Thoreau / Civil Disobedience Seminar:

Absent:

Nick Reed: Reference to Mr. Minnick—valid points, true points… thoughts on voting—a majority doesn’t necessarily make it right, as the majority may not have the value of something at its heart. Really good… cool points…

Tyler Schumacher: Tremendously optimistic towards the nature of people.

* Eble: But he’s also pessimistic—cited the “mass of men”
* Chandler: Not much gets done the right way… moral decisions over national interest decisions. Difficulty with foreign policy. Cited the qualification—Eble started reading it…
* Zac Paz: Read from paragraph 40… the qualification
* Paul Hanna: Qualifier—not just ripping on the gov’t… he wants change without having to feel morally wrong. Looks for reasons to pay—he wants! But right now, he doesn’t think he can…
* Schumacher: He’s not looking for conflict.
* Wheat: Not paying taxes—very extreme in his type of action… I understand why he’s not… we don’t control the money we contribute to government. This goes back to his point about the minority perverting the government.
* Strotman: That’s the opposite—the majority often overrides the minority, even when the majority is wrong…
* Paul Hanna: Public opinion for war = low.
* Scott Rumsey: Condemning the majority / minority who should speak out…
* Paul Hanna: The reason the war start is because minorities were manipulating…
* Schumacher: Cited the expediency question… government should be about conscience (would support Strotman)
* Wheat: Cited the end of the first paragraph (“Witness the present Mexican war, the work of comparatively a few individuals…”)
* Paz: Majority allows the minority to abuse it…
* Wheat agrees
* Asgian: Majority will do what they should do…will follow others… Civil Disobedience is a duty. Your job is to make this change. Central Claim: By not speaking out, individuals are not doing their job.
* Rumsey: Different minorities…
* Paz:
* Eble: Onus of power & responsibility?
* Schumacher: Individual
* Paz: Read about the “force and vitality” of an individual…
* Rumsey: Pessimistic view…
* Orwkis: Human nature to disagree…

Schumacher: Back to optimism / pessimism…

Eble: Central claim?

* Asgian: ?
* Paz: Don’t be content with complacency… voting today versus then… people don’t vote…
* Eble: Clarified central point via Toulmin
* Asgian: Yes.

Schumacher: Philosophy = extremely optimistic. Argument rests on the assumption that people, left to their own devices, will do good things.

* Asgian: He also says… (references anaphora… *“it* does not…”) With less government, more can get done.
* Paz: Pessimistic about now… optimistic about the future…
* Wheat: Government as a big complex machine… referenced to our world today…
* Henry: How is that relevant for today? People should keep in mind the whole scheme…
* Paz: Wealth makes people lose their moral conscience.
* Orkwis: Comment about wealth…
* Henry: Talks about taxes… wealthy people=play with taxes… doesn’t mind wealthy people who live like they’re poor.
* Orkwis: Quote about dollars…
* Wheat: Optimism… quote about people doing good while they are rich (the rich must act as if they are poor…)
* Asgian: When you’re wealthy… things don’t mean that much to you… think as a poor person…
* Wheat: Read from paragraph 23 about wealth—“The best thing a man can do for his culture when he is rich is to endeavor to carry out those schemes which he entertained when he was poor.”
* Eble: So…
* Wheat: He’s calling for a change in the minority…
* Paz: Went back to the friction… if the injustice has a pulley / rope by itself… “Must consider that the remedy must be better than the injustice”
* Eble: Clarify the machine metaphor (pulley or rope unto itself)…
* Paz: Slavery… injustice goes as a part of the government…
* Asgian: Government = a minority that imposes too much on the majority (the people). If the government is less, the minority has less say, this is better for everyone else.
* Carmichael: Minority… if you see a problem with government, your duty is to stand up and be a minority. With slavery…
* Henry: Government as a minority versus individual as a minority…
* Asgian: Types of minorities…
* Schumacher: Machine having its own friction… political gridlock. Dissenting voices make government slow down a bit…
* Eble: Read from paragraph 8…
* Hanna: Challenged…
* Schumacher: Clarified…
* Asgian: Referenced his Fallows article… charts of Republicans becoming more conservative, Democrats growing a bit more liberal.
* Eble: Clarified the machine metaphor (if there is a part designed to cause friction… )
* Hanna: I think he wants people to stand up—enough people will act as a friction…
* Eble: Went to paragraph 41 about the Constitution being good, looking “higher”
* Hanna: People adding friction to the injustices…
* Orkwis: Machine metaphor = complicated…
* Strotman: We don’t get it…
* Orkwis: But if it’s complicated, is it wrong…ineffective…
* Strotman: Can look to other literature…
* Joe Pappalardo: Relevant?
* Strotman: Less relevant…
* Paul Hanna: Inherent wrongs…
* Strotman: Adapt this—abortion… can’t apply this now…
* Eble: Idea = relevant; stylistic elements = not
* Henry Myers: Relevant today… Sarah Vowell—she wrote the same article… government is best that governs least
* Paz: Paragraph 40—not calling out the government, which is the people. The people are important…
* Eble: Why not vote, then?
* Paz: Cited paragraph 12 about voting as a gaming…

Eble: Transcendentalists… skepticism of institutions…

* Asgian: Conspiracy theories… referenced a Bush documentary… Thoreau says that skepticism is good. You’re reflecting what you believe
* Schumacher: Reconcile this contradiction with active abolishment of slavery and him wanting the government not to be too active. He’s saying that slavery is a part of the institution… group in bondage—that can’t happen.
* Paz: Slavery has its own pulley or rope.
* Hanna: Government supported slavery…
* Orkwis: Daniel Webster…
* Asgian: Common for people not to consider slavery… Civil Disobedience as a duty… voting isn’t enough.

Eble: Metaphor… everyone clear? Explained the nature of it… challenged Strotman to devise a new, more modern metaphor.

Paz: Slavery… intertwined.

* Hanna: Not necessarily true… we went to a war… not all based on slavery, but a main reason for the war…
* Eble: Well done with counterargument.
* Paz: Civil war = huge injustice…
* Scott Rumsey: Read from paragraph 18…
* Schumacher: Right about people actively ending slavery… had talked about ending slavery that way… referenced the cotton gin… exact approach…
* Eble: In terms of actively, violently resisting…
* Strotman: People chose to ignore slavery… Compromise of 1850… kept going with the punting—ignoring, containing…
* Paz: Referenced the Jackson win… the House voting to allow him to be President…
* Eble: Look at John Brown, Underground Railroad… raid = 1859? Bleeding Kansas = early 1850’s… Why, on the basis of this context, start with the philosophical split of the government and people?
* Paz: Build up ethos…
* Eble: What if he began with the night he spent in jail?
* Asgian: Black mark on your person… gives no background… the experience has to be later. Much like Teju Cole, who provides his context… ease into it…
* Paz: What did he learn from his night in jail? People are there to support you in the good times.
* Orkwis: Glorified jail…
* Eble: Thoreau – “What are you doing out there?”
* Strotman: Jail in Birmingham… NAACP would bail him out—he would do more in jail…
* Asgian: Leading by example…
* Orkwis: I agree with him… overestimates the power of one person going to jail.
* Strotman: Later works—what if the people he… writes poems about John Brown… poem about the last days of John Brown.