

AMERICAN LITERATURE

Course Syllabus

"Make voyages! -- Attempt them! -- There's nothing else..."

Tennessee Williams

"You miss 100% of all the shots you never take."

Wayne Gretsky

Training is everything. The peach was once a bitter almond; cauliflower is nothing but cabbage with a college education."

Mark Twain

I. AMERICAN LIT.:

Communication and collaborative skills are enhanced as students engage in the works of significant American writers. Your self-understanding and cross-cultural skills develop as we explore various themes in American literature through our poets, essayists, dramatists, and novelists. Writing skills advance as we discuss and reflect on literary criticism, conduct research, analyze and synthesize essays. Through reading, writing, speaking, listening and viewing, skills are transformed and strengthened as your command of language and critical thinking capability evolves. Works may include *The Great Gatsby* by Fitzgerald, *The Crucible* by Miller, *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* by Twain, and *The Catcher in the Rye* by Salinger.

II. COURSE OBJECTIVES:

- A. Students identify authors, themes, genres, and characteristics of American literature, while exploring the social, political, and aesthetic values reflected in these works. Students construct meaning from the experiences, ideas, and emotions of others across the ages, applying their understanding to contemporary circumstances.
- B. Scholars will recognize, analyze and develop narrative techniques. Effective communication requires an understanding of purpose and audience, and reflects well-developed ideas using appropriate conventions of genre, content, form, style, voice, and mechanics.
- C. Students will refine their writing styles for a variety of rhetorical purposes while developing a richer vocabulary, and will develop appropriate speaking tools for diverse social contexts. Understanding the implications of language use is critical for fostering a democratic society in which all voices are valued.

III. REQUIREMENTS:

A. Course Materials-

The text, The Language of Literature, a binder/folder for handouts and notes, a writing implement and an open, optimistic outlook are required. Your folder will contain all in-class assignments, handouts, as well as all completed assignments.

B. Outside Research/Reading Sources-

Assignments, writing and project topics will vary, but research and outside reading texts will be required. Suggestions will be made in class, and final choices must receive the approval of the instructor.

IV. GRADING & EVALUATION:

A. Grading Policy-

A = Prompt completion of assignments, consistent improvement and effort, initiative and concern above reproach. Your participation in class both as an observer/critic and as an active participant, is of vital importance as a means of evaluating your progress.

B = No more than one zero or incomplete assignment, directions and corrections used and improvements made, consistent effort and initiative above normal.

C = Less than three incompletes, follows directions, effort at normal level, initiative and concern below expectations.

D = Three or more unacceptable assignments, inconsistent effort, excessive tardies or absences.

E = Work and effort at an unacceptable level.

Significant, personalized feedback is conveyed on a regular basis through individual conferencing, written observations, coordinated assessments and classroom displays. Grades will be available and updated at approximately three week intervals on Pinnacle. When an assignment is given, it takes about a week to ensure that everyone has taken, re-worked or made up the task, and from one to five days to accurately reflect and assess it. Only then will I update your effort from the past few weeks. This ensures that your status is indicative of your actual progress - not just a reflection of a single outstanding project or a distressing test. Please see me with questions or concerns.

*** Each one of you can earn an "A" if you are willing to put forth the effort.

B. Make-up/Late work-

When a presentation, project, test, etc. is missed due to an EXCUSED absence, you have one day for each day absent to make up the work. If you fail to take the initiative for make-ups or fail to turn in an assignment, it receives a "0". Remember, it is your responsibility to make arrangements for all make-up work. **Reminder – absences do not change long-term assignment deadlines!**

An UN-EXCUSED absence means an automatic "E." Unexcused absences and tardies, both forms of non-participation, will adversely affect your success. You generally receive 5 points per day for class work and productive participation.

I DO NOT EXCEPT LATE WORK...you snooze, you lose! For extenuating circumstances (accepting a Nobel Prize, unexpected time travel), see me. For printer breakdowns, late games, my dog ate it, etc. **PLAN AHEAD!**

C. Midterm/Final Exam - You must receive passing grades to pass the course. This counts as 20% of your final grade.

D. Approximation of points received for individual assignments -

Attendance/Participation				1 – 5
Classroom events/Quizzes			5 - 10	
Minor Written Assignments/Presentations/Assessments			10 - 25	
Major Papers/Projects/Tests			25 - 60	
100-98% = A+	89-87 = B+	79-77 = C+	69-67 = D+	
97-93 = A	86-83 = B	76-73 = C	66-63 = D	
92-90 = A-	82-80 = B-	72-70 = C-	62-60 = D-	59 and below = E

***As with any course, it is your responsibility to save all assignments, papers, projects etc., in order to avoid any grade discrepancy disputes later in the term. Keep everything!

V. CLASSROOM EXPECTATIONS:

- * A Positive Attitude and Productive Participation are essential.
- * Approx. ½ - 2 hours of homework each week; plan on it.
- * *Deserve respect; expect respect.*
- * Bring all necessary supplies, attend regularly, punctually, and behave responsibly.
- * **NO gum, unauthorized electronic use, food, beverages, vulgarity, insubordination, harassment, etc. allowed in class. Infractions will negatively impact your grade.**
- * One trip out of class per semester (restroom, drink, locker, etc.), is available; use it judiciously. If you forget materials, fail to plan ahead, etc., it will affect your grade - see that it doesn't.
- * Do not pack up or get up until the bell; it does not dismiss you, I do.

- * **Plagiarism is the unauthorized use or close imitation of the language and thoughts of another and representing it as original effort.** Research wisely, paraphrase selectively, and attribute accurately; always cite your source. Start early; make it personal; do your own work!

VI. KEEPING IN TOUCH:

I am available Monday, Wednesday & Friday from 7:15 – 7:50 a.m. or after school by appt.; my room # is 401 and my email is dunhamm@gpschools.org, which is the best way to reach me. Please engage in your success now. Ask for help when you get stressed, behind, or befuddled. I am not that scary. Please review the information in this syllabus with your parents.

Welcome - now let's have a great year!