ABSTRACT
MORGAN LEE ELLIOTT. Exploring the Darkness of Postmodernism. (Under the direction of Dr. Barbara Bennett.)

The complex idea of postmodernism has been developed to describe the literature of recent years. In the last several decades, writers, movie makers, musicians, and artists have captured their time in new and unique ways; and for my capstone project, I want to understand the mindset of postmodernism and in particular answer the question: why does it get so dark? Postmodern literature often dives deep into really hard topics - death, oppression, abuse, depression -- and it gets graphic. Writers don't hold back, and at times it seems like they intentionally try to invoke an emotional reaction. I want to understand what the purpose of this darkness is. Are we becoming more desensitized? Are writers more open about hard topics in order to raise awareness and discuss things that are wrong with society? As people become more individualistic and independent, do we become more inclined to sorrow and despair? Does reading about horrible things make us feel better because at least it's not as bad as in the book? Is it more relatable?

To discuss this I will be looking at what postmodernism is; the history behind it, and what characterizes it. Understanding that, I want to focus on popular literature of recent years, mainly young adult novels that have been turned into incredibly popular movies. Books, like The Hunger Games, Divergent, and the Harry Potter series are rich with cultural criticism, incredible and relatable characters, and very dark moments. They were written to help young people understand the world, particularly the really horrible parts, and teach them how to cope, which is why I have chosen to talk about these books as examples of postmodern literature and how it interacts with contemporary culture.