NAME:

COURSE TITLE:

TUTOR:

DATE:

**WHAT HAVE YOU LEARNED THIS SEMESTER?**

The major lesson I have learned from discussions and studies this semester is that history teaching and learning have had significant unbiases and inaccuracies. To be specific, high schools' history textbooks and their respective authors depict the United States as a benign, morally upright country. This is done by leaving out all indications that in formulating and executing its foreign policies, the United States does take inhumane or otherwise dreadful choices that result in an unexpected number of casualties to human life, political stability, or economic stability in other sovereign states. In addition, I have realized that the history taught has aided in giving the students the view that our government is the presumable good guy in the promotion of civil rights, an approach termed as 'the international good guy' view (Loewen, 221).

Conceptually, a history book of the American federal government shows how the government has ventured into peace-keeping actions in countries where chaos has erupted or is they presume will erupt. However, this is despite whatever wrongdoings that the government might purposefully or unintentionally commit. The students are, as such, taught to align their allegiance to the government unquestionably. With this, the role of citizenship now comes short of democracy; rather, it establishes blind faith and patriotism as the students and other citizens refute or play down their criticism on specific government actions. According to *Watching Big Brother* in *Lies My Teacher Told Me,* these textbooks' sycophancy curtails their ability to explain the consideration of the United States primarily to be the 'good guy". Here, the piece explains that American history textbooks “echo the nation our leaders like to present to its citizens as the supremely moral, disinterested peacekeeper, the supremely responsible world citizen” (Loewen, 222).

Primarily, I have had the revelation on the grandiosity of private citizens and non-governmental institutions' influence in the governance of America. Multinationals have for ages now influenced policy making to benefit their agendas. Textbooks on American history do not necessarily elaborate on this issue. They fail to dig into the particular results of the effects such acts the country may behold in the future. Essentially, textbooks do not want to create an image of the country with any blemish. For example, “pressure from First National Bank of New York helped prompt Wilson’s intervention in Haiti and after Russia’s new communist government nationalized all petroleum assets, Standard Oil of New Jersey was presumably the major impetus behind the U.S. invasion of Russia in 1918." (Loewen, 225). In essence, when the average American tries to comprehend some choices of the government, the complexity of that choice in relation to what the country stands for will baffle them. After all, the inferior explanation given by textbook will not cover their queries on the political and economic morality of the choices. What I mean is one will now wonder in the example above was invading Russia a politically morally upright idea? Was the use of the taxpayers' money in the invasion a morally upright economical choice?

Furthermore, I have come to fathom the realities within America's involvement in different atrocities of war, coups, and assassinations. Unfortunately, the accuracy of such information has been an enigma due to the vagueness of textbooks used to teach history. As discussed, textbook authors are hell-bent on portraying the United States as a nice and agreeable nation (Loewen, 226). However, a look at involvements in various attempts of assassinations by U. S. officials and agencies of other governmental leaders or activists to subvert sovereign states shows otherwise (Loewen, 226). Taking the example of the United States' involvement in the repeated attempts on the murder of Fidel Castro of Cuba and the assassination of Patrice Lumumba of Zaire led to chaos. Particularly in Zaire, the assassination of Lumumba paved the way for Mobutu, who then led the country to a whole economic breakdown. Also, it is presumed that "in initiating economic sanctions against Japan, the United States undertook actions that were widely recognized in Washington as carrying grave risks of war” (Zinn, 411).

The atrocities of wars that the United States has been involved in are extreme for a country being considered a peace-keeping force. Through its do-good belief, the United States finds itself at loggerheads with other countries regularly. Not to promote violence, but one does expect retaliation when they cause harm to others. However, when countries wage war or plot assassinations against the U. S., America labels that as state-sponsored terrorism (Loewen, 227). In 1957, the U. S. aided Christians in Lebanon in a fixed parliamentary election; a year later, chaos rose as Muslims took to armed combat to air their grievances (Loewen, 228). Even after all these acts, most textbook authors take the view that the U. S. was doing what it must to keep the peace. Rather than criticize the U. S. the textbook authors tend to fixate the blame on the opposing side despite the chaos being instigated by America. A common justification of war atrocities is in the bombing of Japanese cities, Hiroshima and Nagasaki, to end the war quickly (Zinn, 423). In cases where the government has made mistakes, officials in power look for ways to justify their actions regardless of how heinous they may be. Zinn questions the need for dropping bombs on the Japanese cities, Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Was it moral to do it? Was there not another way out of the war situation? Some American lives were lost in the bombings. "Why did the United States not take that small step to save both American and Japanese lives? Was it because too much money and effort had been invested in the atomic bomb not to drop it?" (Zinn, 423).

Moreover, I have learned that democracy is not upheld when governments are not criticized for their actions. The tendency of governments to have autonomy in the invasion of other states through deploying military troops derails democracy. As per se, taxpayers' and ordinary citizens' money is used in funding these military actions. However, citizens have very little or absolutely no input on whether or not the United States should deploy its armies in these countries. What follows is that the government can hold onto information regarding its covert operations without being questioned. The government will then significantly use fallacies and made-up stories on whether it had involvement in atrocities caused. The downplaying of these issues by textbook authors allow the festering of the federal government's dominance by individuals who only enact policies that suit only themselves.

I have also learned the social inequality brought about by improper governance. Basic civil rights were denied to African Americans and other people of color mainly due to improper governance. For example, J. Edgar Hoover being the Federal Bureau of Investigation's head, takes the law into his own hands in deciding what rights to afford what people. Due to the spite of people of color, Hoover clears the FBI of African American operatives and leaves two of them as chauffeurs rather than officers of the law (Loewen, 237). Since no one can criticize the government, white supremacists, even in the government, could mistreat people of color without the intervention of the whole government. After all the mistreatment of people of color, the government is portrayed as the pioneer for equal civil and voting rights when in a sense, it was African Americans such as Martin Luther King Jr. who led such campaigns (Loewen, 239).

The major ethical dilemmas I have encountered include human decency towards diversity. The fact that people in the government can plan assassinations of other people shows that our government is not a saint. There is a lack of ethical standards and practices. The atrocities caused by wars instigated by America have led to the death of many people, some of them who are American national. Yet, the government still lacks the decency to give out exact reasons and circumstances of entering these wars.