**Essay 2, Option #1: Editorial Related to *The Handmaid’s Tale***

This course moves from thinking about ourselves as **readers**, to learning how to read **texts** carefully, to finally considering how literature might help us understand our **world**. Some people might argue that *The Handmaid’s Tale* by Margaret Atwood is a strange text to read in order to gain insights about our contemporary society, as it takes place in a futuristic world with many problems that our society has not experienced. As a dystopian novel, however, *The Handmaid’s Tale* is intended to warn readers about certain modern trends. In fact, contemporary writers still find ways to connect what happens in the novel to current events, such as Cynthia Boaz’s article called “Welcome to Gilead, Governor Pailin” (which I handed out in class). Boaz argues that Sarah Pailin bears some similarities to the Gileadean “Aunt” figure—particularly in allowing herself to be used by male leaders to communicate their views.

**The Assignment:** This assignment asks you to do something similar. First, you should choose a current event or trend that you think *The Handmaid’s Tale* might be warning us about. Then, write a paper in which you demonstrate what insights *The Handmaid’s Tale* can offer about this current event or issue.

**Some tips for success:**

* As you consider what to write about, the most obvious issue that you may be drawn to is gender. Clearly the novel has a lot to say about that topic. I encourage you to **be creative,** however, in your consideration of that topic and of other topics. Examples of gender-related topics: pornography, violence against women, abortion, status of men/women in marriage, masculinity, clothing/modesty, infidelity, work, fertility, feminism, birth defects, etc. Examples of other topics: age, race, environment, government, war, religion, economics, etc. You’ve brought up a number of additional topics in class that you can use to get you started.
* Make sure to **be specific** when you select your current event/trend in order to make your piece relevant and interesting to readers. You’ll notice that Cynthia Boaz did not write about what *The Handmaid’s Tale* has to say about “women in leadership,” which is vague and abstract. Instead, she chose to write about Governor Sarah Palin’s leadership, which is specific and interesting. (It’s OK to start your brainstorming with something more abstract, but then do a bit of research to find a specific example that you want to address in your paper. Please see me if you have questions about your topic.)
* Make sure to have a **strong thesis statement**. It’s not enough to show that *The Handmaid’s Tale* addresses a situation that’s similar to what we find in our current culture. Make an argument about what you think the text critiques or recommends about our contemporary world.
* Like always, I will be looking to see how you support any assertions you make. Including **specific quotations from the text** is very important. To do well on this assignment you will likely need to re-read (or at least skim) the text again in order to find the most effective quotations.

**Guidelines:**

* The paper should be clearly written, free from errors, and written in a professional tone. It should have a thesis statement, quotes from the text, fully developed ideas, and logical organization with clear transitions.
* Capture the reader’s attention with an intriguing introduction, and leave the reader with something to think about in your conclusion.
* It should be 4-6 pages long and follow MLA formatting guidelines. Remember to use proper MLA documentation for all in-text citations and include a Works Cited page.