stress and increasing group cohesion (<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/17120399>). We would still receive criticisms and feedback on our work, but would be able to consider this advice without too much pressure. While letter based grading provides specific, numeric feedback, written feedback is already enough, giving better, more concrete details than any letter could portray. A pass/fail grading system will remove the stress and arbitrariness of letter grades, without sacrificing the quality of criticism and assessment. Since there have been virtually no conclusive studies, we could try out a pass/fail system, and adjust the grading as the semester progresses.

2. Nap time/independent reading day - although independent reading can be very beneficial for academic success (<https://www.shsu.edu/academics/education/journal-of-multidisciplinary-graduate-research/documents/2016/WhittenJournalFinal.pdf>), sleep deprivation is a huge issue in high school settings. Due to a combination of busy schedules and excessive homework, an extremely low percentage of high school students get the sleep that they need. This impacts many facets of a student's life - academic performance, physical health, psychological well-being, etc. While late starts have been observed to be beneficial for high schoolers (<https://jamanetwork.com/journals/jamapediatrics/fullarticle/383436>), it is a solution that would be very hard to implement at Uni. Instead, we could make the independent reading day have an optional nap aspect, such that exhausted students could catch up on some much needed sleep. This could refuel students for the rest of the day, and considerably improve performance at school (<https://www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2018/04/180425195621.htm>).

- **Activities**

Reading each book in a different way - explained below

- **Assignments**

- a. Open-ended reading quizzes - after each reading, everyone will be required to show in some way or another that they completed and understood the reading. This could be by writing a short summary of the reading, or making a drawing based on what happened in the story. They might even record a timelapse video showing them reading the book. As long as their method proves that they did the reading, they can be free to do so creatively.
- b. In-class readings preceding or following discussions (in notebook, focusing on quality over quantity)

- c. 2 fairly open-ended group projects (student chosen groups)
 - d. No papers, they don't actually give us anything we can't get from class discussions or projects
- **Reading**

We as a group feel that it would be a valuable exercise to read the four assigned books in four different ways. After exploring these different methods of reading, we would then compare and contrast them, deciding which may be best for the individual's personal exploration of books or which may be better for accelerating the discussion of the class as a whole. Modern high school students, based on a unofficial personal survey conducted at University Laboratory High School, are, as one student put it, "swamped with work". These are our ideas of four different and contrasting reading methods.

 1. **Reading as a whole class**

As it has been suggested by students previously, certain methods that involve reading during class time may be beneficial to the engagement of students during discussions. In this imagining of a reading environment, every Monday the class sits in a circle. One student at a time reads a section of the book and then passes the responsibility to the next student. Throughout the first class of the week, the reading is absorbed and enjoyed by the entire class, whatever is not finished in class is homework. This leaves the rest of the week for discussion of the reading -- on Tuesday we discuss Monday's reading, on Wednesday we discuss Tuesday's, etc. -- and any other lessons planned by the teacher.
 2. **Reading in small groups**

Similar to the previous suggestion, the reading would take place during class preferably at the beginning of the week. This leaves the rest of the week for discussion of the reading -- on Tuesday we discuss Monday's reading, on Wednesday we discuss Tuesday's, etc. -- and any other lessons planned by the teacher. Small, student selected (to promote a comfortable and accepting environment), groups read the books out loud to each other. Many people aren't comfortable reading to a large group, particularly consisting of people they aren't close friends with, and so this format would contrast wonderfully with the large group reading environment.
 3. **Listening to a reading of the book**

As it has been shown in many child development studies, listening to reading of books is incredibly beneficial. Although the previous two reading environments incorporate listening as an aspect of reading, this method would be the most pure form. Depending on the teachers willingness and or the quality of an audiobook listening to a pre recorded reading of the book is a viable option. The only problem with this is that the interpersonal communication is not as tangible with

an audiobook as it is with a live reading.

https://teach.its.uiowa.edu/sites/teach.its.uiowa.edu/files/docs/docs/What_are_the_Benefits_of_Reading_Aloud_ed.pdf

4. **Reading individually**

As an essential refresher directly before the final discussion of the reading environments, a traditional form of reading is our final reading method.

- **Homework**

While there are arguments both for and against the use of homework in a high school setting, there is a general consensus that more than 2 hours of homework a night is more detrimental than beneficial. With the current workloads at Uni, practically every student is already exceeding this threshold. While receiving homework in this class wouldn't be too bad if it wasn't excessive, a drastic reduction in homework would still be enormously helpful when factoring in all of the homework from other classes that already burden students. Furthermore, it has been observed that homework is a huge stressor for students, while simultaneously being seen as tedious and boring. It prevents students from developing other skills or talents, and forces them to spend hours of their lives on aspects of school that don't interest them. Many students experience health problems as a result, fail to meet developmental needs, or fail to develop important life skills.

(https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/answer-sheet/wp/2014/03/13/homework-hurts-high-achieving-students-study-says/?utm_term=.e62e05b8257f, <https://www.healthline.com/health-news/children-more-homework-means-more-stress-031114#4>). Therefore, we believe that while homework doesn't necessarily have to be banned in this class, it should be kept to a minimum. We could finish in-class readings at home, or have reading homework prior to an in-class discussion, but writing homework should be assigned more sparingly, since it requires much more time and dedication. If/when we do receive writing homework, it we should concentrate on shorter writings that apply more critical thinking.

Fifth period:

Churovich, Rushing, Cheng, Subbiah, Tangella

Prior to Beginning Course Routine:

- Plants (get 1 free blog post for bringing in a plant)
Research | <https://www.phsgreenleaf.co.uk/the-benefits-of-plants-in-schools-and-educational-facilities/> | This source emphasizes how plants are proven to increase memory retention and performance by about 20%, while reducing feelings of tension and anxiety by about 37% and anger by 44%. Additionally, they are often thought to promote community and friendly environments.
- Clean-up/organize the space
Research | Students often argue that how their space is organized reflects their productivity.

Key Aspects of Learning Environment:

- Plants
Research | <https://www.phsgreenleaf.co.uk/the-benefits-of-plants-in-schools-and-educational-facilities/> | This source emphasizes how plants are proven to increase memory retention and performance by about 20%, while reducing feelings of tension and anxiety by about 37% and anger by 44%. Additionally, they are often thought to promote community and friendly environments.
- Colorful Decor - Try to get posters of the books
Research | <https://smithsystem.com/resource-library/article-library/color-world/> | “The impact color has on a room and its occupants is undisputed.” It is proven that large amount of bright colors, especially reds and oranges contribute to overstimulation, but red and orange in small quantities positively influence learners’ attention to detail. Green and blue contribute to calmness; yellow contributes to liveliness and energy.
- Outside Classes
Research | <https://beneylu.com/pssst/en/classroom-environment-and-its-impact-on-learning/> | A 2006 academic paper pointed to a 2000 study of schoolchildren in California as evidence that outdoor education improves kids’ grades. After studying on an outdoor curriculum basis, students from 11 schools scored higher than students of traditional systems in 72% of assessments in everything from math and science to attendance. The same year, Dennis Eaton published in his book *Cognitive and Affective Learning in Outdoor Education* his finding that students’ cognitive abilities are better developed outside the classroom than in.
- Therapy Dog
Research |

<http://theconversation.com/therapy-dogs-can-help-reduce-student-stress-anxiety-and-improve-school-attendance-93073> | Therapy animals are intended to improve a person's social, cognitive and emotional functioning. Additionally, research shows that therapy dogs can reduce stress physiologically (cortisol levels) and increase attachment responses that trigger oxytocin - a hormone that increases trust in humans. Moreover, the text emphasizes that working with a therapy dog decreases learner anxiety behaviors resulting in improved learning outcomes, such as increases in reading and writing levels.

Key Aspects of Policies and habits:

- Not sitting for the entire class period//Option to stand or sit on the floor
 - <http://web.b.ebscohost.com/ehost/detail/detail?vid=9&sid=2edc8ea5-6fa7-4979-9255-3e3ac2120d70%40pdv-v-sessmgr03&bdata=#AN=112634817&db=ulh>
According to research done by the director of ergonomics at Texas A&M, standing workers are more focused and healthier. Students that stand and move during class tend to be more engaged.

Key Aspects of Activities:

- Emphasis on projects instead of essays/exams
- Emphasis on group discussion
- Blogging
- **No pop-quizzes**

Weekly schedule:

Monday:

- What did you do over the weekend? (5 minutes)
- Important Passage from the reading read out loud (20 minutes)
Research |
https://www.heinemann.com/unitsofstudy/assets/uos_msr_samplechapter_2.pdf | This source captures the many benefits of reading out loud - some of which include increasing attention span, developing listening skills, and growing vocabulary.
- Group discussion of the passage (20 minutes)

Tuesday:

- Journal entries over the readings... taking the place of reading quizzes (10 minutes)
Journal Entries are a good way to develop writing and reasoning skills. It also allows a students to develop their own opinions and their own voice through writing.

<https://www.scilearn.com/blog/5-reasons-students-should-write-every-day>

- Group discussion of readings (35 minutes)
 - Discussion outside, temperature permitting

Wednesday:

- Group discussion of readings (35 minutes)
- Begin working on weekly blog post, 300 words (10 minutes)

Bloggng has many of the same benefits as in-class journal entries. While it's not as private as a notebook, it's still a great tool to develop writing skills and independent thinking.

Thursday:

- Journal entries over the readings... taking the place of reading quizzes (10 minutes)
- Small group discussion of readings (35 minutes)
- [Once book is read, dedicate 45 minutes to watching the film adaptation]
- [Project Day (45 minutes)]

Friday:

- Independent reading day (45 minutes)
 - Background music included
 - Going outside, temperature permitting
 - No computers
- [Once book is read, dedicate 45 minutes to watching the film adaptation]
- [Project Day (45 minutes)]

Research |

http://www.ala.org/aasl/sites/ala.org.aasl/files/content/aaslpubsandjournals/slr/vol3/SLMR_IndependentReading_V3.pdf |

“The amount of free reading done outside of school has consistently been found to relate to growth in vocabulary, reading comprehension, verbal fluency, and general information”, which suggests that free reading done in school would have similar effects. The article also notes that “Ozburn (1995) described a sustained silent reading program in a ninth-grade reading class of sixty, most of whom were at-risk students. Students gained an average of 3.9 year levels on their reading achievement test scores during a one-year program.” which is a substantial increase for a short period of time. |

<https://www.shsu.edu/academics/education/journal-of-multidisciplinary-graduate-research/documents/2016/WhittenJournalFinal.pdf> |

This document, The Impact of Pleasure Reading, notes that reading for pleasure is highly correlated with better grades. Multiple studies have been done on the subject and are cited by the article, and all, with a single

exception, showed a strong connection. A 2013 study, for instance, showed a 9.9% increase in math scores and a 14.4% increase in vocabulary.

The article also notes that “The added freedom of middle school and young adult students makes it imperative to give adequate time for independent, self-chosen reading”, in order to develop reading skills that are correlated with success into the future.

https://www.heinemann.com/unitsofstudy/assets/uos_msr_samplechapter_2.pdf

Researcher Richard Allington suggests that 90 minutes of every school day be allocated to reading among middle schoolers.

Kristine, Albert, Nicole, Christelle, Kevin

Learning environment

- Desks in a circle
- Friendly
- Library for independent reading days (mondays) and possibly also game days (fridays)

Policies and habits

- Open door policy
- Food is to be allowed.
 - Veverka, Sommar. “Eating in Class Benefits Students.” *The Mirador*, 23 May 2014, mhsmirador.com/opinion/2014/05/23/eating-in-class-benefits-students/. \
 - “Eating in class is beneficial, as long as it doesn’t distract others from learning. Without food it’s hard to function, let alone focus, which makes it difficult to perform well throughout the day. It’s important to fuel the body with food because it enhances memory strength, concentration, and energy levels and will enable students to be successful.”
 - Perhaps we can have a rotation in which students bring in snacks for the entire class once in the semester. (Mr. Murphy does this in his classes)

Activities

- Naps
 - ¹ Lau, Esther Yuet Ying^{1,2}, laueyy@eduhk. h., et al. “Beneficial Effects of a Daytime Nap on Verbal Memory in Adolescents.” *Journal of Adolescence*, vol. 67, Aug. 2018, pp. 77–84. EBSCOhost, doi:10.1016/j.adolescence.2018.06.004.
 - “The findings suggested that a daytime nap opportunity supports consolidation of declarative memory among adolescents.”

- “Insufficient weekday sleep, coupled with weekend compensatory “sleeping-in”, leads to large weekday-weekend disparities in sleep duration, which in turn has been reported to predict outcomes such as falling asleep, lower grades and late arrival to school (Gibson et al., 2006).”
- Mix of small and large group discussions
- Going outside for class
 - “The Surprising Benefits of Teaching a Class Outside.” *Greater Good*, greatergood.berkeley.edu/article/item/the_surprising_benefits_of_teaching_a_class_outside.
 - Going outside for class has consistently improved the focus of students not only for said class, but also for indoor classes afterwards.
 - Serves as a stress relieving break in the middle of the school day.
- Reading out loud for one of the books. Maybe choose the densest book or the one that’s slowest to get into.
 - <https://seascscs.net/documents/2017/10/The%20Hidden%20Benefits%20of%20Reading%20Aloud%20with%20Jim%20Trelease.pdf>
 - “How does a child develop a large vocabulary even before school starts? Children who are spoken to and read to most often are the ones with the largest vocabularies.”
- Game Days - Jeopardy, maybe kahoot

Assignments

- Quiz Alternative
 - Games
 - Jeopardy
 - Acting out scenes where one person doesn’t know what scene they’re acting out
 - Pictionary
 - Just some examples - probably the most effective would be jeopardy but variety would be fun as well
 - de Freitas, Sara. “Are Games Effective Learning Tools? A Review of Educational Games.” *Journal of Educational Technology & Society*, vol. 21, no. 2, Apr. 2018, pp. 74–84. *EBSCOhost*, search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=a9h&AN=128981057. This particular study found that the field of games in education is actively growing. From the research that they conducted, they found that the effectiveness of games as a part of educational environment is “overwhelmingly positive”. Although including the right games might be challenging, it is an effective tool.

- If we do have Quizzes, they would have 4 questions, with only 3 needed to be answered correctly for full credit.
- Blogs? No strict deadlines
 - Ex. 2 per quarter but you can do them whenever you feel inspired by the reading
- Each quarter choose a book to do a (open) project/paper on. We'll read 2 books per quarter.
 - Open projects can encompass a variety of things
 - Making creative film adaptations
 - Planning out skits
 - Planning and facilitating class debates
 - Creating a ModelUN-esque role-playing scenario

Weekly schedule

- Independent reading Monday
 - https://www.heinemann.com/unitsofstudy/assets/uos_msr_samplechapter_2.pdf
 - “The amount of free reading done outside of school has consistently been found to relate to growth in vocabulary, reading comprehension, verbal fluency, and general information”
 - “They often choose light reading for independent reading because they enjoy it, and they become more fluent readers in the process. Adults who encourage students to develop the reading habit through light reading can lead them to further reading. Students must take the first step of developing reading fluency before they can take the second step of becoming avid readers.”
- Tuesday-Thursday discussion on readings
- Friday Game Days

Learning Environment: Faizah

1. Going outside at least once a week (disclaimer: if the weather isn't nice, then we go to the lounge or somewhere else)
 - a. Reasoning:
 - i. Decreases stress and calms down the mind
 - ii. Better attitudes about the environment
 - iii. Improves health
 - iv. <https://www.bachelorsdegreeonline.com/blog/2012/11-proven-benefits-of-outdoor-learning/>
2. [Maybe Fake] Plants
 - a. Reasoning:
 - i. Being surrounded by nature is known to decrease feelings of stress and depression

- ii. Improves your mood
- iii. Improves concentration
- iv. https://www.health.harvard.edu/press_releases/spending-time-outdoors-is-good-for-you

Policies and habits: Ayat

1. Grading: Pass/Fail instead of A,B,C,D,F
 - Reasoning:
 - Less Stress
 - Improved Mood
 - Group Cohesion (less competitive atmosphere)
 - <https://classroom.synonym.com/advantages-pass-fail-grading-system-2561.html>

Assignments: Neha

1. Weekly or Bi-weekly Blog Posts and no papers:
 - a. Concept: Instead of everybody writing a long paper that stops at the teacher's desk after each book, students write shorter (maybe 200-300 word) blog posts each week/every other week about the book. Every student should comment ~2 times a week.
 - b. Reasoning:
 1. Everybody gets a chance to share their ideas
 2. Writing is done frequently and consistently
 3. People can improve on their writing skills
2. Open-Genre Projects
 - a. Concept: Students have to choose two books to do a project on during the semester
 - b. Reasoning:
 - i. Students become better problem solvers, more creative, and more engaged
 - ii. If a student doesn't like a book, they don't have to do a project on it
 - <https://www.thecreativeeducator.com/2015/connections/give-students-choices>
 - Students should be given the option of doing them individually or with a partner because collaboration enriches creativity and teaches us how to work with others.
3. Other: Notebook checks and quizzes

Rough Weekly Schedule: Ayat

we aren't really pushing this

Monday: Large group discussion on reading and possible quiz in the classroom

Tuesday: small group discussion with large group discussion last 10-15 minutes
Smaller group learning builds teamwork skills, people are more likely to participate, allows for more flexibility within the group
<https://www.genietutors.co.uk/5-benefits-of-small-group-learning/>

Wednesday: possible quiz and large group discussion (walking around or going outside)

- Physical activity such as taking a walk boosts energy and helps you sleep better at night

Thursday: small group discussion with large group discussion last 10-15 minutes

Friday: Independent reading day

Idea to do for just one book: Ayah

1. Plan:

- a. Read the entire book in class for 1-2 weeks (with some sort of minimum that each student has to reach each day)
- b. At the end of each day, each student takes 5 minutes to write down thoughts in their notebooks on what they just read/ what they want to discuss as a group. They can also discuss for a short while in small groups
- c. After 1-2 weeks, there is a three-day open class discussion and then a project or paper is assigned (the author suggested that the discussions start off with each person saying something about the book.)

2. Benefits:

- a. "novels are works of art. Imagine being asked to analyze the corner of a painting without having seen the whole painting. Imagine that the person asking you to do so has seen the whole painting and keeps asking questions that hint at the meaning, which only becomes clear when you have seen the whole picture. That would be rather silly. It makes much more sense to see the whole picture (ie. read whole story), and then go back and look closely at pieces of it, now with the whole in mind. That is what I mean by a whole novel approach."
- b. Much less stressful on students since there is virtually no homework
- c. Everybody for sure has read the book so the discussion has a much higher likelihood of being rich and fruitful

3. Source:

https://blogs.edweek.org/teachers/whole_story/2017/04/five_steps_to_revolutionize_no.html

Sarah, Alex, Samaia, Anna

Learning environment

- Bean stuff (grow a mini-garden for the school; start during the end of february with small seedlings(i.e. Tomato, peas, pumpkins, potatoes, strawberries))
- Grow a plant
- Painting a classroom a brighter color/ covering up the current color
- Christmas Lights/ Pixie Lights (various colors to brighten up the environment!)
- Physically interacting with the world around us to improve learning
 - While discussing the book we could plant seeds which would also brighten up the classroom.

Policies and habits

- Minimize hw given outside of class

<https://www.procon.org/headline.php?headlineID=005411>

Data shows that homework helps with standardized testing, but too much homework can be harmful. Homework is likely to be one of the main causes of stress for students in high school. Homework takes time away from outdoor recreation, social experience, etc.

Activities

- Small chats and conversations about the book
- When the weather get warmer go outside write, read, draw, etc. (get create juices)
- Trying to mirror the books environment/ simulations

Assignments

- Typical readings
 - Journaling from reading
 - Five observations or reflecting on what you just wrote
- End of Book open genre projects

Project based learning is proven to help increase attention and as well as retention of information. Rather than essays that force the students to repeat the information they either read or learn in class, projects give students a chance to prove their knowledge of the material in their own creative way. Projects also help the student learn more about the original subject by encouraging them to delve deeper in the the subject matter in order to gain a greater understanding.

<https://www.edutopia.org/project-learning-introduction>

<https://elearningindustry.com/project-based-learning-better-traditional-classroom>

Weekly schedule

- Friday reading days
 - Bring in food/tea/hot chocolate
- Friday Funday (Extra Points)

Skip the sources in between the dotted lines as they are from the uni-topia website

http://www.ala.org/aasl/sites/ala.org.aasl/files/content/aaslpubsandjournals/slr/vol3/SLMR_IndependentReading_V3.pdf

Independent reading provides students the opportunity to explore their interests in literature. Benefits include students who respect qualitative and quantitative research.

- “vocabulary, reading comprehension, verbal fluency, and general information”
- “even a small amount of independent reading helps increase students’ reading comprehension, vocabulary growth, spelling facility, understanding of grammar, and knowledge of the world”
- “ literacy experiences have a lasting effect on language growth, reading development, and scholastic achievement”

<https://www.shsu.edu/academics/education/journal-of-multidisciplinary-graduate-research/documents/2016/WhittenJournalFinal.pdf>

“students who chose to read self-selected literature for pleasure performed better in English, mathematics, science, and history”

https://www.heinemann.com/unitsofstudy/assets/uos_msr_samplechapter_2.pdf

1.time to read, 2. access to books they find fascinating, and 3. expert instruction.

Since these are the recommendations we want to add more guidelines to our friday reading days. Since we need some expert instruction it would be nice if we make a recommended list of novels.

Why we should incorporate craft days

<https://www.southernliving.com/how-to/home/arts-crafts-health-study-well-being-happier>

The study found that people who engaged in regular arts and crafts exhibited what psychologists call “flourishing”—a process of internal growth and purpose. The findings of this study support the idea that emphasizing every creativity can cultivate healthier minds.

<https://www.edutopia.org/blog/creativity-academics-power-of-arts-education-neil-swa pp>

(support for art on monday and open genre projects)

This blog post talks about why its school implements an arts education in its curriculum. Research shows that arts helps student’s self-confidence and self-understanding in addition to enhancing their communication skills and cognitions. Incorporating arts will foster a growth mindset as students develop resilience and grit.

<https://articles.extension.org/pages/73371/cooking-with-kids-in-schools:-why-it-is-important>

(why we should have cooking days)

This article lists the many benefits for cooking in schools. These benefits include a boost in self-confidence, nutritional awareness, and communication.

https://www.health.harvard.edu/press_releases/health-benefits-linked-to-drinking-tea

Benefits of tea drinking

Tea drinking is associated with lowering the chance of hear disease, cancer, and diabeteres. It has not yet been concluded that whether tea is the cause of lower these chances or if tea drinkers in general have healthier lifestyles. A school’s job is to help students adopt a healthy lifestyle and drinking tea would help us on the track to developing a good lifestyle. In New Zealand the school day begins with morning tea, 40 minutes of collaboration and socialization.

(<https://www.edutopia.org/blog/school-time-in-new-zealand-adam-provost>)

Overall 5 Day Plan

Monday → Nature Day/Cook Days Physical+Discussion (Discussions while doing other physical activities like walking, cooking, painting, gardening, etc)

https://www.oph.fi/download/145366_Physical_activity_and_learning.pdf

This was an article published by the Finnish National Board of Education about the benefits of physical activity on the learning environment. Although it does focus more on younger students I think it could still be applied to older students. Overall it seems like taking breaks to do activities or even doing them while learning will overall improve the students ability to learn. It includes simplified studies done in previous years.

Tuesday - Thursday → Discussions with Journals for homework (1-2 Paragraph Physical or Blogs)

Friday → Free Reading Day

End of a Book→ Open Genre Project

End of Book → Project in groups with experiments

Project based learning is proven to help increase attention and as well as retention of information. Rather than essays that force the students to repeat the information they either read or learn in class, projects give students a chance to prove their knowledge of the material in their own creative way. Projects also help the student learn more about the original subject by encouraging them to delve deeper in the the subject matter in order to gain a greater understanding.

<https://www.edutopia.org/project-learning-introduction>

<https://elearningindustry.com/project-based-learning-better-traditional-classroom>

Ahmad, Sparsh, Steven, Dominick, Nishant

Intro: Our main topics are: effects of music on learning, class participation and its importance, and alternatives to reading quizzes to gauge participation.

Learning Environment

- Effects of music

- In a study conducted at the University of Columbia, it was shown that usage of background music in a classroom setting improves students' academic performance and cognitive development. The paper references a study performed in 1996, showing that preschoolers tire less during free time when they listened to music. It would certainly be the same for people our age. Students were also found to have more positive behavior, and positive behavior leads to more motivation to work. Therefore, students would be more productive. Students were also observed to be more "comfortable, focused, and relaxed" in the presence of background music by creating a more calming atmosphere. Background music drowns out annoying "white noise", which makes students less productive. Students were found to have more retention of material. Comprehension scores increased in the presence of music. Types of background music could include, but aren't limited to classical (e.g. Mozart, Bach, etc.), soundtracks (e.g. Williams, Zimmer, Djawadi, etc.), Jazz, and peaceful piano and guitar. Even non aggressive music with lyrics would somewhat work (blues, soulful rnb, opera, etc.).
- How to increase participation in class
 - Carl Weisman, the person in charge of CWSEI at the University of British Columbia, wrote a paper on what he himself observed in his own classes. He noted how most students fail to participate in discussions going over things the students have already covered and think they know everything about. He said this causes them to get bored, and ultimately, distract and disengage them from the class. However, he also provides a solution. He talks about how implementing clickers really helped get participation back on track, and it even helped him better gauge where his students were at. He claims adding an interactive/competition aspect to topics that others deem boring really helps them get into the topic and participate. Based off this, I think playing games like jeopardy or having iclicker quizzes would make the class a lot more entertaining and would definitely be a good way to keep students more engaged. I even think it'd be a good way to keep students looking forward to class in order to test their knowledge against their peers.
 - http://www.cwsei.ubc.ca/resources/files/In-Class-Review_CWSEI.pdf
- Effects of participation in class
 - Participation is beneficial in the classroom for a couple of different reasons. For one thing, it forces students to be more attentive in class, so they can respond to a question if they are called on by the teacher. Similarly, participation can also promote doing the reading properly if the teacher asks questions about it in class. This allows the teacher to ensure that the students are doing their due diligence. Students receive benefits in the form of better retention of information told in class - the increased engagement will prevent them from getting distracted, and additionally since there is a lot of dialogue, students will get opportunities to ask question about things that they do not understand, and teachers will get the

opportunity to guide students as they begin to grasp new topics and correct any potential errors in their understanding.

Policies

- If papers: Revision
 - There are many benefits to this. Revising not only helped relieve stress, but also forces the student to re-engage with and better understand the material. So not only do they leave the opportunity happy, they also leave more knowledgeable and well-versed on the topic at hand.
- Extra-Credit
 - Extra-credit is always a good thing for student as it helps relieve stress when your grades are borderline. I think we should allow extra-credit to some extent as long as the assignments are not super easy but also not super hard.

Activities

- Movies (e.g. the handmaid's tale TV show)
 - Seeing how movies interpret books and then comparing that to how we ourselves interpreted it can be pretty interesting. It can give you a whole new view on the book you just read, something that doesn't happen often without tons of discussion with many other readers.
- Audiobooks
 - They are entertaining and you can multitask. Possibly spend time in class and following the chapter you can discuss the chapter. It is also easier to understand the books when read to. Maybe eating could be the activity?
- **Group discussions of book**
 - Refer back to "how to increase participation in class" under "learning environment": Carl Weisman, the person in charge of CWSEI at the University of British Columbia, wrote a paper on what he himself observed in his own classes. He noted how most students fail to participate in discussions going over things the students have already covered and think they know everything about. He said this causes them to get bored, and ultimately, distract and disengage them from the class. However, he also provides a solution. He talks about how implementing clickers really helped get participation back on track, and it even helped him better gauge where his students were at. He claims adding an interactive/competition aspect to topics that others deem boring really helps them get into the topic and participate. Based off this, I think playing games like jeopardy or having iclicker quizzes would make the class a lot more entertaining and would definitely be a good way to keep students more engaged. I even think it'd be a good way to keep students looking forward to class in order to test their knowledge against their peers.
 - http://www.cwsei.ubc.ca/resources/files/In-Class-Review_CWSEI.pdf
- **Independent reading**
 - Independent reading has many benefits, and there is research which backs it. However, it doesn't seem you need to be convinced as you already believe so yourself. We do too! Let's make this one happen!

- Game days to test knowledge of books - Games could be a decent alternative to quizzes. For example, we could have a game day every Friday where everyone participates in groups to solve various questions about the readings. This method is a fun and effective method which lowers the stress on students who more often than not show up to class worrying whether or not they will know the answers on a quiz that could or could not be given. (ie. Kahoot, Jeopardy, Snakes & Ladders)

Assignments

- Group projects (ONLY Dominick/Ahmad maybe)
- 1 assignment at a time
- Longer time to do reading/shorter reading assignments
- Flexible project ideas?
- Reading quizzes -> instead we could do a sort of questionnaire handout that we fill out after we do the reading that asks about what we thought was interesting, what we want to talk about in class, etc. This would make sure students would do the reading (otherwise they couldn't fill out the handout) while decreasing the stress and 'punitive feel' of quizzes, making students think about the book, and bringing in additional things to discuss in class. (Idea from They Haven't Done the Reading Again, similar argument from the author.)
- Instead of Essays, Research papers, or Blogs, we could have a creative open-genre project after finishing a novel to prove our mastery with its themes/background. Just like in Mr. Mitchell's class and Mr. Rayburn's Shakespeare class, students have the freedom to work on just about anything related to the novel. It was a fun experience and actually peaked our interest in the projects we were working on instead of burdening us with boring essays.

Weekly schedule suggestions from above, in digest form (some trimmed to highlight schedule—see proposals for full versions)

M: Reading day / Work day (if a project or essay is coming up)

T: Kahoot quiz; Walking outside + discussion

W: Discussion

Th: Discussion then nap (vice versa?)

F: Snack day / Movie day / Nap day

Monday

In class reading day specifically for the books for the class. Each book is read in a different method as explained in the Reading section.

Tuesday

Discussion of readings during class.

Wednesday

Outdoor day (normal class activities but taking place outdoors)

Thursday

Discussion of readings during class.

Friday

Technology-free reading and/or napping day.

Monday:

What did you do over the weekend? (5 minutes)

Important Passage from the reading read out loud (20 minutes)

Group discussion of the passage (20 minutes)

Tuesday:

Journal entries over the readings... taking the place of reading quizzes (10 minutes)

Journal Entries are a good way to develop writing and reasoning skills. It also allows a students to develop their own opinions and their own voice through writing.

<https://www.scilearn.com/blog/5-reasons-students-should-write-every-day>

Group discussion of readings (35 minutes)

Discussion outside, temperature permitting

Wednesday:

Group discussion of readings (35 minutes)

Begin working on weekly blog post, 300 words (10 minutes)

Blogging has many of the same benefits as in-class journal entries. While it's not as private as a notebook, it's still a great tool to develop writing skills and independent thinking.

Thursday:

Journal entries over the readings... taking the place of reading quizzes (10 minutes)

Small group discussion of readings (35 minutes)

[Once book is read, dedicate 45 minutes to watching the film adaptation]

[Project Day (45 minutes)]

Friday:

Independent reading day (45 minutes)

Background music included

Going outside, temperature permitting

No computers

[Once book is read, dedicate 45 minutes to watching the film adaptation]

[Project Day (45 minutes)]

Monday → Nature Day/Cook Days Physical+Discussion (Discussions while doing other physical activities like walking, cooking, painting, gardening, etc)

Tuesday - Thursday → Discussions with Journals for homework (1-2 Paragraph Physical or Blogs)

Friday → Free Reading Day

Weekly schedule with Friday independent reading day ✓