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Dr. Seuss as Cultural Pedagogue

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Project Summary: Dr. Seuss is a mainstay in modern children's literature. I believe I can safely say that if you are reading this, you have read at least read a few of his books within your lifetime. Seuss' body of works has been examined in multiple disciplines for how his books help children learn how to read. However, there is very little that argue for what Seuss' books teach children about culture and how to act within that culture. In other words, what do Seuss' books teach children about being and becoming good people and citizens?

I have presented a paper on this at a conference a few years ago looking primarily at Seuss' books with political connections. The focus on this study would be on reading every Dr. Seuss book, categorizing them into which books focus on reading and which books focus on a cultural or moral lesson, researching the historical context of each of the "message" books, and crafting an argument about how specific Seuss' books attempt to teach culture and moral lessons. This project will provide the student with experience conducting detailed historical research, experience conducting close textual analysis of Dr. Seuss books, and opportunity to present original research at an academic conference. After being presented at either a state or regional academic Communication Arts conference to receive feedback, the resulting study will be submitted to an academic journal. I will include the student's name on both submissions.

Student Duties: The RCEU student will have three major tasks. First, the student would have to conduct detailed, close readings of every Dr. Seuss book to categorize them to narrow the number of books to be focused on in this project. Second, the student will conduct detailed historical research to connect the elements of culture being presented in specific Seuss books to distinct historical and cultural events, as well as the life of Dr. Seuss. The students will need to keep good records of all of their research, specifically using Zotero to help with citations and coding of all materials. Finally, the student will write a research paper summarizing all of their findings. I will then combine the student's ideas with my own to create a paper to be submitted to an academic conference. After receiving feedback, we will revise the paper and submit it to an academic journal. Both my name and the student's name will be on both papers.

Student Prerequisites: Junior or senior status in a major within the College of Arts, Humanities, & Social Sciences or College of Education is preferred. Experience writing papers including historical research is also preferred. There are no prerequisite classes.

Mentor Supervision and Interaction: The RCEU student and I will meet at least once a week, and more often when necessary. We will use a shared Dropbox folder for both of us to update the

elements we are working on. I will provide some theoretical understanding of rhetoric how children's literature works persuasively at the beginning of the collaboration. Our meetings will entail discussing the strategy for acquiring the books for each week (these books may be accessed in the UAH library, inter-library loan, public libraries, and online), the results of the previous week's research, and an ongoing discussion of what the student is finding or not finding so that we can carefully craft our arguments.

Prior Awardees: RECU18, Nathan Bedford Forrest's Crisis of Identity: Controversy over Conflicted Personas as Represented in a Memphis Statue. Meg Bojarski researched two major Memphis newspapers from 1995 to 2017 for all mentions of Nathan Bedford Forrest, his statue, and the controversy. She then coded the language used to depict Forrest to create an argument concerning how Forrest's public memory is being used and misused for very different purposes. She wrote a paper arguing what the history of the controversy and the recent removal of the Forrest statue has done to Confederate ideologies and the "great what-if" question that pro-confederates pose. She has presented our research at two poster sessions, we both have presented one guest lecture in a Public History class, we have presented the paper at a regional conference, and are in final stages of editing before submission for publication in the Southern Communication Journal.

RECU119, Controversy Through Absence and Distortion: The Misrepresentation of the Rosa Parks Story in Children's Picture Books, Biographies, and Elementary Textbooks. Katie Rozar researched over 35 different children's books that focused on Rosa Parks. She coded for five different events in Parks' life to see what the books were, or were not presenting, and wrote a paper with her findings. The paper has been presented once as a poster, and is currently being edited for submission to an academic conference.