**“Parents Just Don’t Understand”**

**Arts & Sciences 1138.\*\*, First-Year Seminar**

**1 Semester-hour Credit**

**Mondays/4-5PM**

Instructor Name: Nick White Office hours:

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Course Description:

In his award-winning book, *Far From the Tree: Parents, Children, and the Search for Identity*, Andrew Solomon asserts that “[t]here is no such thing as reproduction.” He goes on to explain that when “two people decide to have a baby, the engage in an act of production.” This course will introduce you to stories and strategies for navigating a relationship with your parents when you discover, for whatever reason, that you no longer speak the same language. In this class, we will speak several current and former college students who’ve had to come out to their parents about everything from differing political beliefs to majoring in fields their parents didn’t approve of to their sexuality. We’ll also read stories and essays and watch movies and documentaries that tackle these issues, too.

Texts:

All the texts—chapters, stories, essays—will be provided on Canvass.

Course Policies:

* Attendance at every session is expected. Three unexcused absences will result in a grade of U. (In cases of illness or family emergency, please email the instructor—ahead of time if possible.)

**Course Policies**

Detail your expectations for:

* Attendance at every session is expected. Three unexcused absences will result in a grade of U. (In cases of illness or family emergency, please email the instructor—ahead of time if possible.)
* You are expected to be present mentally as well as physically: participation in the discussions and Q&A with each visitor is an important part of the class’s work. Laptops for note-taking are permissible; checking social media or email are not (and will result in being marked absent for that class session). Phones should be put away and silenced.
* Your weekly assignments will include reading short works about coming out, coming up with questions for our visitors in preparation for their visits, and writing (very) short response papers. You will also be expected to prepare written questions for each visitor.
* The final project will be digital media presentation based on the lives of your parents, focusing on their values and ambitions and how you have (and haven’t) been influenced by their beliefs

# Grading

This course will be graded Satisfactory/Unsatisfactory (S/U) grade. To earn a grade of S, you will need to turn in every assignment and participate in class discussions.

**Academic Misconduct**

It is the responsibility of the Committee on Academic Misconduct to investigate or establish procedures for the investigation of all reported cases of student academic misconduct. The term “academic misconduct” includes all forms of student academic misconduct wherever committed; illustrated by, but not limited to, cases of plagiarism and dishonest practices in connection with examinations. Instructors shall report all instances of alleged academic misconduct to the committee (Faculty Rule 3335-5-487). For additional information, see the Code of Student Conduct (<http://studentlife.osu.edu/pdfs/csc_12-31-07.pdf>).

**Students with Disabilities**

Students with disabilities (including mental health, chronic or temporary medical conditions) that have been certified by the Office of Student Life Disability Services will be appropriately accommodated and should inform the instructor as soon as possible of their needs. The Office of Student Life Disability Services is located in 098 Baker Hall, 113 W. 12th Avenue; telephone 614-292-3307, [slds@osu.edu](mailto:slds@osu.edu); [slds.osu.edu](http://slds.osu.edu/#_blank).

**Biographical Statement**

Dr. White is the author of the novel *How to Survive a Summer* (Blue Rider, 2017) and the forthcoming short story collection *Sweet & Low.* His fiction has appeared in *The Kenyon Review*, *The Literary Review*, *Guernica, The Hopkins Review,* and elsewhere. His creative work explores queer narratives, particularly how queerness manifests in the American South. His debut novel is about a gay-to-straight conversion camp in Mississippi.

#### Weekly Schedule

### **Week 1 – Introduction to the course**

Dr. White will talk about his own experiences coming out to his parents—both as a gay man and as a writer.

Assignment: Read “Son” from Soloman’s *Far From the Tree*, on Canvass, and write a short response to it. (1/2 page, single-spaced)

### **Week 2 – Discussion of “Son”**

We will discuss the chapter and your responses.

Assignment: Read “Deaf” from *Far From the Tree*, on canvass, and write a short response.

### **Week 3 – Discussion of “Deaf” and intro into Disability Studies**

We will discuss this chapter and prepare for visiting speaker, a professor/grad student from Disability Studies (TBA)

Assignment: Read “Disability” from *Far From the Tree*; prepare questions for visitor.

### **Week 4 – First Visitor**

### The first visitor will be a professor or graduate student from Disability Studies and will discuss the relationship between parents and children when one has a disability.

Assignment: Read Karen Russell’s “St. Lucy’s School for Girls Raised by Wolves” and write short responses.

### **Week 5 – How to Code Switch and the First-Generation College Experience**

We will discuss this story and how it handles the topic of code-switching

Assignment: Read Crucet’s “How to Leave Hialeah” and brainstorm questions for next speaker

### **Week 6 – Second Visitor**

### The second visitor will be from the First-Generation College Student Organization, and will share their experiences with us.

### Assignment: Read an excerpt from Garrard Conley’s memoir *Boy Erased* and write a response to it.

### **Week 7 – Queerness and the Family**

We will discuss our responses to this excerpt.

### **Week 8 – Watch and Discuss *This Is Me: A Docuseries***

### We will watch and respond to the short episodes from *This Is Me*, centering on coming out as trans.

Assignment: prepare questions for third visitor

### **Week 9 – Third Visitor**

The visitor is a grad student/professor (TBA) from DISCO and will share his/her experiences of coming-out

Assignment: read “Writing the Family” from *Tell It Slant* by Brenda Miller and Suzanne Paola and write a response to it

### **Week 10 – Beginning our presentations: How to Discuss Family Members**

We will discuss “Writing the Family” and how to capture our parents and siblings in an honest and fair way.

Assignment: “Plotting Your Life” from *Fearless Confessions* by Sue Silverman

### **Week 11 – Beginning our presentations, part 2: How to Discuss Ourselves**

### We will discuss our responses to “Plotting Your Life” and how to frame ourselves in our upcoming presentations.

Assignment: Bring an outline for your presentation

### **Week 12 – Presentation Workshops**

We will discuss and troubleshoot your final projects.

### **Week 13 – Presentations: Group 1**

3 to 4 students will present on their parents

### **Week 14 – Presentations: Group 2**

3 to 4 students will present on their parents

**Week 15 – Presentations: Group 3**

3 to 4 students will present on their parents