American Literature

I Course Description

The eleventh grade transitional class is a full year English class designed to provide extra support for students who have traditionally struggled in Regents level English classes. Moving at a more deliberate pace to support a variety of learning needs, this course will help students improve their reading and writing skills, and prepare them for the English Comprehensive Regents Exam administered in January. Furthermore, fostering these reading and writing skills will promote life-long learning. The following essential questions will help guide our teaching and learning, and provide a lens by which students may look at the literature and history of America.

• What is America?

• How are the historical time periods and cultural traditions of American history reflected in the literature and the writer’s perspective?

• How do authors use specific literary elements and techniques to express their themes, ideas, and philosophies?

• How can we write sentences, paragraphs, and essays that adhere to the conventions of standard, written English and that convey clear, coherent ideas related to a central thesis?

• What strategies can we use to become more effective, interactive readers?

II Course Objectives

Upon completion of this course it is expected that students will be able to do the following:

• Formulate focused questions based on literature
• Make connections between literature and their own experiences
• Generate their own strong thesis statements to give direction to their essays
• Organize a persuasive argument
• Edit and revise drafts
• Give critical feedback to their peers
• Compare works of literature thematically, historically, and philosophically
• Demonstrate mastery of note-taking skills by organizing information to facilitate accurate recall of material for presentation and discussion purposes

These objectives will be realized through the following means:
• Homework assignments with readings
• Guided in-class evaluations
• Participation as both speakers and listeners in regular class discussions
• One-on-one writing assistance
• Exercises on mechanics and style

III Course Policies

A. Materials: Students are responsible for having a three-ring binder in class every day. All handouts will be three-hole punched so they can be kept in these binders. There will be a folder in the classroom for each student that will be used to store drafts of papers. Binders and folders will be occasionally checked and graded for organization and content. Students are also required to bring a blue or black pen and the relevant reading materials to class every day.

B. Missing Work: One point will be subtracted each day a homework assignment is late. Ten percent will be subtracted from other late assignments. After one week late work may not be accepted. When a draft or final is turned in, all previous drafts must accompany it. If all of the previous drafts are not turned in with the newest draft, it will still be accepted, but points will be subtracted for the missing draft or outline.

C. Behavior: Behavior that distracts from the goals of the class negatively affects all in the classroom. If a problem persists it will result in a conference with parents or guardians.

D. Absences: Your attendance, both physical and mental, is an integral component of this course.

   a) Students are responsible for work missed due to all absences from class. Students must find out what work was missed. This is not the responsibility of the teacher.
   b) If the absence is unexcused, late work will be accepted and feedback will be given to the student, but the student will not receive credit.
   c) If an absence is excused, the student must see the teacher to set up a schedule to complete missed assignments.
   d) If a quiz or a test is missed the student must make it up the day he or she returns to class. It may not be possible to do it in class. The student is responsible for scheduling time with the teacher to take the quiz or test. If it is not taken within one week of the student’s return to class, it is a zero.

E. Grading Policy: The quarterly grades will be determined by the following: final drafts of essays, earlier graded drafts and outlines of essays, projects, quizzes, tests, homework assignments, and participation in class.

   The final course grade will be determined by combining the four quarterly grades and the final exam and then dividing by five.
IV Tentative List of Readings and Major Assignments

These readings will be accompanied by vocabulary lists and written homework assignments. In addition, whole class discussions, small group discussions, and written assignments will be used to analyze and assess literary elements/techniques used by the authors. Here are a few examples of literary elements/techniques: characterization, mood, theme, tone, irony, setting, point of view, and symbolism.

Besides the writing assignments referenced above, students will write several Regents style essays in preparation for the exam in January.

- Sue Monk Kidd – *The Secret Life of Bees*
- Arthur Miller - *The Crucible*
- Edith Wharton - *Ethan Frome*
- Tim O’Brien - *The Things They Carried*
- William Shakespeare – *Macbeth*
- F. Scott Fitzgerald - *The Great Gatsby*
- Various short stories and poems

Parents/Guardians and Students:
Once you have read the above syllabus and course requirements please sign below. If there are any questions feel free to contact the instructors.

________________________________________________________________________

Student Signature Date

________________________________________________________________________

Parent/Guardian Signature Date

Parent/Guardian e-mail address and/or phone number: ____________________________________________