**30 Days of American Schooling**

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1. This syllabus is now your God. Best learn how to genuflect. Everything is here in black and white. My expectations are clear. Don’t act like you weren’t told.

2. I will make my PowerPoints available to you every evening so you can study from them and absorb all this knowledge like a sponge. You will grow heavy and full with content that will be wrung out before ever fully absorbed.

3. Let’s be clear. I am the teacher. You are the student. If you are ready, I will appear. If you are not ready, I will be marking your paper with red pen as the paragraphs bleed out into the margins. I will puncture the arteries and veins of your language until a pool of red ink drowns out your voice as you choke and gurgle on the grammar that you never learned because you already had your own.

4. Never say “I think” or “I believe” or “I feel like.” No one cares what you think. Just eliminate those phrases and leave the ghost of what’s left. Remain objective. Take yourself out of the paper as much as possible, but still remain. Write an argumentative essay without your opinion.

5. We don’t speak like that in this school. Pull up your pants. Take off your hat or at least turn it forwards. Have some integrity. Speak proper English in this room. Speak a different variation of English. Yours is too versatile.

6. I don’t know what goes on in this community after 3:00 PM because I drive to the freeway and go straight home.

7. We aren’t going to talk about race, class, gender or privilege in this class. We are all the same. Equality, people. Ever heard of it? Just look – we have a Black president. This is post-racial America, so stop complaining.

8. When I raise my hand like this, that means quiet. I will count down from 3 – 2 – 1 and you will be quiet until you suffocate in the sweet symphony of silence.

9. We are going to learn respect if it’s the last thing we do. You think you can act like that in the real world? If you talk like that on an interview, you’ll never get a job. I’m trying to prepare you for the real world. You’ll be thanking me in a few years.

10. Silence.

11. Silence.

12. Silence.

13. Let the silence rest on your tongue. Swallow it. Digest it. Let the absence of sound marinate in your gut until your throat burns with violence.

14. Oh don’t even think about bringing that hip hop into my classroom. This is school. This is academic. This isn’t the streets.

15. You call this a thesis? Get this out of my face and come back when it’s provable and debatable. This isn’t workable. A thesis is a way of life. It guides everything you do. Think of it like a savior, Thesis Christ.

16. Think of this school as a factory. I’m the CEO. The captain. The foreman. You are the worker. Scratch that. You are the product. We are going to produce greatness. You will be sorted and boxed and shipped to any university of your choosing, unless a legacy student gets in over you because their father donated a building.

17. Yes, why don’t you “keep it real” and meet me in detention at 3:00. You can write on the board, “I will speak proper English” over and over again until you forget who you are.

18. Your experience means nothing here. Your personal connections to this text are irrelevant. See this? This is a literary criticism. You will write like this guy who majored in the study of Milton.

19. Participation is 50% of your grade but I’m going to talk for 75% of the time.

20. Does this make sense? Good. Great. Excellent. Moving on. We have a lot to cover.

21. This is not a democracy. If you don’t like an assignment, too bad. Get used to doing things you don’t like. It’s called life. I have to show up here every day.

22. Check this spelling - there is no “u” in identity.

23. This draft is flat-lining. You killed it. It’s dead. Perform an autopsy and bring it back to life. Stop daydreaming. Stop using your imagination.

24. I will not share my writing with you because I don’t have time to write. Look how many papers I have to grade. You want to trade places? You can grade these papers while I attempt this writing assignment that I never placed myself inside of.

25. Think of reading and writing like divorced parents. You want to love both but they don’t live together anymore and now you have to pick one.

26. Independent reading time is for kindergarten. This is high school. You will read at home, in isolation, because that’s where learning happens. This is not story-time. I’m sorry, did you want a juice box?

27. Tie this poem to a chair and torture a confession out of it.

28. When we workshop someone’s writing, make sure to pick it apart with a critical eye. Deconstruct it. Dissect it. Tear through it with your teeth like chicken from the bone. Slaughter it gently so the writer can pick up the pieces and re-assemble its corpse.

29. No questions at this time.

30. I have no answers.