

English VII-VIII

Syllabus

Mr. Holz

Introduction

Much of the world today revolves around the mundane. Jobs and tasks often take up much of our time, leaving little room for authentic communication and deep thought. The purpose of this course is to develop young adults as resilient literate citizens who think critically about the world in which they live and act on their observations with responsibility, integrity, and respect. The course surveys both British and American literature from a variety of periods and genres.

Course Objectives

- Students will engage in careful reading and critical analysis of imaginative literature
- Students will deepen their understanding of the ways writers use language to provide both meaning and pleasure for their readers
- Students will develop habits of reading, including reading actively with insight and enjoyment
- Students will develop habits of writing in their own voice with precision, intelligence, clarity, and sophistication
- Students will develop habits of conversation in which they listen with respect and speak with succinct vocabulary and clear train of thought

Materials and Grading

Required Materials:

- *Texts* (Anthologies, handouts, and primary readings brought to every class session)
- *Notebook* (Three ring binder that includes lined paper)
- *Annotation Materials* (Pens/Pencils/Hi-lighters. Also sticky notes for annotating the text)
- *Homework* (Independent Reading, Seminar Preparation)

Grades: All assignments will be categorized using a weighted grading system. Category and grade weights for the course are as follows:

- **Formative Assessments - 25%**
 - Bi-weekly self-assessments
 - Benchmark Tests
- **Summative Assessments - 55%**
 - Quarterly Grade Negotiations
 - Writing Pieces
 - Independent Reading
 - Socratic Seminars
- **Final Exams - 20%**
 - Semester Benchmark Tests

Grade	Percent	Unweighted / College Prep G.P.A	Weighted Honors G.P.A.	Weighted AP G.P.A.
A	100% - 94%	4	4.5	5
A-	93%-90%	3.75	4.25	4.75
B+	89%-87%	3.5	4	4.5
B	86%-84%	3.25	3.75	4.25
B-	83%-80%	3	3.5	4
C+	79%-77%	2.8	3.3	3.8
C	76%-74%	2.4	2.9	3.4
C-	73%-70%	2	2.5	3
D+	69%-67%	1.8	2.3	2.8
D	66%-65%	1.4	1.9	2.4
F	64%-0%	0	0	0

***In order to receive credit for this course, students must earn a 66% or higher. This is different than the previous 65% cut off between D- and F.**

Required Texts

The school will provide students with copies of most text and articles necessary for this course. This course does not rely on a textbook, but on texts. Students will be required to obtain some personal copies of some novels, plays, poems, and short stories used in the course. You may purchase copies from a local new or used bookstore, or from an online book source. If available, you may check out books from your school's English Department. All titles may also be found in the local library branches. Some of the works used can also be accessed online.

Summer

- *See summer reading list**

Semester I

- *Pride and Prejudice, Austen**

- *Heart of Darkness*, Conrad
- Poetry— as selected from American and British poets
- Prose (Fiction, Non-Fiction, Essays)—as selected from American and British writers

Semester II

- *The Tragedy of Hamlet*, Shakespeare
- *A Tale of Two Cities*, Dickens*
- Poetry— as selected from American and British poets
- Prose (Fiction, Non-Fiction, Essays)—as selected from American and British writers

*Denotes that text is not provided, students are required to obtain a personal copy for use.

Major Assignments/Activities

In-Class Writing

Students will write a variety of essays and responses in class centering on interpretation, understanding, exposition, analysis, and argument. Students will receive instruction and feedback, both before and after revising their work, furthering their knowledge and skills in the following approaches to writing:

1) Writing to interpret (*Aesthetic*):

Students will be taught to write an interpretation of a piece of literature, basing their essays on a careful observation of textual details, considering the way the work's structure and style help convey its theme.

2) Writing to interpret (*Social/Historical*):

Students will be taught to write an interpretation of a piece of literature, basing their essays on careful observation of textual details, considering the social and historical values it reflects and embodies.

3) Writing to interpret (*Literary Elements*):

Students will be taught to write an interpretation of a piece of literature, basing their essays on a careful observation of textual details, considering such elements as the use of figurative language, imagery, symbolism, and tone.

4) Writing to understand (*Informal/Exploratory*):

Students will engage in writing activities that enable them to discover what they think in the process of writing about their reading. Possible assignments will include dialectical

journals, annotation collections, response-prediction papers, letters, notes, extended questions, reviews, adaptation proposals, free writing, and the like.

5) Writing to explain (*Expository/Analytical*):

Students will write an expository, analytical essay in which they draw upon textual details to develop an extended explanation/interpretation of the meanings of a literary text.

6) Writing to evaluate (*Analytical/Argumentative*):

Students will write an evaluative essay in which they draw upon textual details to make and explain judgments about the work's artistry and quality, and its social and cultural values.

Poetry Response

The poetry response is an ongoing, informal, exploratory writing piece in which students base their responses on careful observation of textual details, considering such elements as the use of figurative language, imagery, symbolism, and tone. The poetry response will require multiple readings of selected poems from American and British poets.

Dialectical Journals

During their study of literature, students will write informally to explore their own thinking process about reading. Through maintenance of dialectical/reading journals, students will annotate text and record their own internal dialogue (i.e. questions, commentary, responses, etc.) in which they actively engage with assigned readings. This process will assist students in forming habits of reading critical to advanced interpretation and analysis.

Formal Essays

Students will write four formal essays in which they will receive instruction and feedback both before and after writing. During the writing process for formal essays, students can expect to revise their essays using peer feedback, teacher review, and instruction in techniques for personal editing. The following skills will be the focus of formal writing instruction with explicit correlation to requirements of the California Common Core Standards:

- 1) A wide-ranging vocabulary effectively *employed* in writing.
- 2) A variety of sentence structures including appropriate use of subordination and coordination.
- 3) Use of specific techniques in logical organization, such as repetition, transitions, and emphasis.
- 4) A balance of generalization with specific, illustrative detail.

5) An effective use of rhetoric including controlling tone, establishing and maintaining voice, and achieving appropriate emphasis through diction and syntax.

Grammar/Vocabulary Instruction

Students will receive instruction in the use of grammar throughout the course. While students are expected to have a command of the English language prior to enrollment, useful targeted instruction in the use of transitive/intransitive verbs, apposition, subordination/coordination, effective transitions, and emphasis will focus students in appropriate techniques for writing at the college level.

Students are expected to not only learn new vocabulary through their reading, but to effectively use that vocabulary within discussion and writing. Short lessons on vocabulary will focus on synonyms, etymologies, and appropriate effective usage of a wide variety of words within the context of the California Common Core Standards framework.

Socratic Seminars

The art of discourse will be a crucial component to this course. Students will participate in weekly Socratic Seminars. Students will be directly instructed in how to conduct formal discussions in small groups. In order for students to practice collegiate-level syntactical structures, and to “own” newly adopted vocabulary, all students will be required to participate in close discussion within a small group. Humility, honesty, and the ability to actually listen to each other will be the habits groomed in this setting. These whole class discussions require students to be present in order to glean deeper meaning of text. Seminar texts will be drawn from current reading assignments and related thematic fiction, poetry, and non-fiction articles to increase depth of critical thinking and analysis in students. These seminars will help students recognize elements of literary devices such as diction detail, imagery, syntax, and tone. They are the core process of instruction in all aspects of reading, writing, listening, and speaking. Participation is crucial to student development and cannot be duplicated with out of class “make-up work”.

Writer’s Workshops

Effective writing is a primary component of this course. Students will participate in writing instruction and workshops throughout the course. Here they will be given the opportunity for instruction prior to and after writing, with the opportunity to revise their essays for logic and coherence; rhetorical structures, repetition, and emphasis; precise vocabulary; sentence structure; organizational features including transitions, balance of illustrative detail; and control of voice and tone appropriate to their audience.