Essay #1: We Don’t Need No Education.  
Or Do We?

In “Against School,” John Taylor Gatto argues that not only do schools fail to provide students with a valuable education, but they also stunt intellectual curiosity, halt the development of critical thinking skills, and indoctrinate students into a culture of conformity and consumerism. But in her impassioned speech at Bowie State University, Michelle Obama describes education as “an act of defiance.” In this essay, consider the schools you have attended throughout your academic career to form an argument about school’s effect on students. Use specific examples and details from your own personal experience to support a thesis about how education is designed to make us conform or rebel.

As you begin working on your essay, you might consider some the following as prewriting questions, though you do not need to answer them all.

- In your experience, were you allowed to “take an education rather than merely receive schooling” (Gatto 34)?
- What do you think the main goal of your education has been: to make enough money to live comfortably, buying the things you want? To become a “good citizen” or a “good person”? To give you the tools to critically analyze, and potentially revolutionize, the world?
- Were these goals set by you, your school, or someone/something else?
- Did schools you attended challenge your worldview? Did they nurture conformity and reward allegiance to authority? Both?
- What courses or subjects challenged you to think most critically about the world or your education?

Because this is a personal essay, you should use the “I” voice, and because it is an argumentative essay, you should use specific and concrete examples to substantiate your thesis statement. However, you should be sure to explain how each piece of evidence supports your thesis rather than simply describing examples. Since you will be drawing on your own experiences, you will not need to conduct any research or cite any sources other than the ones we’ve read in class, if you choose.

**Format**
- Length: 5 pages, double spaced
- Your essay should be formatted in MLA style and submitted as a Word document on Trunk and as a hard copy in class.

**Deadlines**
- An a draft thesis is due in class on Monday, Jan. 29.
- A revised thesis and at least one body paragraph is due in class on Wednesday, Jan. 31.
- A full draft is due in class for a Peer Writing Workshop on Monday, Feb. 5
- A polished final draft is due before class begins on Trunk on Monday, Feb. 5 (also bring a paper copy to class)