MICHEL DEGRAFF: I think it's a nice topic to end this semester, because in a way, it brings together, I think, some of the main threads that we've through this semester. But also, in fact, the last point of the text, alliteration I can sense my point to wait into the future. So without further ado, we have Lorraine, Will, and Cynthia.

GUEST SPEAKER: So this is our presentation on language resistance and liberation. Welcome to the last day of class. Congratulations (CHUCKLING) for getting this far. So as the road map, we're going to go through first "Rethinking Literacy, A Dialogue," the piece by Freire and Macedo. Macedo?

MICHEL DEGRAFF: Freire and Macedo.

GUEST SPEAKER: Macedo?

MICHEL DEGRAFF: Macedo.

GUEST SPEAKER: Macedo. And then we're going to look at the "Literacy and Critical Pedagogy" piece, and then end with the MIT Haiti initiatives.

GUEST SPEAKER: OK. So this is just a little bit of a background on the writers of the first two pieces. Both of them are educators in critical pedagogy. And one is from Brazil, and one is Cape Verdean-American.

GUEST SPEAKER: So in the first piece, Freire mentions the premise-- the main premises of culture, and I think that these are really important to keep in mind, because this is a really interesting and, I think, powerful way to frame culture. The first one is that cultural processes are intimately connected with social relations, especially with class relations and class formations, with sexual divisions, with racial structuring of social relations, and with age oppressions as a form of dependency. Got it? [chuckling]

OK. The second one, culture involves power and helps to produce asymmetries in the abilities of individuals and social groups to define and realize their needs. And third one, culture is

neither autonomous nor an externally determined field, but a site of social difficulties and struggles.

Those ideas are really important to keep in mind, because this paper also raises the idea-- I know it is a social field, which is kind of the combination of all of the beliefs, myths, aspirations, hopes of a part of a society, of a culture, and so it includes things such as why racial hierarchies exist, to why sexual divisions exist, and like what roles gender people play in a society.

And it's really important to keep that in mind, because if you're able to keep that in mind, then you're able to think critically about that. And through the critical process of engaging with it, you're able to change the social field. And so I think that that's important, because even though this paper raises a lot of really powerful ideas, it's still not perfect.

So one of the quotes of this paper is, "Literacy's oral dimension is important, even if it takes place in a culture, like that of the United States, whose memory is predominantly written, not oral, like that of Africa." Africa is not (LAUGHING) country.

And so something like that is also part of the social field, and would make it into this paper. Because even though Freire and Macedo are thinking critically about this, they are not engaging with the full reality of cultural objectivity and being subjects within that.

GUEST SPEAKER: Yeah. So in the next article, Paulo Freire talks about the use of language as a form of resistance. And he first starts talking about how the current traditional methods in literacy how they tend to ignore the importance of language in a person's education. And he bases a lot of his theories on his experiences.

And from the second quote he says that, "The sad reality is that while education in Portuguese provides access to positions of political and economic power for the higher echelon of African society, it screens out the majority of the masses, who fail to learn Portuguese well enough to acquire the necessary literacy skills for social, economic, and political advancement."

And you definitely-- from the way that he mentions this, you could definitely see a lot of like correlations between what's going on around the world and currently in the United States. And you could definitely see that the 1% usually have the most control over things, and that they usually tends to drive how policies are made. But the fact is that when a person is taught in their native language, they tend to learn things better and comprehend things faster.

And can we go to the next slide? There's usually backlash when it comes to different languages taught in schools. For example, in the US, people say that students should learn how to speak standard American English. But when it comes to providing these sort of opportunities to minority groups of, I guess for instance, like students of color, there is usually some racial tensions that develop that make minority students feel inferior.

For example, there was an article mentioned of like recently, like March of 2017, that talked about a robotics team that recently had won the challenge, and the fact that after they had won the students-- or I guess people in the crowd started screaming at them and telling them to go back to Mexico.

And so this form of like demeaning commentary tends to drive the dropout rates of minority groups, and all of this tends to contribute to like the prison-- sorry, the school to prison pipeline.

As you can see in the infographic, it gives a lot of percentages talking about this sort of issue. You can see in the bottom, it says that 68% of all males in state and federal prison they do not have a high school diploma. And this tends to be-- gives statistics on students. And all of this tends to stem from the fact that minority students do not have the same access to education as the elite part of society.

And from personal experience, I can definitely relate to this. I went to a school about like an hour and a half from my house, and I definitely did have a lot of good role models growing up. But were definitely students around my neighborhood that didn't have the same access to the same opportunities that I did. Some of them did drop out to start working. Others were influenced by gangs around my neighborhood. And you could definitely-- things are definitely getting better, but things could definitely be improved from an emancipatory literacy approach, which is what Paulo Freire mentions. Yeah.

So in emancipatory literacy, this involves using the language of the people, rather than the elites. It teaches students to accept their experiences and their culture. And this moves from the world of objectivity to the world of subjectivity, where individuals learn to accept themselves for who they are, rather than feel like they're a victim of society. And Paulo Freire does mention that achieving emancipatory literacy is hard, but it's not impossible.

And now I'll-- and so Lorraine wants to talk about a few examples of how this is being used

today. So considering specifically the case of Haiti-- which Michel works a lot on, the MIT Haiti initiative-- virtually all of the schooling in both K through 12 education and then in higher education is done in French, and not in Kreyol. But the problem is that most people only speak Kreyol fluently, so like 95% or so, and very few people speak French fluently, at all.

So when you go through school, and everything is in a language that you don't understand, how are you supposed to be able to actually get any of the education, get any of this social engagement, especially if children are punished for speaking Kreyol in school. And they can't interact with each other, can't ask questions, can't gather any of the information that's coming at them.

So it's based on this false belief and really outdated belief about the hierarchy of languages, about which languages are created or are younger, or anything like that, and that Kreyol isn't developed enough to be able to be used for technical language for STEM education to have anything translated into Kreyol. And part of that is saying that like Kreyol isn't widespread enough, even though Kreyol has almost 10 million speakers.

Finnish has only about 5.5 million speakers, and yet in Finland all of that education is done in Finnish. And people have-- studies have found that, in Finland, kids are much better equipped to be able to learn a second language, and to go into higher education and gather all of these like technical studies, because all of their education is done in Finnish.

And over at IAP, I was doing MISTI GTL in the Catalonia region, in Spain, and there Catalan also has a little under 10 million speakers. But in Catalonia all of the education is in Catalan, which made it difficult for me as like a "Spanish speaker"-- like not even fluent, but trying to speak Spanish speaker-- to be able to teach the students. But they had such a better experience with all of their textbooks in Catalan all of their computer software.

So I was trying to teach them Inkscape and Gimp, but everything was is (CHUCKLING) Catalan, and I just couldn't understand like even how to open a window. So they taught me a lot about this. And they-- all of them speak Catalan, and Spanish, and English, and then they can like learn German or French on the side, as well. So all of them, because their initial education K through 12 and then higher education, if they want it to be, is in Catalan, then they can learn all of these other things just as well as we do like in English, which is mostly our one and kind of only language in the United States. Yeah. So that was my experience.

And what-- a school that is like a really good model in Haiti is the LKM School. I didn't know

how to pronounce it in Kreyol, so it's LKM. It's a K through 10 school in a rural part on an island of Haiti, and their education is starting to be in this model of all Kreyol education, trying to teach all of these subjects, all of the technical terms in Kreyol. And the students are learning much better than the rest of the students in Haiti, who's schooling is French and who only 10% graduate from high school.

So the linguistic apartheid part of this is that, when you teach somebody in a language they don't understand, you prevent them from being able to move into different socioeconomic classes to attain the education and the success that they should be able to.

And this all leads to the MIT Haiti initiative that Michel started here between MIT and all the Haitian education systems.

So a couple of their main points are to teach educators in Haiti that teaching in Kreyol is perfectly fine, that it is actually better for the students, that it gives them more opportunities, and that STEM and technical subjects can be taught in Kreyol. So a lot of the worries or concerns are that like Kreyol doesn't have words for these languages.

We didn't have words for a computer either up until when they were created. A lot of other languages borrow words from other languages. So I learned Japanese, and in Japanese there's this lovely thing called [speaking japanese] where you just grab words from other languages. So if you don't know how to pronounce it, you kind of like make it sound like it, and oftentimes, it is what has been borrowed.

So for example, bread is pan, from German. And all of these other languages have words borrowed from other languages, and that's what globalization does. So the same thing should be able to happen with Kreyol and STEM learning.

And the really good results of this are that they affirm students' cultures and backgrounds, and their own upbringings, and how the society actually works, as opposed to a colonial oppressive society. And it equalizes students being able to have more social mobility, and to attain what they want and what they should be able to.

GUEST SPEAKER: So to kind of tie this back to what we can do to stay woke, with regards to literacy, I think it's important to remember that, "language is a mediating force of knowledge, but it is also knowledge itself."

And so one approach is for groups to kind of come together and create a language that describes their experience amongst themselves, and then to share that language and to share that experience in their own language. And I think that that is one way that we can start breaking away from the kind of putting standard English on a pedestal, and can also kind of validate other discourses, and other ways of being, and of other just languages that kind of already exist in the US and across the world.

Questions. How have our understandings of literacy evolved in response to the internet, unprecedented global integration, and increased pressure to preserve human rights? For example, what does it mean that schools repress the development of subjectivity, but do largely ensure literacy? How can modern notions of literacy evolve to address the phenomena, such as the proliferation of fake news?

So if we're moving past literacy as just the idea of being able to read, and we are entering this new kind of this new wave being defiantly pushed by the internet and the influence of technology on the way we live, literacy is coming to be a more critical approach to life in the sense that fake news is a thing, you know, and it's actually quite hard to distinguish what news is really what news is fake. And the ability to do that, having that critical lens, is maybe the next evolution of literacy.

So any ideas on that, I guess, is the question.

AUDIENCE: So I'm just gonna answer the first part of this, because I'm not sure if I have an answer for the next two.

But something that I think is kind of hilarious about like the integration of the internet is that I think it's simultaneously making us more literate and less literate. So like-- or like pressuring you to be more literate. So "pressuring" you to be more literate is like, now there's a bunch of sources that you can read, and like now you can be more educated, it's all open to the public if you have a computer.

And then there's also like the pressure to speak English properly, based off either, you know, like there's one viral video, this old grandma screaming at this Hispanic woman in IHOP because she was paying in Spanish, or something like that.

So like it puts pressure on you to speak English correctly, and then meanwhile, because of like things like Facebook and like any social media, people like don't speak English correctly, like

typing, you know, abbreviations and stuff that's acceptable in text, but like meanwhile we're saying you should speak English properly. So it's kind of a weird dichotomy.

GUEST SPEAKER: I'm interested in the age implications of what you just said, kind of aligning-- kind of a critique towards the use of different varieties of English with older generations and the use of nonstandard varieties of English with younger generations. I'm interested in that.

AUDIENCE: Yeah, I think-- I mean, I guess like-- so like there's a grandma that I know that's on Facebook, and like she makes sure to type everything out, including punctuation. And like her Facebook posts are longer and they're more like here's a card, that type of thing.

Whereas like my Facebook, A, I'm just sharing things, but B, if I write anything, it's probably not good, proper English. So I think it does depend on your age group, but also like going back to the original point of, you know, that grandma screaming at the Hispanic woman in IHOP, like it's not just like an older woman screaming because, you know, she's more literate.

Like there's also like kids who think like, oh, you have to speak English in here. So like there is still that weirdness between like how older people act on Facebook, and stuff like that. But I still think like the point of, you know, pressuring people is regardless of age.

AUDIENCE: I think because we're gonna be talking about language, which is dialect in this class, I would kind of risk saying that we're kind of creating a new language because of the internet with like all the abbreviations and things. And there's the way-- the push for speed and everything like that.

So I think the reason that older generations don't use it as much is because they're not used to it, and they're in a different frame of reference and they just haven't learned this new dialect that we're starting to use. So I think that it's a good thing, in a sense, but a lot of people who want that standard American English are going to be pushing us to go back to that, as opposed to using the internet language.

But going as far as our changes in literacy because of the internet, like I didn't know if the ending was satire, at first. Well, I just didn't know that the ending existed. And then when I saw that, I realized that that was satire. I think that nuance like that is something that you miss especially with the internet, because you can't really express sarcasm very clearly over just plain text. And I think that's something that we're like struggling with, because of the internet.

AUDIENCE: But I think that you said-- you talked about The Onion. I think that shows like Stephen Colbert or the Colbert Report, and shows like that, show that we have been dealing with that sort of satire language issue. Because for a long time, people rushed [inaudible] didn't realize that it was satire. So I think that we've done this before, and it's sort of a different cycle. Now it's on the net instead of being TV.

AUDIENCE: I wanted to bounce off what you originally said. Like with like it's not a bad thing that we're checking the language, I agree with thi It's kind of like [inaudible], as you mentioned. Do you think like there are certain rules, like the way we type, and like is there like a way to be literate like with our new abbreviations?

AUDIENCE: I think there definitely is. Like for instance, punctuating sentences with like LOL or ha ha. Like the beginning of the end, where you put that. Using emojis to get more emotion in it. Like there's definitely like a science to it that we kind of fell into, but didn't realize was [inaudible]..

AUDIENCE: Yeah. OK, cool. I understand what you're saying.

GUEST SPEAKER: My question is, so knowing now that people grow up in the type of literacy, whether it's traditional or emancipatory, what are the pros and cons of your type of literacy? And explain why we should move towards or away from an emancipatory literacy.

AUDIENCE: I think you all gave some really great points towards moving to emancipatory literacy. I mean, if it's helping people learn, I don't see a down fall, especially because it's kind of broadening their world view. A couple of presentations ago, there were other students who were playing jeopardy with AAE, and that was kind of like broadening their worldview. Like even if you went to the school and didn't speak AAE you were learning about a new language that you weren't familiar with. And so they were able to do this through the emancipatory sort literacy.

MICHEL DEGRAFF: What's AAE?

AUDIENCE: Oh, African-American English. Sorry. Not AAPE.

AUDIENCE: So kind of just playing devil's advocate a little bit, I think-- I guess one of the dangers of emancipatory literacy might be kind of this non-standardization like with issues like Common Core and things like that. We kind of have an educational system that's set up so that everybody's kind of put on the same level, to some extent. Like everybody has that same kind of baseline education.

But like with emancipatory literacy, I think you're going to find educational programs are more geared towards a specific like cultural norms and things of that nature related to whatever population it targets.

So I wonder if that could potentially produce a system in which certain students, even though they're receiving an education that is geared towards them, it's objectively not that same quality of student who are receiving more of a traditional There's the approach. [inaudible]

GUEST SPEAKER: I want to push back on that just a little bit, because I think that the standardized approach to education is the approach that's been taken with, you know, teach for a test approach, and it's failed. It's been failing for a while now, and I think that a lot of people in education policy and even just teachers are recognizing that now. And I think that education-- emancipatory literacy gives us an interesting lens to think about how to educate people so that they can learn.

And I think maybe another place you can start kind of investing energy is thinking of ways in society that we can value those different ways of knowing and being and learning, so that it's not just, you went to college, so you deserve to be paid a lot of money kind of thing, and it's a, oh you can build a table from scratch. How do you get paid to do that?

AUDIENCE: Where do you think MIT falls on the spectrum of like emancipatory literacy? [laughing]

GUEST SPEAKER: I think MIT is way far on the tradition. MIT is the Alt right of traditional literacy, I think. [laughing] I just think that there are-- I think that the immense pressure that falls on students, just on students physical bodies, is definitely a symptom of a larger problem. And for me, the fact that that symptom is not enough of an impetus to change, is heartbreaking.

Because I think that-- I didn't come to college expecting it to be the best four years of my life, but I didn't come here also expecting to just suffer. [laughing] And so I think that there's definitely got to be a way where I can bloom, can reach my best potential.

And I love learning. I love-- like I love school, you know, and the fact that I have just kept running up against the institution, I think, as a creative person, has made me kind of step back and think again about emancipatory literacy and how I can do that after.

MICHEL DEGRAFF: So I have a question for you, Cynthia. So given what you just said, how

would you-- so if you were to be MIT's president, what would you change? What-- how would you make it better more emancipatory? Keeping in mind that there are certain goals that you have to reach in terms of, say, chemical engineering, if you're a chemist, how would you do that? How would you advise administration be better on that score?

CYNTHIA: I think very first thing I would do is have people who are more interested in research not be professors. So the ones who are interested in research should be doing research full time, and the people who are interested in teaching should teach.

Because I think that that gives like-- that gives people more impetus just to connect with their students and actually get to know them, and I think in that kind of environment, you would foster like a safer, healthier environment for learning. Whereas if you have a professor who is more interested in winning the Nobel Prize, like what are you-- what do you do coming up against that?

I also would have MIT think very, very hard about where the funding is coming from? What it's going to? And how that kind of fits in the global system, where MIT as an institution fits into the global system, as kind of not only an institution that does propel you to a higher class, but kind of does that at the expense of a lot of other people and systems across the globe even if it's not directly in the area.

So I think that being more critical and intentional about our values, and also maybe adding soul to the end of that-- end of the that motto. But--

MICHEL DEGRAFF: OK, OK.

CYNTHIA: Yeah.

MICHEL DEGRAFF: Attention to the third question. Thank you.

AUDIENCE: The last question is, from your personal experiences, or what you've seen or read about, how do you think we can improve students' experiences and confidence through intentional language use in schools? Like what mottoes do you think are working, or would work?

TEACHING ASSISTANT: Dana?

AUDIENCE: Well there's a model, the only one of it's kind, it's in Canada, it's a Mohawk language immersion school that's K through six, but it struggles to secure funding because it also

doesn't follow a standardized Canadian curriculum.

In fact the community has sort of decolonized the curriculum, and they teach history, for instance not Canadian history, they teach Mohawk history, and it's been really affirming for children in the community, Especially a community that has its own struggles with language preservation and revitalization, and passing on the language to continued generations. Especially after a history of residential schooling that-- main aim was a cultural and linguistic genocide of these people.

So this is a great model, but it's funded entirely by community fundraisers and every year struggles with staying open. And it's never certain that it will be there in the next school year. But it seems to have had a really, really a positive impact on the Mohawk community in Canada.

And so programs like that I think need to now be funded, and that involves challenging our federal and local requirements for funding, and to do that we need to interrogate what value there is in the curriculum we have standardized, and why that is considered objectively the standard that should impart the best learning experience upon students?

MICHEL DEGRAFF: Go ahead Colin.

AUDIENCE: So bouncing of that it seems we get to [inaudible] thing where it [inaudible] is inculcated in this standard curriculum. It goes into society and then perpetuates the standard curriculum back on the Indian students.

So I'm curious about if anyone has thoughts how you could make knowledge about-- because one of the main hurdles is people instituting, or interrogating the standard curriculum is just strictly about how the story of America's history has been with regarding the Native American genocide, slavery, and, for lack of a better word, mean that it is manifest destiny.

How do you make people aware of that on a level that they can see those things playing out today, then work to interrogate that curriculum? Especially if they are coming from a background where race isn't talked about in this family because it's an uncomfortable topic, or if they just haven't heard about these things necessarily because of school.

AUDIENCE: For me, I feel like it's more about where do you learn to interrogate your own beliefs, and I feel like that's hard to find. And I came to-- this class was a huge part of that for me. And I don't know if that because I started out, or if I just happened to stumble upon a place where I

learned to interrogate my own beliefs.

But I think this isn't a point to make for themselves, but I don't really have an answer for how we get triple the value in evaluating in interrogating your own beliefs, or how much more in [inaudible] learn to interrogate your own beliefs before attacking someone else's.

AUDIENCE: Yeah, bouncing off of I think a common theme that we come up in this class is how do we have conversations with people who don't want to these conversations? And I think the only way for them to figure it out is for them to interrogate themselves, but most of those people won't.

So finding ways to make them interrogate themselves, I think is gonna be a common problem throughout history. And unfortunately I don't know I, personally, have a great solution for that. But I think more opportunities like this-- I mean obviously you mentioned this before, the people who are taking this class, were not really diversified at all right? We all sought this class out mostly, so I don't know how you can get someone who doesn't want interrogate themselves in to a situation like this.

So maybe mandating something like this where you have to go a black history class, or a Native American history class, or whatever might force people to start talking about it.

AUDIENCE: Yeah, I almost think it might be better to not have a separate class where this is your well-roundedness class, this is where we're going to learn about the others. But to integrate what you would learn in a specific black history class into the general curriculum. Which of course is harder, but I do think would require the same amount of conversations and connections, and negotiations as making a requirement of a separate class.

But I think that a better approach that might be more palatable and have more positive effects would be just straight up integration, decolonizing the current curriculum.

CYNTHIA: I totally-

AUDIENCE: Yeah, go ahead.

CYNTHIA: I was going to say I totally agree with Dana, I think that-- I'm losing my train of thought-- I totally agree with Dana because I think that the history will speak for itself. I think that history is-- if you know the full history of the United States for example-- it's pretty terrible and I think that you do need to know the whole history, and also need to get the alternative sides and

have those be integrated into the curriculum.

I also was interested in thinking about entry points into these conversations, and ways that our humor can function as entry points in these conversations. I've been having this conversation with a friend of mine of how humor, for example, gives us a way to kind of express some of these things that are more taboo, and kind of laugh them off, and kind of integrate them, as opposed to everyone shunning them and people feeling bottled. So I am interested about humor and art specifically as entry point into these conversations.

MICHEL DEGRAFF: [inaudible]. So Dana, I think what you say in a way answers the concern that Shope expressed right? Because Shope put it as dual choice. That you either do this or you do that, right? So Dana is right, right Shope,?

One can imagine having in the class-- the principle math class, chemistry class-- paying attention to those issues. In fact there room for that, even if you take a simple photography class one can even think about what kind of choices go into making your camera?

And actually, I have friends who are photographers and they explain to me that actually most cameras were not geared to take pictures of black people. So even as a white photographer he finds that when he takes a picture with his regular Cannon of a white person it comes much better than when takes it of a black person. Why? Because the lenses are designed with a normal gaze of the white subject right? So he had to tweak his camera to make it take good pictures of black people.

So even there, even in physics there's a way to interrogate the curriculum. Why selections are made with the lens for example? So in a way it could both, you could both have the necessary interest in human beings the quote unquote more "traditional curriculum".

And going back to the other point, can you imagine also in history, in biology, biology could include text like I mentioned earlier, The Mismeasure of Man if you wish, goes into lots of integral issues about biology. About how we make-- heads were measured to show that humans are as intelligent.

At Harvard for example, for many years when you were coming in you had to undress and they took your picture naked, and they would at your picture to decide what kind of students you would become based on physical traits, like because your head. This was Harvard. I guess this was one proponent of what was called then phrenology. Which is the measure of--

So there is plenty, plenty of room to integrate those kind intricacies within traditional curriculum.

AUDIENCE: Yeah, and I want to express the fact that to do such a thing is not just to include all of the hushed historical abuses that we gloss over in our current curricula. But it's also to acknowledge the good that we have overlooked. So discoveries and innovations that other people who are not quote unquote "western", and who are not Anglo-American have made and contributed to the fields of science, and history, and literature. So not only to recognize these historical evils, but also the grand positive impacts that others have had.

MICHEL DEGRAFF: Absolutely, absolutely. So are you guys happy with the answers? [laughter] OK, so thank you very much. [applause]