Progress Points

The Idea

The test will measure whether you are an **informed, engaged, and productive citizen of the world**, and it will take place in schools and bars and hospitals and dorm rooms and churches.

You will be tested on **first dates**, in **job interviews**, while **watching football**, and while **scrolling through your Twitter feed**. The test will judge your ability to think about things other than celebrity marriages, whether you'll be easily persuaded by empty political rhetoric, and whether you'll be able to **place your life and your community in a broader context**.

The **test will last your entire life**, and it will be composed of millions of decisions that will **make your life yours**. And everything, **everything**, will be on it.

Where is the **joy** in learning?

Learning should be **fun**.

Learning should be guided by your **authentic interests**.

Learning should make us **better people**

   And make the **world a better place**.

If you don't think **learning is fun**, I would argue that you don't know much about either of these things.

So what's the **point**?

Life is about challenging yourself,
    Learning something cool,
        And then challenging yourself again.

To that end, we're about to do something that's
    Just a little bit
        Crazy.

Since 1948, the 3M company has encouraged employees to spend 15% of their time working on their own projects.

One result?

Google famously gives engineers 20% of their work time to work on projects not directly related to their main assignments.

One result?

So what exactly are we **doing**?

We will spend approximately every other Friday over the course of the year working on self-directed projects.

Want to know a secret?
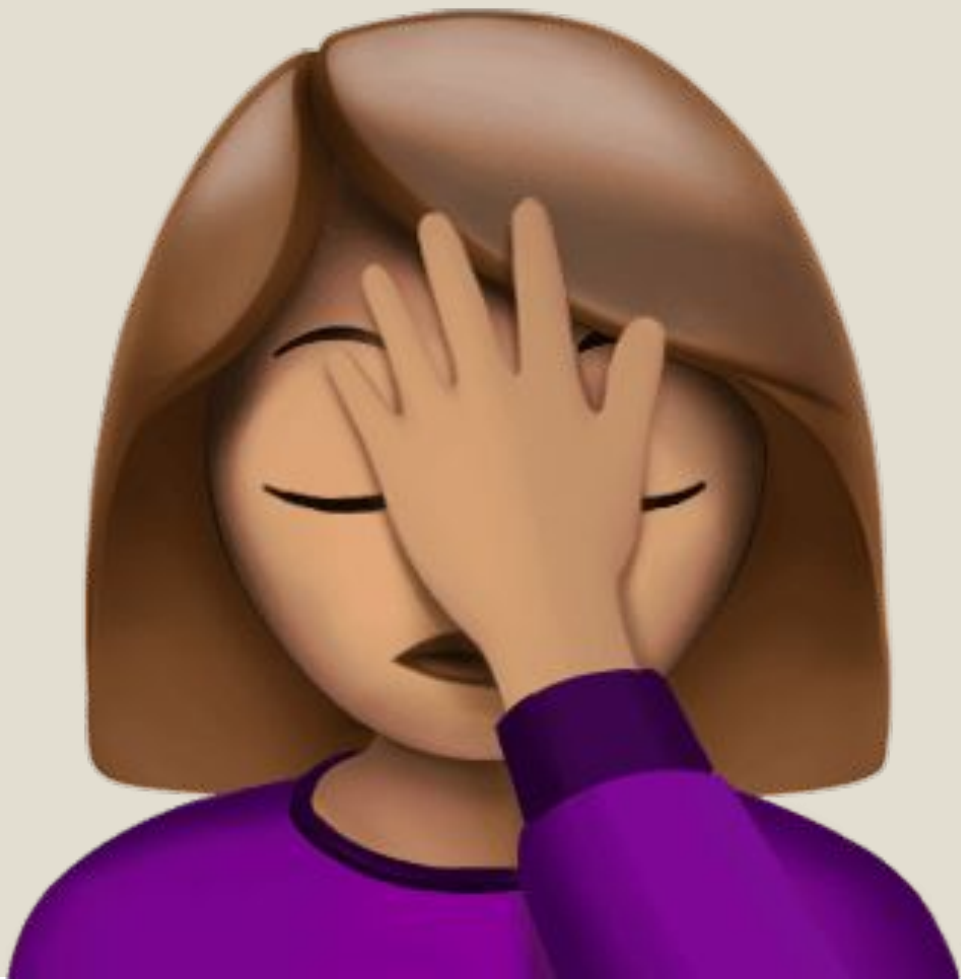
This project **terrifies** me.

Which is why I think we should do it.

The Rules:

- ◦ Your project must be something new to you and something you wouldn't do in another class.
- ◦ You must complete 40 Progress Points per quarter (I will explain this more in-depth soon).
- ◦ It must involve reading or writing something.
- ◦ If, at any moment, you feel lost, overwhelmed, or uninspired, you must set a meeting with me to discuss solutions.
- ◦ You must be flexible/open to changes or adjustments.

Fine, I'll grade you.

I will grade the **process**, not just the **product.**
(Failure is an option.)

- Project Pitch
- Checkpoint Meetings
- Quarterly Progress Points
- Final Presentation

The Points

Progress Points

The skills you learn in this class are applicable to the wide world of information. Even if you never read another fictional novel again, you can apply those skills to anything else you could possibly read or write. With that in mind, the goal of this year-long project is to give you an opportunity to start applying those skills to a topic that you are passionate about.

You will show me the progress you are making on your projects by completing 40 Progress Points each quarter. These points can be achieved in many different ways.

At the end of the year, you will compile all of your Progress Points to create a final project/presentation.

Bibliography (Required Quarterly)

Points: 15

Limit: 4

Requirements: Create three bibliography entries each quarter for reputable sources that address your problem. Your entries should meet these requirements:

- An MLA style citation
- Summary of the article (2-3 sentences)
- Explanation of relevance to topic (2-3 sentences)

**We will focus on this concept during our next scheduled Progress Point work day.

Independent Reading

Points: 20

Limit: 2

Requirements: Read a novel of your choice and critically analyze its connection to your problem through a literary lens. Include the following:

- Name the title and author of the novel.

- Identify the genre of the story.

- List the major characters.

- Give a brief description of the conflict(s).

- Describe what you liked/disliked about the book.

- Respond to three items from a list of questions.

Film Analysis

Points: 15

Limit: 2

Requirements: Watch a film of your choice and critically analyze its connection to your problem through a literary lens. Writing requirements:

- Name the film and its director, the run time, major actors, and year of release.

- Name and briefly describe the main characters.

- Briefly describe the setting – the time and place.

- In 1 –2 sentences summarize the plot.

- Identify and explain the connection between your film and your problem.

- Respond to three of the following items:

Volunteer Work

Points: 5-15

Limit: 1

Requirements: Conference with me about what you plan to do and with whom you will be working. Come to the conference prepared to give me details about what exactly you will be doing and what your learning goals are (how will this experience influence your studies?)

You will need to provide me with a signed permission form from the adult you plan on volunteering for stating they are willing to vouch for your attendance.

Optional writing requirements can be completed for additional points.

Interview/Survey

Points: 10-15

Limit: 2

Requirements: Conduct an interview or survey in which you carefully develop ten questions that relate directly to the issue you are researching.

If you are interviewing an individual, they should have a connection to your topic, and you should summarize their answer to each questions.

If you are conducting a survey, you should poll at least 20 individuals, and you must report the results using a visual aid (i.e. pie chart, bar graph, line graph).

Write a one paragraph reflection in which you discuss what you learned from this experience and how it has influenced your opinion on the topic.

TedTalk/Podcast Review

Points: 10

Limit: 2

Requirements: Find a Ted Talk or podcast that addresses your topic. Include a link to the video/audio along with these writing requirements:

- Who is the speaker and what is their background?

- What did you learn from this that you didn't already know?

- What solutions does the speaker offer in regards to your problem? Do you think this is a viable solution to the problem? In what ways might this solution fall short?

Current Event

Points: 15

Limit: 4

Requirements: Find a recent news article that relates directly to your topic. This article should come from a reputable source. Along with your article, write a reflection which addresses additional writing requirements.

Grammar

Points: 15

Limit: 2

Requirements: Find an informal piece of writing (something posted on a blog or on social media) that directly addresses the problem you are studying. Print a copy of the text and attach a written reflection to the text. Writing requirements:

- Identify the writer and give a brief description of who they are.

- Describe the platform in which the text is presented.

- Summarize the author's argument in 2-3 sentences.

- Evaluate their writing style and respond to two of the following questions:

Creative Writing

Points: 10-30

Limit: 2

Requirements: Points will be awarded on a sliding scale based on word count between 500-2,000 words (approximately 5 points for every 250 words). Writing can be about any facet of your problem and in any style (biography, poem, fictional story, essay, etc.) you wish. Writing must be typed and word count included on the bottom.

Poem/Song Interpretation

Points: 5

Limit: 2

Requirements: Find a poem or song that addresses your topic. Along with a copy of the text, write a reflection that answers the following questions:

- Who is the writer/singer? What is their connection to/views on this problem?

- What literary elements are present in the piece?

- Why did this poem/song stand out to you? What makes it interesting to you?

- If your song has a music video, how does this add to your understanding?

Vocabulary

Points: 10

Limit: 1

Requirements: Create a list of ten vocabulary words that are necessary to understanding the problem you are studying. For each term, include a standard definition along with a brief explanation (1-2 sentences) describing its relevance to your topic.

Other Ideas

Can you think of something else you'd like to do? Run it by me!

Requirements for student choice:

- Project MUST include reading and/or writing something.

- All aspects of the project must be school appropriate.

- Student must present me with a full picture of what you want to do, what the project would entail, how much time it will realistically take, and how many points you feel it should be worth.

- Conference with me to discuss the above considerations prior to beginning.

The Pitch

The Project Pitch

In the business world, an "elevator pitch" is a quick, passionately delivered description of a product that an inventor/business owner has created. You never know when you'll be standing in line or sharing an elevator ride with a rich and powerful investor. To make the most of such an opportunity, an inventor must have an elevator pitch ready to roll at a moment's notice.

Tomorrow, you will "pitch" your project idea to the full class with a 60-second elevator pitch/mini-presentation.

The Requirements

Your pitch must include:

- ◦ Your name
- ◦ What you want to learn during your project
- ◦ Why you chose this project (Tell a little story, perhaps?)
- ◦ What materials/resources you'll need
- ◦ What obstacles you anticipate and your plan to navigate those obstacles
- ◦ Why this project is worthy of a significant investment of time
- ◦ Graciously thank the audience for our time/consideration of your idea

You will also participate in a full-class question/answer session after your pitch, so be ready to further explain/defend your idea.

The Topics

Environment

How can we limit food waste?

How can we better control animal populations?

Is it okay to experiment on animals?

Is global warming a cause for concern?

How can we protect our environment?

Is it ethical to contain wild animals in zoos?

Politics

Should marijuana be legalized everywhere?

What are the implications of nuclear energy?

How does our political system compare to other countries?

How can we improve our immigration system?

What are some of the biggest challenges for female politicians?

Should a person have the right to choose when they die?

At what age should you legally be allowed to drink?

How should LGBTQ rights be changed?

How do you feel about more restrictive gun laws and universal background checks?

Athletics

What should be done with athletes who use performance-enhancing drugs?

Do you think collegiate athletes should be paid?

Are some youth sports too intense?

Is cheerleading a sport?

Is the gap between male and female athletes' pay fair?

Health

How can we improve access to healthy foods?

How might we limit the transmission of diseases?

How do eating disorders affect young people?

Are pharmaceuticals doing more harm than good?

How can we better address mental illness?

How can we reduce suicide rates?

How should we treat addiction?

How can we improve our healthcare system?

Is smoking/vaping a problem among teenagers?

Education

How can we improve school attendance?

Should we ban vending machines in schools?

How does the poverty of a child's parents affect their education?

How does gender affect education?

Why do other countries measure ahead of the U.S. in education?

Does homeschooling disadvantage students?

Should sex education be required for all public schools?

Should you be forced to say the pledge of allegiance at school?

Is cheating getting worse?

Family

Should men receive paternity leave?

How can we get childcare costs down in the United States?

What is the best kind of parenting style?

What should birth control and/or abortion regulations be?

Is dating a thing of the past?

Society

Is there a better way to manage traffic?

Is culture being lost in the melting pot of America?

Is our prison system effective?

How can we best help those in poverty?

How can we better support farmers?

How is technology influencing younger generations?

What services should be provided for veterans?

Is racism still a problem in the United States?