

IF TEXTBOOKS, INSTRUCTIONAL MATERIALS & MEDIA CENTERS

USD 469  
REQUEST FOR REVIEW OF A TEXTBOOK,  
INSTRUCTIONAL MATERIAL,  
OR  
MEDIA CENTER MATERIAL

Request initiated by Kirsten Workman

Telephone [REDACTED] Address [REDACTED] [REDACTED] [REDACTED], Lansing, KS 66043

Complainant represents:  self; or if a group: and child.

Name of group \_\_\_\_\_

The material I object to is a film  recording  magazine  pamphlet  textbook  other .

Book or other material see attached list.

Author (if known) \_\_\_\_\_

Publisher (if known) \_\_\_\_\_

1. Are you familiar with the district policy, procedure and philosophy regarding selection of textbooks, instructional materials, and media center materials?  Y  N
2. Did you read or view all the material provided in the entire work?  Y  N. If no, how did you select the parts for reading or viewing?

Did you? I did, for the record (exception noted - see attached). Is the intent of this question to gauge my level of understanding and if so, that is not the issue and

3. Please identify the objectionable material. (Please be specific; cite pages or items.) see attached. cannot be assessed with a box check.

4. What is the basis for your objection to the specific sections or parts identified? see attached.

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5. What do you believe is the major theme of this material? unless explicitly stated

by the author, this is entirely subjective and depends on the literary lens I'm using. Do you ask so that you

6. What would you recommend the school do with this material? may disqualify my answer & curriculum challenge?

This seems to be an attempt to bait me into an answer that would allow you to categorize me as a "book burner" and disqualify my objections.

7. In its place, what material of equal educational quality would you recommend?

Would you read it in it's entirety? \*excerpts: Invisible Man - Ralph Ellison  
What to the Slave Is the Fourth of July? - Frederick Douglass (entirety)

8. Additional Comments: The Expanse (TV show-Prime) excerpts; (dystopian without the political bias) - I also have several alternate discussion questions that are less "leading". Would you read them? Consider them for

\_\_\_\_\_  
Administrator

even a second?

K. Niskanen  
Signature of Complainant

Date received: \_\_\_\_\_

Approved: 9/10/12

Revised: 12/13/21

I'd like to challenge the following:

1. **Oscar Wilde Biography: His "Wild" Life, by Steve Theunissen for the Biographics YouTube Channel.** The inclusion of information related to the childhood wardrobe of Oscar Wilde, his mother's supposed desire for a daughter, and the sexual nature of his relationships (or anyone else's for that matter) is salacious, lacking in sound evidence, and irrelevant to the lesson or the literary work chosen for study. This video is over twenty precious-learning-minutes long. From the 7:54 mark to the end (more than 12 minutes later), the video is almost exclusively about Wilde's homosexual relationships and the social and persecution he endured as a result. The video presenter discusses rumors and testimony of Wilde's homosexuality, his solicitation of child prostitutes and other "shocking acts," and introduces the viewer (my child) to the "supposed homosexual undertones" in all of Wilde's work (12:20). As if that weren't enough, the graphic description of Wilde's supposed post-mortem condition was a jarring, unnecessary inclusion that was disrespectful of his humanity and human dignity: "his body actually sort of exploded, fluid pouring out of several orifices" (19:28). With the exception of a few 1-2 sentence quotations peppered throughout, the video post provides NO references for viewers (or teachers) to verify the accuracy of its content. This video does not measure up to educational standards; it panders to gossip, innuendo, and the macabre. Our students deserve better quality historical accounts of relevant course material than this video provides.
  
2. **The inclusion of a 'Social Justice' Expository Unit in an English Language Composition course.** While topics related to social justice may naturally make their way into a writing course, FIVE WEEKS of teacher-initiated exposure to social justice issues under the guise of "expository writing" is indoctrination, especially when the required readings, "essential questions," and writing prompts are leading in nature and present only one perspective on each issue (as though it were the only one) (see Social Justice Expository Unit slideshow, assigned readings and email communications). Five weeks is nearly *one third of [redacted]'s composition course*. The required readings are *highly* biased, and not even expository in nature (ex: "We Should All Be Feminists" and "Willing to Be Disturbed"). Students are required to indirectly defend those viewpoints in the writing assignments.

Although the Kansas Department of Education does not require students study social justice or espouse particular stances on social issues in order to meet competency standards for writing, M [redacted] does. Or, rather, [redacted] behavior makes students and parents believe they must.

- A. See Senior Composition Syllabus, Course Objective Number 2, which states that students will: "study perceptions of race, gender and culture through current events and contemporary literature."
- B. See email communication dated 14 September: M [redacted] responded to my concerns about my daughter learning to analyze literature using the "Marxist lens" and other social-political theories by providing Kansas State Standards RL. 11-12.13 & RL. 11-12.7 and instructions on how to become an observer in Canvas.
- C. See email communication dated Tuesday, October 4: informed [redacted] that the Social Justice Expository assignments are "state curriculum" and that I had inquired about placing [redacted] in an online class (which was not in any way accurate, and my question about whether [redacted] misunderstood that conversation went unanswered).

My opinion is that ██████████'s *writing* course has been hijacked by a social-political agenda where ██████ is force-fed ideas that are completely homogenous and ignore other perspectives.

The unit's first assigned reading is Wheatley's "Willingness to Be Disturbed" a post-911 commentary on a changed world. This work has been adopted by adult educators and counselors working in post-secondary education to encourage *each other* to reflect on *their* willingness to have their beliefs and ideas challenged, unpack adult mindsets, and to instruct teachers in how to be "a change agent." (see attached copy from Tool Set B, Unpacking Adult Mindsets from the Network for College Success's Post-Secondary Success Toolkit, and [https://digitalcommons.georgiasouthern.edu/esed6234\\_master/2/](https://digitalcommons.georgiasouthern.edu/esed6234_master/2/)).

When used in M██████████ chosen way (as a precursor, or grooming, for a five-week unit on controversial social and moral issues, the effect for my child has been to encourage ██████ to accept moral relativism (i.e. unlearn existing beliefs about morality) in order to "restore hope to the future" (Wheatley, 2002). The concept of moral relativism is very confusing for a young person in a high school class of thirty, non-accelerated students. In this setting, it is difficult to believe the teacher can verify students have even a basic understanding of the concept. For that matter, is this content something M██████████ is qualified to teach, and if so, why is she not teaching it in a sociology or philosophy course rather than a required writing class?

██████████ is seventeen years old, and has not fully formed her own ideas yet. ██████ is not a college student. This reading, presented in this context, does not serve as encouragement for a young mind to do the intellectual work required to ██████ support ██████ own ideas, but rather to try on others' ideas to see how they feel and whether that brings harmony to society. This puts the cart before the horse and teaches ██████ to mimic a demonstration of personal reflection rather than espouse it.

Meanwhile, my child does not learn to write. And she's certainly not learning *how* to question what she reads (or watches on YouTube during class).

The inclusion of this 5-6 week social justice unit in an English composition class violates policy ID: Instructional Program; which states "learning objectives shall be based on valid educational research and current State BOE requirements" since the corresponding course objective ("students will study perceptions of race, gender and culture...") is not based on state BOE requirements for English Courses.

3. The teaching of concepts related to social justice in any course until the district:
- A. Clarifies and provides its definition of social justice and:
  - B. Ensures that opposing viewpoints on any social justice issue are given equal exposure in both reading/viewing material AND class discussion time.
  - C. Most importantly, requires the lesson include education on the relevant constitutional amendment (U.S. and/or state) for the particular issue at hand.

Social justice means different things to different people, and as I'm sure you are aware, is a subject that often leads to heated debate. A cursory internet search for a definition of social justice does NOT yield a consistent, generally-accepted definition. I asked ██████████ for a definition the district uses and learned that there is none. Unless the district is able to reconcile a definition of social justice for the purposes of primary and secondary education, teaching it is

irresponsible and will undoubtedly lead to personal bias being inserted into our curriculum. There is plenty of evidence to support my assessment by reviewing the information I've shared here.

I won't patronize you with instructions on how to prevent bias in teaching...knowing how won't motivate someone to do it. But I would like to implore that you always point students toward the Constitution. Practically *every* social justice issue can be addressed from this lens, and honestly, it's the framework around which our society is built. Students will know their rights, defend the rights of others and correct social injustice if they understand the Bill of Rights. And we all know that, as a whole, they don't.

*I do not necessarily wish to challenge the inclusion of the following titles in our curriculum; however, I have unanswered questions about the context of their use and/or whether they will be used in their entirety or just excerpts.*

4. **"We Should All Be Feminists" by Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie**

This is an essay adapted from a speech, and is presented to LHS students as an example of expository writing. The speech is intended to be persuasive (see title; final pages), not expository and is almost entirely anecdotal. Adichie does not provide a single source or reference to support the applicability of her personal life experiences to society as a whole, and it is often unclear whether her criticism is aimed at Nigerian culture or that of the United States. The writing demonstrates a lack of understanding of typical Western views on child-rearing (p. 25), female and male gender roles, marriage roles (p. 31), as well as the psychological concept of ego (p.27). The author also overlooks the Judeo-Christian and Islamic views regarding the origin and concept of physical modesty (p. 33). She does not explore or reflect upon the gender roles of males in the examples of injustice she provides (p.37) (Nigerian or U.S.). Adichie attempts to redefine a socio-political movement to suit what she believes it should be, and with which most individuals would find it difficult to disagree, and does so using purely anecdotal evidence. It looks and feels good, but it's a weak argument for why we should all be feminists, as she is not the author of the movement. In the final two sentences of her essay, the author proposes an alternative definition of feminism which would dramatically increase the number of people who identify as such, but which is so lacking in specificity that it actually ambiguates the meaning of the term (p. 48). This is not expository writing.

Adichie's analysis of her anecdotal experiences could arguably constitute the lowest level of research quality (expert opinion) if she possessed the academic credentials to be considered a subject matter expert on feminism, social justice or gender studies. However, a Master's Degree in Creative Writing and lots of personal experience does not an "expert" make. Not even *sixteen* honorary doctorates.

This essay is not a well-researched perspective supported by evidence, and to include it as an example of expository writing confuses students as to what expository writing is and does a disservice to the creativity and informal, charismatic value of the piece.

This piece may be a useful example of insightful journaling or creative writing. Even if presented to students purely as an example of a social justice issue (not as exemplary expository or even rhetorical writing), it still violates Lansing BOE policy IF and, as it does not "help students develop an appreciation of balanced views concerning...issues and problems" because there is

no alternative view presented to students for consideration (BOE Policy IF). ~~As the exclusive presentation on the subject of feminism, it also violates policy IKB: Controversial issues, which states "teachers shall ensure that various positions concerning any controversial subject are presented."~~

5. "The Laramie Project" by Moisés Kaufman

~~I will preface this objection with the disclosure that I've not yet received my copy of "The Laramie Project."~~ However, I remember learning about the murder of Matthew Shephard in the news when it happened. *Like the vast majority of people*, I felt horrified by the hatred that must have sparked such depraved violence. *Like the vast majority of people*, I was also shocked by the rationalizations offered by a vocal minority of individuals whose personal beliefs about the morality of homosexuality seemed more important to them than the morality of sadistic murder. I am grateful that 24 years later, such a crime is still just as unthinkable for most Americans today as it was for most Americans in 1998, and I wish that every other country in the world shared that same mindset.

*Most importantly*, I object to my child's exposure to literary themes which are heavily centered on sexuality, religion, morality, brutal murder and death. Additionally, the play is full of excessively foul language that is both indecent and profane (see attached handout). I feel that a high school teacher for a class of thirty is not equipped to present and allow students to truly process content that is so highly sensitive, value-based and emotive. Not in a classroom of 30 children, not in a non-accelerated or non-AP class, not in a *writing course, not without parental consent.*

I have read the play in its entirety and find it to be neither appropriate for a high school classroom nor an example of *expository* writing, since the playwrights themselves profess that they are not objective. Rather, they state they are providing an artistic representation of about two dozen individuals from edited interviews (Act 1). Interview participants were hand-selected by the playwright (not randomly chosen), disproportionately representative of the local religious community, both of which mean the author cannot claim the sample size is representative of the larger population. This is neither *nonfiction* nor *expository*. Is this really even an accurate representation and analysis of non-fictional events, places and people when the use of artistic license is fully disclosed but "research" techniques and references are not?

Sound analysis may be lacking. But even as a purely social justice discussion point, I don't want this play or M. [REDACTED] to give my child the impression that hate crimes are even a remotely prevalent social issue in the U.S. According to the Department of Justice, only 0.1% of all crimes involve bias motivation (approximately 8,000 of 7.7 million crimes, both violent and non-violent) (<https://www.justice.gov/hatecrimes/hate-crime-statistics> and <https://www.statista.com/topics/2153/crime-in-the-united-states/#dossierKeyfigures>).

One theme of "The Laramie Project" is to highlight the dangers of 'homophobia,' particularly in certain areas of the United States (Midwest flyover territory). Another theme of Kaufman's work is to associate hate crimes against homosexuals with religious communities. We know that Matthew Shephard's murderers were methamphetamine addicts...I would like to know if he shared whether they were also practicing Christians, Muslims or Jews (so as to know whether Kaufman found, in his analysis of rural America, a correlation between religions that do not

embrace homosexuality and perpetrators of hate crimes). Kaufman argues that 'tolerance' is not 'acceptance,' and only acceptance is good enough to prevent 'homophobia' (p. 60-61 & 86). Depending on what he means by "acceptance," (which is not clearly specified in the play) this is highly imperious toward individuals with religious convictions about the morality of homosexuality. The mere vapor of that question has no business in a public-school classroom of children led by an adult.

Students should not be developing their understanding of human sexuality, morality, religion and the psychology of violent behavior under the direction of an English teacher in a composition class. I believe M. [REDACTED] is operating well-outside the scope of a high school English teacher.

This assignment is in violation of policy IKD: Religion in Curricular or School-Sponsored Activities, which states **"material with a religious theme are permitted as part of the curriculum if: 1. they are presented in balanced and objective manner. 2. "are a traditional part of the cultural and religious tradition of a particular holiday or field of study" ...and 3. "should never demean any religious beliefs or non-beliefs."** The play oversimplifies and demeans religious views on the morality of homosexuality and attempts to vilify those views as inciteful of murder. It's like blaming Islam for 9/11.

#### 6. **"13th" by Ava DuVernay**

~~I have asked what section of the documentary will be shown in class or whether students will view it in its entirety. I will respond accordingly once I receive the answer to that. However,~~

The film is crafted to argue that the 13<sup>th</sup> amendment actually *reinvented* slavery rather than abolish it. Viewers do not see or hear the full text of the 13<sup>th</sup> amendment to the Constitution; only the six words: "except as punishment for crime," which was included in the amendment to make the exception that forced labor may be imposed upon convicted prisoners. LHS students are not given instruction on or access to the full text of the amendment. DuVernay also states that the War on Crime, the War on Drugs, and specifically the 1994 Crime Bill were intended to target and enslave the black population.

I see from the course materials that there is no evidence that the alternative to 'for-profit' prisons (government-run prisons) are explored ~~with equal scrutiny~~. The substandard, often cruel conditions exposed in state-run mental hospitals that led to the process of deinstitutionalization in the 1970's would be prudent information to explore along with this topic; or the shockingly high prisoner death rate due to 'falling bricks' in the local US Disciplinary Barracks before the "new" facility was built.

The film is highly biased and heavily edited. The viewer never hears what question or prompt the interviewee's are answering. It's chock full of emotional language and images, and has gaping holes in the data it presents. For example, the film shows the increasing numbers of incarcerated people over the years, but doesn't provide the demographic data to illustrate that African Americans were *disproportionately* affected/targeted, or corresponding census data to illustrate the population increases. The total numbers of incarcerated persons do not reflect categories of crime, nor do they present the percentage of prisoners who were/are African American or an estimate of how many were falsely convicted or even unjustly sentenced. The

film doesn't expound upon the statistics it uses or cite any references for its analysis. It also conveniently doesn't mention the name of the author of the heinous 1994 Crime Bill: Joe Biden.

The objectionable material in this film is as follows:

1. Rape Scene (33:44-34:00): if a male teacher included video of a rape scene in a classroom, would we tolerate it?
2. Footage of actual, violent deaths of nine people (1:30:30-1:32:59): Filmmakers obtained the permission of the family members to include video of the death of their loved ones. No one even thought to ask permission to then show it to my daughter.
3. Other Brutal Images of Maimed & Murdered Human Beings Presented: (8:32, 8:37, 46:05-46:24, 1:29:38, & 1:30:31)
4. Propaganda (1:20:13-1:22:10): Shows video clips/news footage of police brutality and other abuses of African Americans during the civil rights movement. In the background and between clips are statements from a former president, taken completely out of context and artfully crafted to mirror the events happening in the black and white footage from decades ago. It's the most perfect example of propaganda I've ever seen—Joseph Goebbels himself would be proud.

The film is a clear example of Critical Race Theory, based on the following themes which meet CRT criteria:

1. Society is systemically racist (entire film, which also specifically asserts that the 1970's War on Crime and 1980's War on Drugs were "white backlash for the civil rights movement" (17:53): "crime begins to be the stand in for race" (15:09, 15:22). Also: "They declared the war on drugs like a war on terror, But what they really did is let the police terrorize whoever, But mostly black boys, But they would call us [redacted], And lay us on our bellies with they finger on they trigger" (18:58)
2. Two groups in society: oppressor and oppressed, with no say as to which group you're a part of: See course writing prompt and the associated quote at 1:30-1:49
3. The notion that whites will allow and support racial justice/progress only to the extent that there is something in it for them (convergence of interests): (2:50-3:30)
4. The notion that whites were the actual beneficiaries of civil rights legislation in the U.S.: film states that:

A. The 13<sup>th</sup> Amendment allows for the slave labor of incarcerated people

B. African Americans are targeted for prison (and, subsequently, enslavement) by the justice system, the American Legislative Exchange Council (ALEC), the 1994 Crime Bill, and other legislation aimed at issues surrounding law and order (ex: Stand Your Ground Law). See course writing prompts requiring students accept and respond to the following:

"Were you surprised to know about ALEC (American Legislative Exchange Council—a committee of politicians and corporations influencing laws that benefit its corporate founders and pushing forth policies to increase the number of people in prison and increase sentences)?"

*is the correct answer to this closed-ended question "YES" or "NO"? Do students also learn about the National Council of State Legislatures (NCSL; the left-leaning counterpart to ALEC)? No, they do not.*

*"Talk about CCA (Corrections Corporations of America, leader in private prisons that is required to keep prison beds filled—the leading corporation responsible for the rapid increase in criminalization) and how that impacts our communities."*

*opinion stated as fact; conditional agreement required by students in order to acknowledge and respond to the prompt.*

*The writing prompt is factually incorrect: the CCA is not "required to keep prison beds filled."*

*This "writing prompt" is a gross misrepresentation of the following true statements:*

- 1. the government chooses to contract with businesses to run prisons*
- 2. the businesses require a minimum occupancy rate in order to survive, profit and continue to house prisoners (i.e. prisons are not staffed by volunteers)*
- 3. the negotiated contracts typically require the payment of a monetary penalty by the government when occupancy rates fall below 90%.*

*These facts are not included in the film, just the statement that the CCA is 'required to keep prison beds filled.'*

*Why not present these factual statements to students and ask them to discuss the pros and cons of contracting prisons, and whether or not the effects serve to incentivize an increase in crime legislation and subsequent incarceration rates?*

*Is it because there's a chance students may not arrive at the teacher's desired conclusion or state of moral outrage?*

*The lack of alternative viewpoints on a controversial issue violates Lansing BOE policy IF, as it does not "help students develop an appreciation of balanced views concerning...issues and problems" because there is no alternative view presented to students for consideration (BOE Policy IF).*

*The inclusion of this film also violates policy IKB: Controversial Issues which states "...teachers shall **ensure that various positions concerning any controversial subject are presented.**" This material is introduced by the teacher, not a product of natural discourse. Course material does not include any opposing viewpoints.*

*The inclusion of this film also violates policy GBU: Ethics which states "educators shall be responsible to present subject matter in a **fair and accurate manner**" because alternative viewpoints are not presented and much of the material in question is factually inaccurate or so highly edited as to be deceptive.*

*The inclusion of this film also violates policy IKI because, as clearly representative of critical race theory, it does not conform to usd469's **approved curriculum.***

## The Laramie Project (M. Kaufman)

- *“They better watch their fuckin’ ass” (p. 52)*
- *“Shit outta luck” (p. 29)*
- *“I’m not a fucking faggot” (p. 81)*
- *“I was just bullshittin’ around with my shit”*
- *“I was in deep-ass sand” (p. 43)*
- *“Good to be with people who felt like shit” (p. 60)*

## The Laramie Project (M. Kaufman)

- *“I always say, don’t fuck with a Wyoming queer, cause they will kick you in your fucking ass.” (p. 32)*
- *“He tried to grab my dick” (p. 66)*
- *“The queens...faggot type people” (p. 32)*
- *“My motherfucking bread” (p. 66)*
- *“Matthew was a little rich bitch” (p. 61)*

## The Laramie Project (M. Kaufman)

- *“Pissed off to all hell” (p. 74)*
- *“Smoke a bowl with him” (p. 62)*
- *“Stuck my tongue right in my husband’s mouth” (p. 78)*
- *“Aaron was fucked up” (p. 61)*
- *Multiple other uses of “Fag,” “Dyke,” “Hell,” “Damn,” “Faggot,” “Pissed,” & “Shit”*

## The Laramie Project (M. Kaufman)

- *“Why’d you fuck up like that?” (p. 62)*
- *“Jesus Christ, well that’s not how it is here” (p. 53)*
- *“He was going to grab my balls” (p. 81)*
- *“He bought us shit gloves” (p. 55)*
- *“He’s...gonna get humped a lot...” (p. 66)*
- *“Auction his ass off” (p. 66)*
- *“Blunt little shit” (p. 31)*