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Hebbar

Television and Reading

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*Liberal Arts* Pilot Presentation

The trend in television lately is to show the dark side of humanity without shame; *Orange is the New Black*, *Community*, *Freaks and Geeks*, *Arrested Development*, and *The Office* are all cult hits that center around relatively everyday affairs and do not sugar coat the negatives. Rather, they play up the negatives for comic effect, making the flaws in humanity the driving force of the show, showing humanity at its core, making real people the heroes, creating the trope of the heroic freak. I propose a television show that, like the shows mentioned, makes humanity the heart of the show and creates comedy in the dark heart of the heroic freak.

*Liberal Arts* is an hour-long dramedy that takes place at a college and is centered around five young women attempting to make their way in a fresh environment. The show starts in their sophomore year, and the relationships have been established and are deep to begin with, but as television shows rarely start with relationships in medias res, there are far more journeys to go on with the characters, fresh stories that have not been covered by sitcoms. Though the show will focus on the mundane, it is the characters that will drive the show, making the heart of the show the bond between average women, flaws and all.

Lauren is the main character, as much as is possible in a show that will feature five women relatively equally. She studies Psychology, and is going to be a lawyer one day. Confident, smart, and quick-witted, she is the one that brought the girls together freshman year and is the tie that connects them. Her roommate from freshman year is Jordan, an equally loud

girl who plays goalie on the soccer team. She has absolutely no filter, and her mouth often gets her in trouble. Emma is her teammate, a quiet girl who holds the secrets of everyone and is considered the mom of the group as she's the oldest of five children. The last roommate is Sarah, who showed up to college on a major academic scholarship but is now an art major who is barely holding on to anything resembling a direction in life. Tyler spends most of her nights sleeping on the couch, as she's supposed to be a commuter but she can't feed her wild streak while living under her parents' roof. In an unfamiliar situation they found each other and now they are family, for better or for worse.

The pilot episode is called *Orientation* and it centers on the weekend before school starts, when the new freshmen show up. The girls have a large group of students to show around, and in the beginning of the first day they show up less than eager to volunteer for the school so early in the morning and putting on a smiling face for scared eighteen year olds. They're in a familiar situation, but they need to make this situation interesting for themselves; they begin to plan a party for that night, covertly feeling out the freshmen and developing a plan for who to invite and how to keep it quiet from the people who could get them in trouble. We see the girls preparing for a party: Emma and Lauren develop a list of orientation guides who won't get them in trouble if they're invited, while Sarah, Jordan, and Tyler go on an alcohol run with Tyler's fake ID that goes very wrong when the director of orientation corners them on the way back in to school and they have to lie their way out of the situation and distract him long enough to get their room ready and bring supplies from the car all the way to the room. They also have to deal with a group of freshmen who have decided to follow them around like puppies, freshmen that will absolutely not be invited to the party. We see the party begin and as more and more people start to show up, it's a miracle that everything is going so well until Lauren gets a text that the

orientation director caught wind of the party and is coming up to bust it up. She announces it and people begin to panic as Lauren goes to the peephole in the door, and we see the director walking up, clearly furious; Lauren turns around and the room is empty, and we see two dark bedrooms and a bathroom packed with people holding bottles and cups. The music is blaring as she opens the door and the director is thwarted in his attempt to get the girls in trouble. He knows he's been outsmarted but can't figure out how, and storms off. The party continues in a montage, and we see the girls cleaning up, celebrating the day and recalling stories from the party, scenes we didn't see. Finally, they show up the next morning in the same position we first saw them in, ready to start the next day of orientation.

Future episodes will include WiFi going down on campus, a midnight attempt to steal a flag from the baseball field, cramming for finals, and things that will threaten to break up the family, a family that has been created but has no reason to continue other than loyalty. There will be significant character development as well as relationships in play; for the first season it will be important to show each girl interacting with each other in a new combination every episode (as was done in *Community*) so as to feel out where the ideal chemistry is for future seasons, which can either be set as years in school or semesters.

The girls are un-heroines in their inaction and failure to do the right thing consistently, with no moral center to speak of; even Emma is not as moral as she may first appear, as her mom-ness extends only so far as to protect her friends. However, there will be a bond created between the characters and the viewers through the way we watch modern television, in a single-camera format where the stories are intimate and personal, and there is not as much of a concept of watching a television show instead of watching your friends, your weekly companions. The bond referenced above indicates that unlike in earlier times in

television where a character was merely a visitor in your life, the advent of ‘binge-watching’ creates a companion in the television shows consumed by viewers; characters are companions in your life, and you go on a journey with them. This connects with the idea of the freak being a newly important character in that now there must be fully developed characters on television, because the medium does not make allowances for anything else. Fully developed characters mean more realistic characters, and this is what we see in new television, and this is what we will see with *Liberal Arts*.