The University of Mississippi Common Reading Experience Resource Guide

Integrating *Evicted* into the Classroom

Written by EDHE, Law, Library, and Writing and Rhetoric Faculty and Staff
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*An electronic version of this Guide is available in the EDHE_105-305_Instructors_2019-2020_Fall Blackboard course and on the Department of Writing and Rhetoric website at [https://library.cwr.olemiss.edu/guides/cre/](https://library.cwr.olemiss.edu/guides/cre/).
Chapter 1: Using *Evicted* in the Classroom

**Why does UM have a Common Reading Experience?**
The Common Reading Experience provides a shared intellectual experience for new members of the UM community. Through reading and considering a common book, new students engage with each other and with UM faculty in exploring issues relevant to today’s global community. The Common Reading Experience helps students understand the expectations of college-level academic work, the nature of scholarly inquiry, and the values of an academic community. The program also enriches new students’ campus experiences through co-curricular programs and events related to the book. The Common Reading Text is used in EDHE classes, Writing 100/101 classes, and other classes on campus. For more information about the Common Reading Experience visit [http://umreads.olemiss.edu/](http://umreads.olemiss.edu/).

**Why was *Evicted* selected?**
The Common Reading Text is chosen by a committee made up of UM faculty, staff, and students. This year’s selection was chosen after careful consideration of dozens of potential options. *Evicted* is an in-depth look at housing insecurity in America. Author Matthew Desmond spent many months living among low-income renters in Milwaukee and spent years completing meticulous research to present evidence about how housing problems affect cities and the country as a whole. In this book, readers will get to know many different renters who have been evicted or face eviction, as well as landlords and other figures who play key roles in the rental industry. *Evicted* has won numerous awards, including the 2016 National Book Critics Circle Award, the 2017 Pulitzer Prize for General Nonfiction, the 2017 PEN/John Kenneth Galbraith Award, the 2017 Andrew Carnegie Medal, and the 2017 Robert F. Kennedy Book Award.

**Who is Matthew Desmond?**
Matthew Desmond is a professor of sociology at Princeton University. He is an accomplished researcher and scholar, having won a MacArthur Fellowship, commonly known as a MacArthur Genius Grant, in 2015, and having authored or co-authored four books. Desmond completed his Ph.D. at the University of Wisconsin-Madison in 2010, after which he took a professorship at Harvard University. He became a member of the Harvard Society of Fellows as a Junior Fellow that same year before moving on to his current position.

**How do I teach non-fiction?**
The Common Reading Experience provides students and teachers in all disciplines a chance to interact with a shared text. Critical analysis of texts may feel like foreign territory to some teachers; however, analysis is a skill that is useful in all areas of education and beyond and can be approached in ways with which teachers are comfortable. Writing classes use the common reading text as the basis of a major project, but work with the book in other classes does not need
to be so in-depth or take up entire class periods. Try to implement short in-class discussions, homework assignments, response papers, or journal writings using the themes and prompts listed in this guide. Or ask students to examine the choices Desmond makes as a writer (style, structure, dialect, dialogue, etc.) and how they impact us as readers. Remember that you can concentrate on a few narratives that relate specifically to the themes of your course. This resource guide should provide starting points for discussions, homework, and/or writing assignments that will challenge students.

**How do I encourage students to read?**

**Before assigning reading:**

- Preview *Evicted* with students. Introduce the book during class. Explain how the book will be used in the course and how it will help students meet learning outcomes. Share your own excitement about the book, perhaps describing some favorite passages, events, or people.
- Help students understand the depth of reading required. Display a passage, and model critical reading strategies such as text annotation and marginalia.

**As students read:**

- Provide focused questions for students to consider while they are reading. Ask them to respond to those questions in writing before the next class.
- Have students identify and submit a discussion topic or question via email or Blackboard after they have read an assignment but before the next class meeting. Use their topics and questions as the basis for class activities.
- Require students to keep a reading response journal in which they comment on or question the reading assignment.
- Ask students to underline/highlight several passages from a reading assignment. In class, ask students to discuss one of their underlined/highlighted passages.

**After students have read:**

- Use class time and activities to build on, rather than summarize, the reading assignment.
- At the start of class, assign a one-minute paper in which students identify both the most crucial part of the reading assignment and an unanswered question they have about the reading assignment.
- During the first few minutes of class, ask students to write about links between the reading assignment and the topic being discussed in class.
- Distribute one or two questions that build on the reading assignment. Use the think-pair-share protocol. Students first consider the question(s) on their own. Then they discuss the question(s) with a partner. Finally, they share their results with the class.
How do I lead a class discussion?
A good class discussion, like any part of teaching, should be structured yet open to improvisation. Following are some pointers for leading a discussion based on what students have read (or even their attendance at an event).

Preparation before the class meeting:
Though you may have already read the book, be sure to review what the students are reading for your class meeting. Make a list of what you would like your students to learn from this exercise in order of importance.

- For instance, you might make priority one that students understand what they read.
- Then you might select a couple of scenes or events in the book that seem important or interesting (or even puzzling – just because you are leading class discussion does not mean you need to have all the possible answers).
- Perhaps you have selected several themes in the book as your focus. You might choose scenes that relate to poverty, stereotypes, or the power of community.
- You might also ask students to respond to a specific quotation or passage.
- Jot down a few notes so you can access them easily during your class discussion.
- Annotate your own text.

Class time:
- Establish respect. Class discussion is a time for exploration, and the classroom is a safe environment for students to say what they are thinking. Remind students of the first rule of the University creed: “I believe in respect for the dignity of each person.” Be sure students are listening carefully to each speaker and taking his or her ideas seriously.
- Before discussion, ask students to reflect on a directed, yet open, question in a five- to ten-minute writing. Encourage students to keep writing throughout the allotted time even if they run out of things to say. They will surprise themselves with this unstructured writing. This writing is not a quiz with one correct answer. Ask them questions such as “What do you think is the significance of X?”; “How has X changed over time?”; “Why did X do what he or she did?” You could also ask them to do a close reading of a particular passage, perhaps even comparing it to another passage.
- Avoid general questions such as “What did you think of the reading for today?” or “What did you find interesting?” These are dead-end questions that will lead to short discussions.
- To mix things up, you may also have them work together in small groups to find discussion starters or answers to your questions.

Other ideas and approaches:
- Different classes have different personalities. Just make sure the environment in which students speak is a safe one, and continue to encourage discussion in different ways if something is not working.
- Some students will direct their comments just to you. Encourage them to talk to each other.
- If you had them write a response, invite students to share what they wrote.
- If you had them work in groups, invite representatives from each group to share what they found.
- Encourage students to point to specifics in the text. Ask them where they see what they see.
- Invite students to read sections out loud.
- Be open to where the conversation takes you. Sometimes students will pick up on details that you didn’t see.
- Try not to let the class discussion go over fifteen to twenty minutes. Students are most productive in that time frame.
- At the end of the discussion, recap the major points made or ask students to do so.
- Course-specific discussion prompts are included in the course-specific sections of this guide.

**How do I deal with controversial topics?**

Some issues in *Evicted* may spark controversy in the classroom. Topics that might generate controversy include but are not limited to poverty, racism, sexism, addiction, mental health issues, domestic violence, homelessness, public assistance, capitalism, and rent control.

Remember that the common read discussion should always serve your course outcomes. If a student raises an issue with which you have no expertise or are uncomfortable tackling, you might respond by explaining the topic is more suited for discussion in a different course (such as Criminal Justice, Sociology, or Political Science). For example, you might say, “[Controversy X] is an important issue, and it’s one that you can study in depth in [Course Y]. [Course Y] is taught by an expert in that field. For the purposes of this course, let’s keep the focus on [your course outcome Z].” Additional guidelines are below.

If a student raises a controversial issue unexpectedly, you may want to:
1. Acknowledge the student’s remark.
2. Acknowledge that other students may hold different views or positions.
3. Assess your willingness to continue the discussion further.
4. Assess other students’ willingness to continue the discussion further.

The following guidelines may be helpful for facilitating planned discussions of controversial issues:
1. Articulate a clear purpose for the discussion (for example, how the discussion is related to course objectives).
2. Establish ground rules, such as listening without interrupting the speaker, questioning ideas rather than criticizing individuals, offering at least one piece of evidence to support each point made, using “I” statements rather than “you” statements.
3. Be an active facilitator by redirecting students who are off topic or participating too actively, ensuring students are not put on the spot as spokespersons for certain groups, providing opportunities for all students to participate (orally or through writing), and being attuned to students’ emotions.
4. Summarize the discussion at the end of class and obtain student feedback.

**How do I build instruction around the book’s themes?**
The book weaves many themes: poverty, profit, family, struggle, friendship, commiseration, segregation, inequality, hope, community, depression, and choice. A class focusing on the theme of struggling to maintain housing might look like this:

- Individually, students identify and write about a passage that illustrates the theme of struggle. (five to seven minutes)
- As a class, students discuss the pages they have chosen. (ten to fifteen minutes)
- With partners, students brainstorm ways in which people struggle with housing costs and research resources available to people to help avoid eviction. (five to ten minutes)
- Student pairs report their findings to the entire class. (ten to fifteen minutes)
- Homework: Students use the Internet or other resources to identify and analyze an article or video about an eviction. Here are some questions for them to consider: What circumstances led to the eviction? What could the person/family control? What could the person/family not control? What was something new you learned about eviction or housing costs? How does eviction impact people beyond just those losing their housing? Why do the answers to the previous question matter in the bigger picture?

**What library resources are available?**
Visit the [UM Libraries Common Reading Research Guide](https://libraries.olemiss.edu/careg). Explore this website about *Evicted* featuring full text articles, videos, suggested readings, upcoming events, historical information, and more.

**Extra copies of the book**
Two copies of the book are located in the main library stacks for regular checkout. An ebook edition is also available through EBSCOhost.
What events or speakers are being planned for the fall semester?
Thought-provoking events are an excellent way to get students involved with the book outside of the classroom. Please consider encouraging your students to attend an event and reflect on the overall message being delivered. For the most up-to-date list, visit the UM Libraries Common Reading Research Guide.

What if one of my students has a disability and needs a copy of the book in a different format?
Students with disabilities should visit Student Disability Services in 234 Martindale as soon as possible at the beginning of the semester. SDS provides classroom accommodations to all students on campus who disclose a disability, request accommodations, and meet eligibility requirements. SDS will be able to help your student acquire a copy of the CRE book in an appropriate format. The SDS website, http://www.olemiss.edu/depts/sds/SDSFaculty.htm, has some helpful resources for instructors.
Chapter 2: An Open Letter to New Tenants at the University of Mississippi and in Oxford

Prepared by Desiree Hensley, Associate Professor of Law and Director of the Housing Clinic at The University of Mississippi School of Law, this letter, which may be distributed to students, contextualizes the issue of fair housing in our University, local, and state communities.

Welcome to the University of Mississippi and to Oxford! We hope you are settling into your new campus home and town and will have a great first year of college. Everything is almost certainly going to go according to plan, or even better. We’re sure you will love your classes, make new friends, grow as a student and scholar, and have a fun and conflict-free academic year, especially with the University of Mississippi as your landlord. We think it’s only fair to warn you, however, that conflicts may occur when you reside on campus, and if they do you may be up the proverbial “creek.” Or, maybe not a creek, exactly, but at a place where you are without the statutory rights and protections promised to other renters and tenants in the State.

Mississippi law is not very protective of renters in general, but in most cases (not all) it does at least require a landlord to prove in court that he or she is entitled to evict a renter and always prohibits a landlord from using violence or threats to kick out a renter. What this means is that in some scenarios a landlord may change tenants’ locks or shut off their electricity but can’t threaten tenants with a weapon or beat them up while doing it. Rest assured, Ole Miss will not threaten you with a weapon. But it may be able to change your locks. (Note to self: Have you read your housing agreement with the University?)

Also, Mississippi law usually requires a landlord to maintain the rental home in a decent condition and provides a way for the tenant to get out of the lease when the landlord is not maintaining the property. Water is leaking into your room from the room above yours? The law requires your landlord to fix that. The lock on your room is broken? Call the landlord. Have mold? Landlord, please fix it. Your air conditioning is broken? Landlord on the way. Unfortunately, however, the Mississippi legal requirements that obligate a landlord to maintain a tenant’s home are difficult to enforce, and—apologies!—don’t apply to tenants like you (University students living in a dorm), so good luck getting your dorm room fixed (at least as soon as you would like). (Aside: I’m sure the University means well and will take care of your needs as soon as possible. But if not, there’s not much you can do about it.)

Mississippi law also says that a landlord must give a tenant written notice that the tenant has violated a rule in the lease, and then must wait 30 days before evicting the tenant. The reason? To give the tenant time to stop violating the lease so that the tenant can continue to live there. We know you would never violate dorm rules and are not interested in late parties, alcohol, having overnight visitors, listening to loud music, or putting signs in your windows. So, no worries there. Just in case you do violate a dorm rule, however minor, you should know that
state law doesn’t require that the University give you any notice before it evicts you. (Aside: Please read your agreement about what happens if you violate the lease. Just a heads up!)

It’s no joke that college is expensive and would be unaffordable for many of you but for student loans. In Mississippi, if your rent is late the landlord can evict you just three days after providing written notice that you better pay or get out. Three days is much too short for most people to come up with the missing rent, especially when there’s no money left until the next paycheck. As a student, most of you are not getting a weekly paycheck. For many of you, your “paycheck” is your once-a-semester student loan. Imagine trying to 1) find a new place to live; 2) pack up; and 3) physically move out within three days while going to class, preparing for tests, writing papers, or taking care of a family. Three days to completely uproot your entire life is an impossible and stressful situation to be in for anyone. For students, eviction often leads to dropping out of school until the student is able to become financially stable again.

Finally, please try to avoid becoming homeless—either on campus or in Oxford. You will be removed by campus police if you sleep on campus and are not a currently enrolled student. The Oxford police will offer you the choice of either going to the Lafayette County detention center or being dropped off outside of the city limits. Interfaith Compassion Ministry has a limited number of vouchers it can provide qualified Oxonians for three nights at the Ole Miss Motel on University Avenue, but that is essentially the only resource available to you. The HUD vouchers described by Matthew Desmond in *Evicted*? There are none available here. And last year the City of Oxford chose to demolish 100 units of federally subsidized housing for Oxford citizens most in need of housing that the City could have refurbished or rebuilt with federal and state funding.

The good news is that if you do end up in a housing situation that is unfair or unjust, there is always “The Law.” Just go to the Square and hire a lawyer to force your landlord to follow the terms of the lease or the law. Just joking. This really never happens. It’s way too expensive for most renters to hire a lawyer to help them, and it’s very, very hard for a tenant to get free legal help. In Mississippi the ratio of lawyers who provide free legal services to low-income people who need these services is 1:18,000. The main local provider is North Mississippi Rural Legal Services in Oxford. You can find their 1-800 number online. The University of Mississippi School of Law also has a Low-Income Housing Clinic that educates law students by providing free legal services to UM students and the community regarding housing issues on a first-come, first served basis. You can apply for the Clinic’s legal services by calling 662-915-3493 during the academic year.

Even if you get a lawyer to help you fight an eviction, you are likely to lose. Mississippi’s court system assigns eviction matters to the Justice Court. There are over 82 separate Justice Courts in the State—at least one, sometimes two, per county. Each court has its own judge who runs the courtroom and interprets the laws differently. This is especially problematic because anyone with a high school diploma is qualified to be elected as a Justice Court judge in Mississippi. Most have no formal legal training whatsoever and regularly get the law wrong. Many have no idea about the complex personal, legal, financial, and health problems
caused by the system of easy evictions that Mississippi and most other places in the United States have today. Appeals are expensive, and, in any event, just because someone appeals a Justice Court’s decision to enforce an eviction doesn’t mean that the eviction is “paused”—it isn’t.

I think you get the picture. Being a renter here at the University, in Oxford, in the United States in general, means that you are subject to forces that are, in many ways, beyond your control. Even when you have a right to be treated a certain way, enforcement of those rights is not a given and difficult, at best. Adding to the mix, being in poverty, experiencing an unexpected financial strain, suffering from physical or mental disabilities, dealing with drug or alcohol addiction, being the caregiver for rambunctious children, or even being a member of a minority group—all compound the problem. What can you do about it? Elect state representatives who will enact tenant-protective laws and reform the courts; elect federal representatives who will fund new publicly-owned, affordable housing units and HUD vouchers; elect local officials who will not demolish public housing, but who will fight to preserve and improve it. Advocate at your University for a Student Bill of Rights that protects you when you are a tenant in campus housing and when you move off campus into privately owned and managed housing. Volunteer at North Mississippi Rural Legal Services. Become an advocate. Become a lawyer.

Additional Resources

Mississippi Access to Justice Commission
http://www.msatjc.org/housing-issues


Mississippi Judicial Elections

Justice Court Issues
https://caselaw.findlaw.com/ms-supreme-court/1857340.html

North Mississippi Rural Legal Services
http://nmrls.com/

UM Law Low-Income Housing Clinic
https://law.olemiss.edu/academics-programs/clinics/housing-clinic/

Oxford’s Demolition of Public Housing [https://www.oxfordeagle.com/2017/03/03/riverside-residents-deserve-a-plan-to-keep-them-in-community/](https://www.oxfordeagle.com/2017/03/03/riverside-residents-deserve-a-plan-to-keep-them-in-community/)

Examples of Student Bill of Rights


Court Appointed Lawyers for Eviction Defense [https://ir.lawnet.fordham.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=2123&context=ulj](https://ir.lawnet.fordham.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=2123&context=ulj)

**A Note for Instructors**

Chapter 2 is written by University of Mississippi Associate Professor of Law Desiree Hensley, a legal scholar and tireless advocate for fair housing policies. Her “Open Letter to New Tenants” is at times provocative, informative, funny, and satirical. Professor Hensley wants our students to view themselves as tenants, perhaps for the first time, and to thereby better relate to some of the individuals profiled in Evicted. Sharing her letter would be a great way to lead students on an imaginative journey, to get them thinking critically about themselves, the book, and our collective world.

If you choose to use Hensley’s letter, remind your students that the exercise is an imaginative one. In reality, the university provides policies and rights above and above the legal minimums of Mississippi. If your first-year students have questions about campus living, they can always contact a staff member from the Department of Student Housing at (662) 915-7328. These campus housing professionals are eager to help and support students. Thankfully, as Hensley notes, our students don’t have to navigate the tricky legalities of being a tenant alone. Unlike many Americans, our students have certain privileges, supports, and responsibilities. Student Housing does not simply change locks nor evict students for minor policy violations, and the Student Housing website offers information, contact channels, and a digital “Maintenance Request” form for reporting maintenance issues.

Student Housing works hard to support and advocate for students and provides living and learning environments that support student success. And, as students move beyond their first year, Ole Miss continues to provide apartments and residence hall options for sophomores, juniors, and seniors to continue their academic success and have a home away from home.

Discussing the letter with students might even be an opportunity to make sure students know whom to contact if they do have any issues or concerns with their living spaces or want to learn more about leadership and academic opportunities in campus housing.
## Chapter 3: Who’s Who in *Evicted*

### A List of Residents and Landlords
(adapted from Rachel Hudak's *Evicted Teacher's Guide*)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Milwaukee’s South Side</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sherrena Tarver</td>
<td>landlord with rental properties on Milwaukee’s South Side</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quentin Tarver</td>
<td>Sherrena’s husband; managed maintenance of rental properties</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arleen Bell</td>
<td>rented home on 13th Street from Sherrena Tarver</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ger-Ger</td>
<td>Arleen’s eldest son (given name Gerald)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jori</td>
<td>Arleen’s 13-year-old son</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jafaris</td>
<td>Arleen’s 5-year-old son; suffers from asthma</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boosie</td>
<td>Arleen’s son (given name Larry)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Larry</td>
<td>Boosie and Jori’s father</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Little</td>
<td>Jori’s cat</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Belinda Hall</td>
<td>a representative payee responsible for handling finances of SSI beneficiaries; managed 230 clients when she started working with Sherrena</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Doreen Hinkston</td>
<td>rented unit at 18th and Wright from Sherrena Tarver</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Patrice Hinkston</td>
<td>Doreen’s 24-year-old daughter; lives upstairs from Lamar and Doreen with her three children</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Natasha Hinkston</td>
<td>Doreen’s 19-year-old daughter</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C.J. Hinkston</td>
<td>Doreen’s 14-year-old son</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ruby Hinkston</td>
<td>Doreen’s 13-year-old daughter</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mikey Hinkston</td>
<td>Patrice’s 10-year-old son; Doreen’s grandson</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jada Hinkston</td>
<td>Patrice’s 4-year-old daughter; Doreen’s granddaughter</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kayla Mae Hinkston</td>
<td>Patrice’s 2-year-old daughter; Doreen’s granddaughter</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coco</td>
<td>Patrice Hinkston’s dog</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Crystal Mayberry</td>
<td>19-year-old tenant of Sherrena Tarver</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Name</td>
<td>Description</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------------</td>
<td>-----------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vanetta Evans</td>
<td>Crystal’s friend from the homeless shelter and later roommate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trisha</td>
<td>Crystal’s upstairs neighbor; later takes in Arleen and her children</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kamala</td>
<td>upstairs tenant at 18th and Wright; mother of three girls</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lamar Richards</td>
<td>disabled veteran living in Sherrena’s duplex apartment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Luke Richards</td>
<td>Lamar’s 16-year-old son</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eddy Richards</td>
<td>Lamar’s 15-year-old son</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Buck</td>
<td>Lamar’s 18-year-old neighbor; sleeps at his parents’ house but lives with Lamar</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DeMarcus</td>
<td>Lamar’s 16-year-old neighbor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>College Mobile Home Park</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lenny Lawson</td>
<td>manager of the College Mobile Home Park on Milwaukee’s far South Side</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Office Susie</td>
<td>employee of the College Mobile Home Park</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tobin Charney</td>
<td>owner and landlord of the College Mobile Home Park; lives 70 miles away in Skokie, IL</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Larraine Jenkins</td>
<td>resident of the College Mobile Home Park</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Glen</td>
<td>Larraine’s former boyfriend; died while in prison</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beaker</td>
<td>Larraine’s brother; resident of College Mobile Home Park</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Heroin Susie</td>
<td>resident of the College Mobile Home Park</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scott Bunker</td>
<td>39-year-old former nurse and recovering addict; resident of College Mobile Home Park</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teddy</td>
<td>previously homeless; moves into College Mobile Home Park with Scott</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pam Reinke</td>
<td>College Mobile Home Park resident and mother of four daughters</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ned Kroll</td>
<td>Pam’s boyfriend; motorcycle repairman</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Chapter 4: Critical Thinking Exercises**
The UM QEP, *Think Forward*, defines critical thinking as the ability to conceptualize problems, gather pertinent information, interpret data, appraise evidence, distinguish diverse points of view, and articulate personal insights, in order to present reasonable and effective arguments, responses, or conclusions.

![Diagram from Think Forward Quality Enhancement Plan](image)

The small group exercises below help students develop critical thinking skills.

**Exercises Related to Tenant Protections**

1. Matthew Desmond’s book is about eviction in Milwaukee, but many people around the country face similar circumstances when it comes to housing. In Mississippi, the Landlord-Tenant Act was recently amended by the state legislature to clarify that there is no legal right to a ten-day grace period between an eviction judgment and a warrant of removal, meaning tenants can be evicted immediately after receiving a court judgment in the landlord’s favor. As Desmond notes in the book, this process can mean tenants’ possessions are taken and put into storage at their cost. Investigate some policies on eviction judgments and warrants of removal in different states, and outline which ones make the most sense to you and why.

2. Mississippi has some of the weakest tenant protection measures in the United States. According to Erica Hensley of *Mississippi Today*, “[i]f a tenant is three days late on rent, they will likely be evicted, regardless of neglected housing repairs or personal circumstance that resulted in defaulted rent — issues that are settled in housing courts in many states.” For this critical-thinking exercise, work individually or in groups to determine some of the drawbacks for society at large with practices such as this. Then, suggest a policy or practice that might be more beneficial for all parties involved.

**Exercise Related to Distinguishing Diverse Points of View**
3. In the “About this Project” section of *Evicted*, Desmond explains his purpose: “I wanted to try to write a book about poverty that didn’t focus exclusively on poor people or poor places. Poverty was a relationship . . . involving poor and rich people alike. To understand poverty, I needed to understand that relationship” (317). He further notes that both the landlords and the tenants in his study were eager to talk with him, as in this exchange with Scott Bunker, “Scott nodded to me scribbling away in my notepad and asked AA diehard Anna Aldea, ‘Does it make you nervous, having Matt here?’ ‘Fuck no,’ Anna said. ‘My life is an open book’” (319). Similarly Sherrena Tarver “wanted people to know ‘what landlords had to go through’” (320).

Choose one of the tenant/landlord relationships chronicled in the book. Trace that relationship from the beginning to the end by rereading each encounter between the tenant and the landlord. As you read, make a list of the arguments the tenant and landlord offer in each encounter as well as a note about the resolution of each encounter. Consider where the tenant and landlord share common ground and where they seem to be miles apart. Based on this analysis, characterize the nature of their relationship. Then consider Desmond’s stated purpose for the book. How does this relationship help Desmond and the reader understand poverty?

**Exercise Related to Policy Solutions**

4. Statistics in 2019 show that evictions are on the decline in New York City after commitments to provide free legal representation to poor tenants facing eviction. Read “Mayor de Blasio: Record-breaking 37% Decrease in Evictions Citywide” (The Official Website of the City of New York, 04 Feb. 2019), and then think about the local situation in Mississippi. Keep in mind that 2016 data shows Jackson, MS has the fifth-highest eviction rate in the country. Is mandatory legal representation possible in Mississippi? Why or why not? Work individually or in groups to investigate potential strategies that might help lower eviction rates in Jackson and in Mississippi. What is possible in our state and why?

**Exercises Related to Information Literacy**

5. The Center for American Progress produces annual reports on poverty in the U.S., including state rankings, from 1-50, on several criteria. Read the infographic on poverty in Mississippi in 2018, found here: [https://talkpoverty.org/state-year-report/mississippi-2018-report/](https://talkpoverty.org/state-year-report/mississippi-2018-report/). List the criteria for which Mississippi is ranked between 21st and 40th. Why might Mississippi be performing better on those criteria when it is falling behind in the other criteria? What assumptions might you make about affordable housing in Mississippi based on this data?

infographics affirm Desmond’s decision to study affordable housing through the lens of eviction? Why, or why not?

6. The Statista charts below provide information about eviction in the United States from 2000-2017. Examine the charts and make a list of everything they reveal about eviction during that time period.

- Based on your list, what would you argue is the predominant reason people are being evicted?
- Based on your list, would you argue that the U.S. is making improvements in decreasing the rate of evictions? Why?
- Based on your list, what suggestions would you make for decreasing the eviction rate in the U.S. even further?
- Matthew Desmond moved into Tobin’s trailer park in May 2008, and *Evicted* was published in 2016. How does Desmond’s research complicate the information conveyed in Charts 1 and 2? Do those complications change the way a reader views the charts? How can you reconcile the information on the charts with the information in Desmond’s book?

**Chart 1**

**Leading reasons why renters received eviction threats in the United States in 2017**

![Chart 1](chart1.png)

**Chart 2**

![Chart 2](chart2.png)
Rate of eviction in the United States from 2000 to 2016
Chapter 5: Integrating *Evicted* into EDHE 105/305

The common reading book selection is used each year in EDHE 105/305 courses primarily as a framework for class discussions, projects, and writing assignments that explore social themes and/or issues from the book. EDHE 105/305 instructors use the text (with a focus on those themes and issues) to teach students how to explore their personal reactions, to understand and appreciate both the things that make them different from their peers and the things that they have in common, and to effectively and respectfully voice their own opinions and viewpoints.

**Note to teachers:** It is recommended that before asking your students to speak publicly or participate in projects where they may have to directly address their own housing background you assign a simple writing or journal prompt asking students to describe what home means to them. Answers from students will hopefully guide you in covering the common read material in a manner that won’t cause anxiety or other possible issues for some students.

**CLASS DISCUSSION PROMPTS**
(adapted from Rachel Hudak’s *Evicted Teacher’s Guide* and UW-Madison’s Big Read Discussion Questions for *Evicted*)

EDHE 105/305 classrooms provide excellent opportunities for students to practice classroom discussion. Instructors are encouraged to read pages 2-7 of this guide to prepare for these opportunities. Here are several suggestions for discussion prompts:

1. What was your experience reading *Evicted*? Were you surprised by what you learned? Was any particular scene or individual’s story emotionally painful for you to witness?

2. In *Evicted*, author Matthew Desmond takes a narrative approach to an important topic and follows the stories of several real people. Which person’s story were you most drawn to and why?

Core Value: the UM Creed
3. The purpose of the UM Creed is “to outline certain established values that each member of the University community should strive to possess” (UM Policy 10000781). Discuss how certain individuals or events in *Evicted* reflect or do not reflect one of the following aspects of the Creed:

- I believe in respect for the dignity of each person.
- I believe in fairness and civility.
- I believe in personal and professional integrity.
- I believe in good stewardship of our resources.

**Core Curriculum: Inclusion – Respect for the Dignity of Each Person**

4. Ruminating on the reasons for Lorraine’s purchase of lobster with food stamps, Desmond reflects that “it was not because her benefits left her with so much but because they left her with so little” (219). Even with austere personal budgets and self-control, Desmond contends that for those at the bottom, pulling oneself up by the bootstraps is practically impossible. After learning about the people in *Evicted*, do you think individuals get stuck in a cycle of poverty due to a “poverty mentality”—they are poor because they throw money away, or—as Desmond suggests—they throw money away because they are poor? Did this chapter challenge or reaffirm your previously held beliefs about people living in poverty?

5. How does the process of screening tenants lead to a “geography of advantage and disadvantage” (89)? How can landlords’ decisions impact neighborhood characteristics like schools, crime rates, and levels of civic engagement? How can a criminal background or history of past evictions impact a person’s ability to rent property? Do you think a tenant should have to disclose this information? Why or why not?

6. Many people have very codified perceptions of “people who get evicted” and suspect that those people are largely responsible, through bad decision making, for their circumstances. Did you feel this way before reading *Evicted*? Why or why not? Did your opinions change after reading the book? If so, how?

**Core Curriculum: Wellness – Self-care**

7. Desmond discusses the connection between substandard housing, the high cost of rent, and health issues facing tenants and their families. How do housing conditions contribute to health issues? For example, Lorraine sometimes had to choose between paying her rent and filling her pain medication prescriptions (42), and we learn that “[s]uicides attributed to evictions and foreclosures doubled between 2005 and 2010, years when housing costs soared” (298). What are other examples of health-related issues facing tenants in the book? How are children, in particular, at risk (see Notes, 386-7)? How do the landlords respond to these issues?
8. Desmond writes, “No one thought the poor more undeserving than the poor themselves” (180). How do you see this attitude reflected in residents of the trailer park? Do you see it reflected in Arleen’s actions?

9. What challenges did Scott face while maintaining his sobriety? Do you think the process for Scott to get his nursing license back was reasonable? Why or why not? What relief did Scott receive after obtaining subsidized housing and county-subsidized methadone treatment?

Core Curriculum: Wellness – Financial Management
10. Though Sherrena’s and Tobin’s tenants struggle to pay their rent, the landlords both have an estimated net worth of approximately $2 million. Sherrena remarks, “The ’hood is good. There’s a lot of money there” (152). Similarly, Desmond notes of Tobin, "The annual income of the landlord of perhaps the worst trailer park in the fourth-poorest city in America is 30 times that of his tenants working full-time for minimum wage, and 55 times the annual income of his tenants receiving welfare or SSI. There are two freedoms at odds with each other: the freedom to profit from rents and the freedom to live in a safe and affordable home" (308). Do you see these freedoms being affirmed or denied in Evicted? Where is the line between running a profitable business and exploitation? On which side of that line do you see Sherrena and Tobin?

11. Why do you think Larraine chose to spend all of her food stamps on expensive food like lobster and king crab? What personal reaction did you have to her decision? Do you agree with Pastor Daryl that Larraine is careless with her money because she is operating under a “poverty mentality” (219)? Why might it be difficult for Larraine to lift herself out of poverty by practicing good behavior or self-control? What options do you believe Larraine has?

12. Why do you think 90% of landlords are represented by attorneys in housing courts while 90% of tenants are not? What would you do if you were facing eviction and in need of legal assistance? Do you think attorneys should be provided to low-income tenants at no cost?

Core Curriculum: Relationships/Community
13. If you were unexpectedly evicted from your home, what would be the fallout? How would this impact your education, employment, and relationships? How might a sudden change like eviction affect your physical and mental well-being?

14. Besides affecting an individual family, what are the consequences of evictions for schools and communities? How can a single eviction destabilize multiple blocks in one neighborhood?

15. Do you agree or disagree with Desmond’s views on home when he writes:
The home is the center of life. It is a refuge from the grind of work, the pressure of school, and the menace of the streets. We say that at home, we can be ourselves. Everywhere else, we are someone else. At home, we remove our masks. Home is the wellspring of personhood. It is where our identity takes root and blossoms . . . Civic life begins at home . . . America is supposed to be a place where you can better yourself, your family, and your community (293-4).

How does unstable housing prevent attainment of this kind of life?

16. Desmond reflects on his description of the project at the end of the book: “I wanted to try to write a book about poverty that didn’t focus exclusively on poor people or poor places. Poverty was a relationship, I thought, involving poor and rich people alike . . . This sent me searching for a process that bound poor and rich people together in mutual dependence and struggle. Eviction was such a process” (317). How does eviction bind rich and poor people together? How does the relationship between rich and poor compare to the relationship between landlord and tenant? What are some ways that tenants and landlords in *Evicted* benefit and struggle due to their roles? On a larger scale, are there organizations or government programs mentioned in *Evicted* that enforce or challenge this mutual dependence?

17. Did reading *Evicted* inspire you to want to help others in positions similar to those of the people in the book? If so, how do you think you might get involved?

**IN-CLASS ACTIVITIES**

1. **Budgeting By the Book Project**

   Instructors: Put students into groups of 3-4 and read/display Part One of the assignment below to each group. Give students 5-10 minutes to decide how to allocate their monthly income for Part One. Then read/display Part Two of the assignment and give students another 5-10 minutes to discuss how to allocate money in these new scenarios.

   **Part One**

   Assume that your group is a family in good health (two parents and two children) with one income that is renting a place to live. The earner in your family makes $55,000 per year, just under the median family income for Mississippi families. Assume that after taxes and other monthly required expenses, your family has $4000 per month to spend on the categories below. Decide as a group how your monthly income should be budgeted and be prepared to explain why. Be sure to consider the following: 1.) It is advised that you should spend no more than 30% of your income on housing, and 2.) Assume that you can find a place to rent for your family that meets this criteria. (You may want to research online what average families spend on groceries, healthcare, etc.)
Budget Categories
- Rent
- Groceries
- Utilities
- Health
- Clothing
- Entertainment
- Emergencies
- Savings

Part Two
Now imagine that your family is in the same position as Arleen in *Evicted*. You can’t work for a variety of reasons (no money or access to childcare, no transportation for interviews, etc.) and you are instead having to rely on a state family aid program. You receive a check for $628 per month, and the rent for your apartment is $550. How would you allocate your income if you had a housing voucher or a public housing unit that only required you to pay 30% of your rent costs ($188)?

Post-Activity Class Discussion Prompts
- Ask the groups to share why they made their decisions under each scenario.
- Under the second scenario, ask them how they might handle a situation where there is an issue in the apartment (toilet breaks, heat goes out, etc.) if they are late or behind on their rent. How might this impact their budget in the future?
- How would they plan to handle emergencies if they did not or could not allocate money to this?
- Did this scenario change their perceptions about how much monthly funding most people receive through welfare programs?
- Refer to earlier discussion questions in this chapter for additional questions related to this activity.

2. Problem-Solving Brainstorming Session
Divide the class into 4–5 groups, providing each group with 5-6 index cards and an envelope.

1. Instruct each group to select a social problem or issue that was brought up in the book and then write this on the envelope. Alternatively, you may start with a brainstorming session, list problems, and then have each group select one.

   Suggestions for issues: affordable housing, racial profiling, abuse of power, legal representation for indigent individuals, economic exploitation by landlords.

2. Each group then passes their envelope to the next group.
3. As each group receives an envelope, they have a set amount of time to discuss the problem and possible solutions. They write their best solution on an index card, place it in their envelope, and then pass it to the next group. Groups may not look at other solutions from other groups that are in the envelope!

4. Continue until each group’s envelope comes back around to the starting point. Have each group read all of the solution suggestions, decide which one they think is the best, and explain why to the class.

3. In-Class Debate

Choose one of the controversial issues or themes described in this guide and write a proposition statement. For example:

- Example #1 – Resolved: “Decent, affordable housing should be a basic right for everybody in this country” (300).

- Example #2 – Resolved: “A universal housing voucher program would carve a middle path between the landlord’s desire to make a living and the tenant’s desire, simply, to live” (308).

- Example #3 – Resolved: “Establishing publicly funded legal services for low-income families in housing court would be a cost-effective measure that would prevent homelessness, decrease evictions, and give poor families a fair shake” (303).

Divide the class into two or more groups with one or more sides taking the affirmative position and the other side(s) the negative. Allow 10 to 15 minutes for research and drafting arguments. Each side then presents its case in the following format:

1. Affirmative constructive speech
2. Negative constructive speech
3. 5-minute work period
4. Negative rebuttal speech
5. Affirmative rebuttal
6. 5-minute work period
7. Negative rebuttal
8. Affirmative rebuttal
9. Decision

Variation: Require research and preparation outside of class. Make teams of two to three and use the debate as the group project assignment.
4. Investigating People’s Stories (individual or group activity)

Choose an individual from the book. Suggestions:

- Arleen Bell
- Doreen Hinkston
- Crystal Mayberry
- Lamar Richards
- Larraine Jenkins
- Scott Bunker

Investigate this individual using these questions:

- What is this person’s story?
- Describe his or her character traits. Do you admire these traits? Why or why not?
- List a memorable quote from this person. Why did you choose this particular quote?
- How does he/she interact with the landlord?
- Does this individual evolve and develop throughout the book? If so, how?

GROUP/INDIVIDUAL PROJECT ASSIGNMENTS

1. Just the Facts!

Early in the semester, groups can give short presentations on the facts related to various topics in the book (some examples are listed below). The presentations can be limited to a particular city or state instead of the whole country.

- Public or subsidized housing
- Homelessness
- Landlord vs. tenant rights
- Cycle of poverty
- Racism and eviction
- Drugs and housing
- Housing legislation
2. Research Project/Presentation

*Note to instructor: Consider encouraging your students to utilize the library resources found at the UM Libraries Common Reading Research Guide and other resources listed on pages 6-7 of this guide.*

Divide the class into small groups, assigning one of the non-profit organizations listed (or others selected by the groups with your approval). Each group member will be assigned a particular role: researcher, illustrator, writer, organizer, presenter, etc. Have students use the suggested resources plus any others they find in order to prepare a 10-15 minute presentation to the class on their project. Instruct students to address the organization’s mission, activities, impact, etc.

- Just Shelter (justshelter.org)
- National Low Income Housing Coalition (nlihc.org)
- The National Housing Law Project (nhlp.org)
- Urban Institute (urban.org)
- National Coalition for a Civil Right to Counsel (civilrighttocounsel.org)

3. Identity Project (adapted from NC State’s “Creative Project”)

Choose an individual from *Evicted* and create two representations of this person’s identity: how he/she thinks others view him/her, and how the individual views himself/herself. You may use any medium you want. Some potential options include:

- Video
- Song or other audio art
- Poem or other written art
- Painting, drawing, photography, or other two-dimensional art
- Sculpture, model, diorama, or other three-dimensional art
- Other creative representation of identities

4. Written Identity Reflection (adapted from NC State’s “Creative Project”)

Please address the following questions. Your response to each question should be thorough but limited to one or two paragraphs per question. Overall, your written reflection should be no more than three pages.

1. Define what identity means to you, and describe the identities you feel apply to you as an individual.

2. Select one person from the book whom you found interesting (you may select the author). Briefly describe the person and his/her experience. How are that person’s identities different from yours? In what ways are his/her identities similar to yours? How might you and this person experience life differently?
Chapter 6: Integrating *Evicted* into WRIT 100/101

The first-semester, first-year writing courses—WRIT 100 and WRIT 101—use the Common Reading Text as the basis for the initial major writing project. This project emphasizes the critical reading, critical thinking, analysis, research, and synthesis skills that are vital to college writing. In this assignment, students are given a prompt pertaining to the Common Reading Text and asked to compose an essay that integrates the Common Reading Text with outside sources and/or the student’s own ideas. The prompts are intentionally complex to introduce students to the expectations of college thinking and writing. First-year writing courses use the Common Reading Text as a basis for student reading and writing rather than as a literary study.

Discussion Questions
(Adapted from: Rachel Hudak, *Evicted Teacher’s Guide*)

1. Why was Arleen evicted from her apartment on Milwaukee’s near South Side? Were you surprised that her landlord made the decision to evict the family after the apartment door was damaged? Arleen later found an apartment where the rent, not including utilities, was 88% of her welfare check. How might a family like Arleen’s manage to cover rent, utilities, and all other expenses on such a small income? What kind of sacrifices do you think families in this situation must make in order to make ends meet?

2. Tenants are often given two options while being evicted from their residence—their possessions can be loaded into a truck and checked into bonded storage or movers can pile their belongings onto the sidewalk. What challenges and consequences may a tenant or family face when experiencing one of these two scenarios? If you were suddenly faced with the decision to move or store your possessions, which option would you choose?

3. Sherrena Tarver claimed to have found her calling as an inner-city entrepreneur, stating, “The ’hood is good. There’s a lot of money there” (152). How did Sherrena profit from being a landlord in poor communities? Do you think her profits were justified? What responsibilities do landlords have when renting out their property? What risks do they take? Do you sympathize with Sherrena? Why, or why not?

4. In an average month at the College Mobile Home Park, nearly 1/3 of tenants were behind on their rent. Why did park landlord Tobin Charney select a handful of tenants to evict each month? How did some tenants escape eviction? Tobin lived 70 miles away from the trailer park he owned. How might this kind of distance benefit a landlord? What problems might it create?
5. How did Tobin benefit from offering his tenants the “Handyman Special” (46)—giving families their trailers for free but charging them for lot rent? Why might tenants see this as a better deal than paying the equivalent in rent? How did the high demand for low-cost housing impact Tobin’s decisions about whether or not to repair property or forgive late payments? What incentives could be put in place to motivate landlords to maintain their properties? What risks do tenants take when filing a report with a building inspector?

6. Many Americans still believe that the typical low-income family lives in public housing. But only one in four families who qualify for housing assistance receive it. What challenges did Arleen face when trying to get approved for subsidized housing? Assistance programs in Milwaukee either require tenants have dependent children or have experienced a sudden loss of income. How do these services assist people experiencing short-term crises but not those facing more serious long-term poverty? Are there other forms of housing assistance available to low-income individuals and families?

7. How does the process of screening tenants lead to a “geography of advantage and disadvantage” (89)? How can landlords’ decisions impact neighborhood characteristics like schools, crime rates, and levels of civic engagement? How can a criminal background or history of past evictions impact a person’s ability to rent property? Do you think a tenant should have to disclose this information? Why, or why not?

8. Why do you think landlords like Sherrena rely so heavily on hiring tenants and jobless men to maintain their property? Do you think this affects the employment prospects for people in the neighborhood?

9. What benefits do landlords like Sherrena receive when they rent to tenants who have housing vouchers? Why do some tenants who spend more than 30% of their income on housing receive assistance while others do not? How do landlords like Sherrena and Tobin benefit financially from the Fair Market Rent set by the Department of Housing and Urban Development? How does this program bring large gains to landlords? How does it prevent gains in racial and economic integration?

10. Why do you think Crystal made the decision to let Arleen and her sons stay until they found another residence? How do tenants like Crystal and Arleen rely on friends and extended kin networks to get by? Does this do anything to lift them out of poverty or distress?

11. What motivated Crystal to call 911 after hearing a domestic disturbance upstairs? How did this strain her relationship with her landlord, Sherrena? What risks do landlords incur once their
property becomes a designated nuisance? Should landlords be penalized for their tenants’ behavior? Why, or why not?

12. Crystal was diagnosed with a wide range of mental illnesses. What struggles did Crystal face throughout her search for stable housing? How might mental illness present additional challenges to a person already living in poverty? How might mental illness contribute to a person’s history of eviction? What protections do people with mental illness have?

13. Landlords repeatedly turned down Pam and Ned’s rental applications because they have children. Why? Do you think families with children should receive any protection when seeking housing? Why do you think families with children were not considered a protected class when Congress passed the Fair Housing Act in 1968? Do you think it is fair for landlords to charge tenants with children monthly surcharges and children-damage deposits? Why, or why not?

14. Why did Doreen choose not to call Sherrena when the house was in desperate need of repair? Do you agree that “The house failed the tenants, and the tenants failed the house” (page 256)? What effect does living in a home that is not decent or functional have on a person’s psychological and emotional health?

15. Why did Vanetta participate in an armed robbery? Do you think the 81-month sentence Vanetta received was too harsh? Why, or why not? What challenges do you think Vanetta will face while serving a 15-month prison sentence? What challenges will she face while serving 66 months on parole? Why do you think Vanetta’s public defender failed to mention that she was attending GED classes, providing childcare, and looking for housing every morning? How might that information have impacted her sentencing?

16. What challenges did Scott face while maintaining his sobriety? Do you think the process for Scott to get his nursing license back was reasonable? Why, or why not? What relief did Scott receive after obtaining subsidized housing and county-subsidized methadone treatment?

17. Arleen received 89 negative responses and one positive from prospective landlords. What impact did this have on her children, Jori and Jafaris? How do children expose families to eviction rather than shield them from it? What happened to Arleen when she was evicted from her apartment? After losing her possessions in storage and having her welfare case closed, what options did Arleen have?

18. Why did Desmond believe it was important to live in the Milwaukee communities most affected by eviction? How did his presence impact the lives of his neighbors? How was his personal experience different from the experiences of the people he interviewed?
19. Why do you think there is so much research on public housing and other housing policies but very little research on the private rental market? What solutions to the lack of affordable housing does Desmond propose? Do you have other ideas for how this issue could be addressed in your community?

20. Desmond points out that, compared to wealthier areas, residents in poorer neighborhoods are much more likely to help their neighbors. Tenants support one another in times of dire need by helping with bills or buying groceries, but not without judgment or shaming. Desmond writes, “But for such vital exchanges to take place, residents had to make their needs known and acknowledge their failures” (181). Neighbors console and prevent a tenant from harming herself when Child Protective Services takes her children away, although one resident still remarks, “It ain’t nothing to be proud of … But the Lord took ‘em for some reason” (181). Desmond notes that trailer park residents often feel “[e]victions were deserved, understood to be the outcome of individual failure” (179). How does this revelation compare to Desmond’s description of the frequent protests against evictions and unsanitary conditions in the early twentieth century, when “renters opposed landlords and saw themselves as a ‘class’ with shared interests and a unified purpose” (180)? What changed so drastically in the last hundred or so years, and why?

21. In the “About this Project” section of Evicted, Desmond explains his writing choices by claiming that “first-person narration … may be the least well-suited vehicle for capturing the essence of the social world because the ‘I’ filters all,” (334) yet we know from reading this section that Desmond was very involved in the lives of his subjects. What are the disadvantages and advantages of using first person to make a case? Would you have read this book differently if Desmond had used “I” throughout to tell his story?
## Resources Suggested by DWR Teachers

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<th>Title</th>
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<td>Poverty USA</td>
<td>Data visualization tool which allows students to see poverty statistics from their hometowns</td>
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<td>“Homelessness is Solvable”</td>
<td>Part of the Solvable podcast series; Malcolm Gladwell interviews Roseanne Haggerty about solutions to homelessness</td>
<td><a href="https://www.rockefellerfoundation.org/solvable/solvable-podcast-series/homelessness-is-solvable/">https://www.rockefellerfoundation.org/solvable/solvable-podcast-series/homelessness-is-solvable/</a></td>
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<td>Intergroup Monopoly</td>
<td>Classroom game that explores issues of inequality</td>
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<td>Discussion of careers and volunteer opportunities that help alleviate poverty</td>
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Project Prompts

1. Public Policy Analysis

(NYT) Many of the people featured in *Evicted* are facing homelessness or are one step away from it. Homelessness creates a whole new set of problems for America to solve. Read back over some of the situations in *Evicted* where people confront homelessness. Then, read “‘I’m Cold and I’m Afraid’: Across Midwest, Homeless Await Deep Freeze” (*NYT*, 29 Jan. 2019), and consider the following statement by Ben Carson, secretary of the Department of Housing and Urban Development, on homelessness: “This is not a federal problem—it’s everybody’s problem.” How are the problems of homelessness and eviction intertwined? Why are solutions for one issue important to the other? Is Carson correct? Compose a thesis-driven essay in which you critically examine these two issues and then argue what Carson means and why, citing evidence from your sources.

(TCC) Many of the people featured in *Evicted* are facing homelessness or are one step away from it. Homelessness creates a whole new set of problems for America to solve. Read back over some of the situations in *Evicted* where people confront homelessness. Then, read “Homelessness is everyone’s problem” (Simon Fraser University, Office of the Vice-President, Research 02 July 2009), and consider the following statement by Ben Carson, secretary of the Department of Housing and Urban Development, on homelessness: “This is not a federal problem—it’s everybody’s problem.” How are the problems of homelessness and eviction intertwined? Why are solutions for one issue important to the other? Is Carson correct? Compose a thesis-driven essay in which you critically examine these two issues and then argue what Carson means and why, citing evidence from your sources.

2. Public Policy Argument

(NYT) Chapter 8 of *Evicted*, “Christmas in Room 400,” focuses on eviction court. Here, readers learn the vast majority of low-income tenants have no legal representation while landlords often have lawyers present in court or lawyers available. Read back over Chapter 8 and any other parts of *Evicted* where eviction court is prominent. Then, read “For Tenants Facing Eviction, New York May Guarantee a Lawyer” (*NYT*, 26 Sept. 2016) and/or “In 83 Million Eviction Records, a Sweeping and Intimate New Look at Housing in America” (*NYT*, 7 Apr. 2018). Should people facing eviction have the right to legal counsel? What are the costs for providing or not providing such aid both short-term and long-term? Should the Sixth Amendment to the U.S. Constitution include certain civil matters? Compose a thesis-driven essay in which you closely examine the issue of legal representation in eviction court and argue what policies and practices would benefit America the most, citing evidence from your sources.
Chapter 8 of *Evicted*, “Christmas in Room 400,” focuses on eviction court. Here, readers learn that the vast majority of low-income tenants have no legal representation while landlords often have lawyers present in court or lawyers available. Read back over Chapter 8 and any other parts of *Evicted* where eviction court is prominent. Then, read “*Someone To Speak For You*: Low-Income Tenants Get Lawyers For Housing Court” (*NPR*, 3 Apr. 2019). Should people facing eviction have the right to legal counsel? What are the costs for providing or not providing such aid both short-term and long-term? Should the Sixth Amendment to the U.S. Constitution include certain civil matters? Compose a thesis-driven essay in which you closely examine the issue of legal representation in eviction court and argue what policies and practices would benefit America the most, citing evidence from your sources.

### 3. Correlation Analysis

(*NYT*) One area that *Evicted* highlights is the struggles of single mothers. People featured in the book such as Arleen, Doreen, Vanetta, and Patrice face the difficult task of finding stable residences while raising children. Many Americans see a correlation between single motherhood and poverty. Why? Where does this come from? Read back over sections of *Evicted* where Arleen, Doreen, Vanetta, and Patrice are featured. Also, read “*Single Mothers Are Not the Problem*” (*NYT*, 10 Feb. 2018). What are some of the factors that contribute to the struggles of many single mothers? What are some of the ways we combat those struggles in America? Compose a thesis-driven essay in which you explore and analyze the connection between single motherhood and poverty. Make and support a claim about the issues, citing evidence from your sources.

(*TCC*) One area that *Evicted* highlights is the struggles of single mothers. People featured in the book such as Arleen, Doreen, Vanetta, and Patrice face the difficult task of finding stable residences while raising children. Many Americans see a correlation between single motherhood and poverty. Why? Where does this come from? Read back over sections of *Evicted* where Arleen, Doreen, Vanetta, and Patrice are featured. Also, read “*Single mothers much more likely to live in poverty than single fathers, study finds*” (*Phys.org*, 31 Aug. 2015). What are some of the factors that contribute to the struggles of many single mothers? What are some of the ways we combat and/or fail to combat those struggles in America? Compose a thesis-driven essay in which you explore and analyze the connection between single motherhood and poverty. Make and support a claim about the issues, citing evidence from your sources.

### 4. Issue Argument

(*NYT*) According to the Milwaukee Eviction Court Study, 2011, one-third of tenants in eviction court “devoted at least 80 percent” (as cited in Desmond 97) of their income to rent. Investigate
what financial experts recommend for budgets and how much of a person’s income should go to rent or mortgage payments. Also, read “New York Rents Outpaced Inflation Over 3 Years, Census Data Say” (NYT, 24 Feb. 2015). Then, compose an essay in which you examine rent control. Is rent control good? Fair? Why, or why not? Make an argument about how housing prices impact people’s lives and what that means for society in a larger sense. Cite using your sources.

(TCC) According to the Milwaukee Eviction Court Study, 2011, one-third of tenants in eviction court “devoted at least 80 percent” (as cited in Desmond 97) of their income to rent. Investigate what financial experts recommend for budgets and how much of a person’s income should go to rent or mortgage payments. Also, read “Rising Rents Are Stressing Out Tenants and Heightening America’s Housing Crisis” (Forbes, 19 Oct. 2017). Then, compose an essay in which you examine rent control. Is rent control good? Fair? Why, or why not? Make an argument about how housing prices impact people’s lives and what that means for society in a larger sense. Cite using your sources.

5. Case Study Analysis

(NYT) Guaranteed income programs are being piloted in several communities across the United States to help alleviate some of the problems highlighted in Evicted. Read about The Magnolia Mothers Trust, a guaranteed income program pilot in Jackson, Mississippi, in The New York Times opinion piece, “Baby Steps Toward Guaranteed Income and Racial Justice” (8 May 2019). Then analyze Arleen Belle’s situation in Evicted. Would The Magnolia Mothers Trust, or a program like it, have changed Arleen’s life in significant ways? To analyze Arleen’s situation, first list everything you know about Arleen’s difficulties. Then, list all of the explanations for Arleen’s difficulties as shared by herself, landlords, family members, and Crystal, evaluating the strengths and weaknesses of each explanation. Finally, compose an essay that makes a judgment about whether a guaranteed income program would have changed Arleen’s life significantly. Explain how you reached that judgment using what you know about Arleen’s difficulties and the explanations offered for those difficulties by the individuals in the book. Cite using your sources.

(TCC) Guaranteed income programs are being piloted in several communities across the United States to help alleviate some of the problems highlighted in Evicted. Study the website of The Magnolia Mothers Trust, a guaranteed income program pilot in Jackson, Mississippi. Then analyze Arleen Belle’s situation in Evicted. Would The Magnolia Mothers Trust, or a program like it, have changed Arleen’s life in significant ways? To analyze Arleen’s situation, first list everything you know about Arleen’s difficulties. Then, list all of the explanations/interpretations for Arleen’s difficulties as revealed by herself, landlords, potential landlords, family, and Crystal, evaluating the strengths and weaknesses of each explanation. Finally, compose an essay that makes a judgment about whether a guaranteed income program would have changed
Arleen’s life significantly. Explain how you reached that judgment using what you know about Arleen’s difficulties and the explanations offered for those difficulties by the individuals in the book. Cite using your sources.

6. Mode Analysis

*(NYT)* “On the Brink of Eviction” is a photo essay in *The New York Times* (9 Mar. 2014) chronicling the eviction of Kevin McCrary, the son of 1950s media celebrities. Examine the photos carefully, listing all of the significant details and reflecting on the messages the photos and the details are relaying to the viewer. Reread the accounts in *Evicted* of the Eagle Moving and Storage Company’s evictions (113-33), listing all of the significant details and descriptions and reflecting on the messages those passages are relaying to the reader. Compare the details and messages conveyed through the photos with those in the *Evicted* passages. Consider the strengths and weaknesses of both modes (visual in the photo essay and linguistic in *Evicted*), and write an essay analyzing the ways in which mode affects message in this case. Cite using your sources.

*(TCC)* “Evicted in Colorado” is a photo essay in *The Washington Post* (29 Oct. 2011) chronicling the eviction of a family in Miliken, Colorado. Examine the photos carefully, listing all of the significant details in the photos and reflecting on the messages the photos and the details are relaying to the viewer. Reread the accounts in *Evicted* of the Eagle Moving and Storage Company’s evictions (113-33), listing all of the significant details and descriptions and reflecting on the messages those passages are relaying to the reader. Compare the details and messages conveyed through the photos with those in the *Evicted* passages. Consider the strengths and weaknesses of both modes (visual in the photo essay and linguistic in *Evicted*), and write an essay analyzing the ways in which mode affects message in this case. Cite using your sources.

7. Motivation Analysis

*(NYT)* Chapter 12 of *Evicted* is called “Disposable Ties,” and it documents the relationship between Crystal and Arleen and her children. Later, in Chapter 14, Desmond writes about Milwaukee, “[p]eople who lived in distressed neighborhoods are more likely to help their neighbors pay bills, buy groceries, fix their car, or lend a hand in other ways, compared to their peers in better-off areas” (181). Why might poor people be more willing to help those around them, even strangers, than are people who are better off financially? Read back over chapters 12 and 14 in *Evicted*, and next read “The Charitable Giving Divide” (*NYT*, 20 Aug. 2010). Then, compose an essay in which you examine the nature of generosity and giving and make an argument about why certain groups may give more than others, whether that be in terms of money, time, or in other ways. Cite using your sources.
Chapter 12 of *Evicted* is called “Disposable Ties,” and it documents the relationship between Crystal and Arleen and her children. Later, in Chapter 14, Desmond writes about Milwaukee, “[p]eople who lived in distressed neighborhoods are more likely to help their neighbors pay bills, buy groceries, fix their car, or lend a hand in other ways, compared to their peers in better-off areas” (181). Why might poor people be more willing to help those around them, even strangers, than are people who are better off financially? Read back over chapters 12 and 14 in *Evicted*, and next read “Study: Poor Are More Charitable Than the Wealthy” (*NPR*, 08 Aug., 2010). Then, compose an essay in which you examine the nature of generosity and giving and make an argument about why certain groups may give more than others, whether that be in terms of money, time, or in other ways. Cite using your sources.

### 8. Case Study Analysis

*NYT* Throughout the book, readers learn how eviction essentially traps poor people in a cycle of poverty, how it makes securing future housing more difficult, can lead to a loss of a job, and have other damaging effects on families. Read Desmond’s argument, on the bottom of page 298 and the top of 299, that eviction “fundamentally redirects [individuals] their way, casting them onto a different and much more difficult path. Eviction is a cause, not just a condition of poverty” (299). Also read his *NYT* op-ed called “The Eviction Economy” (5 Mar. 2016). Then choose an individual in the book and trace the effects of eviction on that person’s physical and psychological well-being. How might a universal housing voucher have changed that individual’s experience? Compose a thesis-driven essay detailing your analysis of this individual and explaining how a voucher may have affected him or her. Cite using your sources.

*TCC* Throughout the book, readers learn how eviction essentially traps poor people in a cycle of poverty, how it makes securing future housing more difficult, can lead to a loss of a job, and have other damaging effects on families. Read Desmond’s argument, on the bottom of page 298 and the top of 299, that eviction “fundamentally redirects [individuals] their way, casting them onto a different and much more difficult path. Eviction is a cause, not just a condition of poverty” (299). Also read his interview with Micaela Suminski in *Stanford Politics* (25 October 2016). Then choose an individual in the book and trace the effects of eviction on that person’s physical and psychological well-being. How might a universal housing voucher have changed that individual’s experience? Compose a thesis-driven essay detailing your analysis of this individual and explaining how a voucher may have affected him or her. Cite using your sources.

### 9. Case Study Analysis

*NYT* Eviction often has a large impact on many aspects of renters’ lives. Read “In 83 Million Eviction Records, a Sweeping and Intimate New Look at Housing in America” (*NYT*, 7 Apr. 2018), and then go back into the article and think carefully about Amy Woolard’s statement: “An
eviction isn’t one problem. It’s like 12 problems.” What does she mean by this? Why should citizens in an area with high eviction rates be concerned even if they don’t face eviction? Select one individual from Evicted and chronicle his or her situation as covered in the book, analyzing how this individual’s situation falls under Woolard’s claim. Then, compose an essay in which you closely examine your chosen individual in the context of Woolard’s statement and what your analysis means in a larger context. Think about why eviction impacts both individuals and communities, and cite from your sources.

(TCC) Eviction often has a large impact on many aspects of renters’ lives. Read “Eviction Comes Fast and Often, Sweeping U.S.” on the WRAL.com website, and then go back into the article and think carefully about Amy Woolard’s statement: “An eviction isn’t one problem. It’s like 12 problems.” What does she mean by this? Why should citizens in an area with high eviction rates be concerned even if they don’t face eviction? Select one individual from Evicted and chronicle his or her situation as covered in the book, analyzing how this individual’s situation falls under Woolard’s claim. Then, compose an essay in which you closely examine your chosen individual in the context of Woolard’s statement and what your analysis means in a larger context. Think about why eviction impacts both individuals and communities, and cite from your sources.
Appendix

Sample Rubrics

Sample Group Presentation Rubric

1. Was the content of the presentation well organized and presented with compelling evidence?

<table>
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Comments:____________________________________________________________________

2. Did the visual component enhance the presentation?

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Comments:____________________________________________________________________

3. Was the verbal presentation clear and engaging?

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Comments:____________________________________________________________________

4. Did the group engage the class in a discussion?

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Comments:____________________________________________________________________

5. Did the group follow the time limits?

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Comments:____________________________________________________________________
Sample Group Presentation Peer Evaluation

Your name: ________________________________________________

1) Team member name: ______________________________________
This team member contributed fairly to the creation of the outline.  Yes  No
If no, please explain:
___________________________________________________________________________

This team member contributed fairly to the creation of the presentation.  Yes  No
If no, please explain:
___________________________________________________________________________

2) Team member name: ______________________________________
This team member contributed fairly to the creation of the outline.  Yes  No
If no, please explain:
___________________________________________________________________________

This team member contributed fairly to the creation of the presentation.  Yes  No
If no, please explain:
___________________________________________________________________________

3) Team member name: ______________________________________
This team member contributed fairly to the creation of the outline.  Yes  No
If no, please explain:
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This team member contributed fairly to the creation of the presentation.  Yes  No
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4) Team member name: ______________________________________
This team member contributed fairly to the creation of the outline.  Yes  No
If no, please explain:
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This team member contributed fairly to the creation of the presentation.  Yes  No
If no, please explain:
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Other comments or concerns about your group and how you worked together? (use back)
ASSESSMENT RUBRIC FOR RESPONSE PAPERS

STUDENT’S NAME: __________________________

ASSIGNMENT TITLE: __________________________

SCORE: _____________

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Write additional comments on the back of the rubric.