Paper Proposal

For my final paper, I intend to explore the use of censorship in utopian and dystopian societies and its role in the maintenance of power. First, I plan to define the term “censorship” in terms of the breadth of what may be censored. From the standpoint of government and societal censorship, ideas and free thought in addition to the usual subjects of literature and art can be considered. Next, I will analyze fictional examples of censorship in society, possibly using one or all of the books mentioned in my bibliography: *The Republic* by Plato, *Utopia* by Thomas More, *Fahrenheit 451* by Ray Bradbury, *Brave New World* by Aldous Huxley, and *We* by Yevgeny Zamyatin. Censorship is prevalent in each of the fictional societies, but of different concepts. For example, Plato in *The Republic* intends to withhold certain works of literature and art in the education of philosopher kings, whereas in *Fahrenheit 451* and *Brave New World*, thought and ideas themselves are censored. In another part of the paper, I intend to discuss the real-world implications of censorship using secondary sources listed in my biography, where I will compare the prevalence of censorship in the United States and China, specifically internet censorship. The internet with regard to censorship is a topic in particular I intend to write about. The censorship that currently exists in China and how the Chinese government uses it to control what the citizens see and hear is a good example that could be discussed. Many articles discuss *how* various societies in both literature and in real life governments, but there are not many articles that discuss *why* those in power in these societies promote censorship. Therefore, I intend to address this issue in my paper using internet censorship in the United States and China as examples.

From the research that I have done so far and from my personal knowledge, I could ask several analytical questions regarding this topic. One possible question that I could explore is the effects of censorship of various kinds on the citizens of these societies using literary and real-life examples. Another vein of questioning that I could explore is the differences of motives of those in power who choose to censor their society. The group or person in power must have an underlying reason to limit the freedoms of their society; this becomes clearer if one analyzes the subject of censorship in relation to the culture’s values and beliefs. Another idea that I could possibly investigate is the notion of whether censorship is ultimately effective in these societies, and if the people of that society are generally better or worse off overall for being censored. While censorship in general may have a bad reputation, there may be situations where a certain kind of censorship is justified or even necessary. By answering these questions, I could offer a possible explanation to the ultimate motives behind the censorship.

I intend to explore the *why* instead of the *how* of censorship in literary dystopias and utopias, then in Chinese and American government. Because this will be the type of question that I will address, my paper, and its thesis will be relatively original. For example, J.R. Clark and Dwight Lee in *Censoring and Destroying Information in the Information Age* discuss several examples of censorship that exists that the American government enforces today, such as in education, agriculture, and the economy. However, the authors do not discuss why the government withholds information from the public and instead condemns the government in participating in censorship. In my paper, I would expand on these examples, and offer possible reasons why the American government may do these things while comparing these reasons to the Chinese government’s motives. The articles *Four Phases of Internet Regulation* and *Texting Toward Utopia: Does the Internet spread democracy?* by John Palfrey and Evgeny Morozov respectively discuss the internet and its censorship in various societies. These two sources would support my paper’s analysis of what and how information is censored in real life. *Speak No Evil: Circumventing Chinese Censorship* by Jennifer Shyu gives an excellent background of internet regulation in China and the solutions that are being proposed to amend the situation there. This article supports my paper by discussing an existing society that openly withholds information from its public. From this article and possibly some others, I may be able to analyze the Chinese government’s motives for censorship. Seth Kreimer in *Censorship By Proxy: The First Amendment, Internet Intermediaries, and the Problem of the Weakest Link* describes a method in which the American government has attempted to censor internet access. This can be compared to Charles Feng Guangchao’s article *Tracing the Route of China's Internet Censorship: An Empirical study* which analyzes the Chinese government’s various methods of internet censorship. In *Understanding Support for Internet Censorship in China:An Elaboration of the Theory of Reasoned Action* by Steve Guo, the possible reasons for support of internet censorship by young people is explored using the theory of reasoned action. The article also includes a brief social history of China that may have contributed to this support. In my paper, I would use this context to build upon my own analysis of the motives of the Chinese government’s censorship policies.

Based on the research that I have done so far, many articles and primary sources discuss parts of my topic. The secondary sources that I have gotten so far are all available through the Dickinson College online library database, using the *Political Science Complete* database in pariticular to search for articles on American and Chinese censorship. I own three out of the 5 primary sources and the other two should be easy to obtain either through the Dickinson Library or the nearby Carlisle Public Library. Any other sources that I may need can most likely also be found through Dickinson College’s vast collection of available databases. If it is not available, interlibrary loan is always an option that I could pursue.

Bibliography

Primary Sources:

Bradbury, Ray. Fahrenheit 451. New York City: Ballantine Books, 1979.

Huxley, Aldous. Brave New World. New York City: Harper Perennial, 1989.

More, Thomas. Utopia. Mineola: Dover Publications Inc., 1997.

Plato. The Republic. Mineola: Dover Publications Inc., 2000.

Zamyatin, Yevgeny. We. New York: Harper Collins, 1972.

Secondary Sources:

Cardin , Matt, "On living well in Ray Bradbury’s dystopia: Notes toward a monastic response," The Teeming Brain: Channeling the Multiverse of Ideas, August 28, 2012, http://www.teemingbrain.com/2012/08/28/on-living-well-in-ray-bradburys-dystopia-notes-toward-a-monastic-response/

Clark, J. R., and Lee, Dwight. "CENSORING AND DESTROYING INFORMATION IN THE INFORMATION AGE." *CATO Journal* 28, no. 3 (Fall2008 2008): 421-434. *Political Science Complete*

This source contains many good examples of existing censorship in the United States. These include in education, agriculture, and the economic system. Using this source, I think that I can analyze the reasons of censorship and their validity given these examples.

Connelly, Deborah S. "To Read or Not To Read: Understanding Book Censorship." *Community & Junior College Libraries* 15, no. 2 (April 2009): 83-90. *Library, Information Science & Technology Abstracts with Full Text*

Fish, Eric. "Is Internet Censorship Compatible with Democracy? Legal Restrictions of Online Speech in South Korea." *Asia-Pacific Journal On Human Rights & The Law* 10, no. 2 (December 2009): 43-96. *Academic Search Complete*

Guangchao, Charles Feng. "Tracing the Route of China's Internet Censorship: An Empirical study." In Telematics and Informatics. *Science Direct*.

Guo, Steve. "Understanding Support for Internet Censorship in China:An Elaboration of the Theory of Reasoned Action ." Journal of Chinese Political Science. 17. no. 1 (2012): 33-52. *Political Science Complete*.

This source offers a counter-intuitive result of censorship from the American point of view: that some of the young people in China actually support internet censorship. To offer reasons for this support, the article takes a look into the social context of China. I could use this article to support my reason for internet censorship in China.

Kreimer, Seth. "Censorship By Proxy: The First Amendment, Internet Intermediaries, and the Problem of the Weakest Link ." University of Pennsylvania Law Review. 155. no. 1 (2006): 11-101. *Business Source Complete*

This source will be useful to me because it gives an example in which the United States has attempted to censor websites. I could compare this method and the Chinese government’s methods using Charles Feng Guangchao’s source, which describes them.

Merrington, Louise. "The Impact of the Internet on the Political and Media in the Landcape of the People's Republic of China." Melbourne Journal of Politics. 33. (2008): 7-29. *Political Science Complete*.

Morozov, Evgeny. "Texting Toward Utopia: Does the Internet spread democracy?." *Boston Review* 34, no. 2 (March 2009): 19-21. *Humanities Full Text (H.W. Wilson)*

Palfrey, John. "Four Phases of Internet Regulation." *Social Research* 77, no. 3 (Fall2010 2010): 981-996. *Political Science Complete*

This source and the one previous are very good in giving the background of the internet and the attempts to regulate and censor it from various governments. The internet is an extremely good example of what can be censored; the internet is often considered a bastion of free speech and ideas. Therefore, it is an obvious target for censorship by governments that seek to limit what their citizens see.

Shyu, Jennifer. "Speak No Evil: Circumventing Chinese Censorship." *San Diego Law Review* 45, no. 1 (Winter2008 2008): 211-249. *Academic Search Complete*

Chinese censorship, particularly of the internet, is an extremely good example of a government that seeks to control what its citizens have access to. With further research I may be able to find sources where first-hand experiences of censorship in China are described. I could also compare these conditions to those of the dystopias and utopias described in the primary sources.

Warf, Barney. “Geographies of global Internet censorship.” *GeoJournal (February 2011) : Vol. 76 Issue 1*. 1-23. *Environment Complete*