

## Contemporary American Culture CPA/H Syllabus

Mrs. Daly

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Classroom code:



### **Course description**

This interdisciplinary course examines recent trends in American culture from 1950 to the present. History, economics, sociology, and political science are joined with the study of contemporary literature, art, and music in order to give students a better understanding of the world in which they live.

All our work in Contemporary American Culture will be guided by the following essential questions:

- What is culture?
- What historical events between 1950 and the present have been key to the shaping of American culture?
- How does contemporary literature reflect and illustrate American culture?
- How does contemporary art reflect and illustrate American culture?
- How is the concept of the American Dream integral to American culture?
- What are the major problems and issues facing American society today?

These are certainly subject to change, but this is the gist of this semester:

#### TERM 1

- Exploration into Culture - What contributes to culture? How are individuals impacted by culture? How can individuals impact culture?
- Post WWII America - Conservatism and conformity and those who fought against that: The Beat generation - Jack Kerouac's *On the Road* (annotated) - nonfiction - poetry
- 1960's and 1970's - Ubiquitous Media and its coverage of major events such as: The Vietnam War (Tim O'Brien's- *The Things they Carried*), American activism, The Civil Rights Movement. The broad impact on culture and catalyst for a counter culture.  
Nonfiction, short stories, poetry, music and annotated novels.

#### TERM 4

- 1980's and 1990's: When Capitalism becomes culture. The highs and lows of riding the bubble. Stock market wealth and poverty in cities. The 1990's tech boom and big business prisons: James Bridge's *Bright Lights Big City*, Music as a history of American inner cities. Research project on topics related to politics, economics, and/or media and its impact on culture.
- 2000's: A nation's shared grief and the war on terror. Documentary and historical research. Contemporary topics in American Culture (varies each semester). Book groups.

And goals:

Upon successful completion of this course, students will be able to integrate material from a variety of sources and disciplines to arrive at and express conclusions, supported with evidence, about contemporary American culture (1950-present).

Our individual and class goals for this year are directly related to [the expectations and core values of the high school](#) and the [Common Core frameworks](#).

## **Class Policies**

### *Communication*

I am here because of you! I care about you and want you to succeed. Please take the time to talk to me, email me, or ask questions about the materials or other things on your mind. If/when we're in school, I'll be in either C014 or C027, but email is the best way to contact me: [laura\\_daly@wrsd.net](mailto:laura_daly@wrsd.net)

\*I will not respond to emails after school hours or on the weekends

### *Approach*

Try! Have fun! Think critically! This class will require you to speak your mind. Your peers and I will benefit from your ideas.

### *Tech*

We'll be using Chromebooks. So, be sure you have yours and it is charged for each class! I have a charger that stays in my classroom. Just ask if you need to borrow it. **SECURLY:** Consider this your warning!! If we are using our school issued Chromebooks in class, I will be using Securly, which is an add-on that allows me to see your entire computer screen. I will do my best to remind you in class, but just be sure you are not distracted/doing something you shouldn't be.

### *Class Practices*

Regardless of whether we're remote, hybrid, or in-person, you should

- Be respectful
- Be responsible
- Be present

### *Attendance/Participation*

This is an interactive course. Discussion, writing, group work, and deep thinking are necessary for success, so attendance to and **active participation** in class are critical. **Please note:** It is the responsibility of the student to account for any work missed due to absence. Please see WRHS Student Handbook for additional information.

### *Student Work*

I may use student work to inform instruction or as a model in class. I may also share it with other teachers in order to improve practice and for research purposes. I will usually do so anonymously, but if I use work with your name, I will always ask your permission. If you do not want me to use your work, please tell me, and I'll honor that request.

### *Academic Integrity*

Per the WRHS Student Handbook:

“All students’ academic work must reflect their own honest efforts. Cheating and plagiarism in any form will not be tolerated. This includes, but is not limited to copying homework, papers, lab reports, or quiz or test answers; acquiring or disseminating quizzes or tests before they are administered; or using information from the

Internet or other outside sources without proper attribution. Any student known to have cheated will be subjected to penalties, up to receiving “0” for the work.... Students who collaborate with others in cheating by allowing their papers to be copied or by other means will be subjected to penalties commensurate with their involvement, which may include the student receiving “0” for the work or suffering significant grade reduction.

In all cases, the principal or the class administrator along with the department head and teacher will be informed about both the incident and the penalty imposed, and the parent(s) or guardian(s) will be notified. The administration reserves the right to impose other penalties up to and including removal from the course, removal from honor societies, and loss of eligibility for scholarships with “honor” as criteria.”

## **Assignments and Assessments**

### *Grading*

Your grade will be calculated on a total points system with the total points you earn divided by the total possible points. The resulting percentage will be converted to a letter grade according to the scale in the WRHS handbook. You will be graded on a variety of assignments, which will include (but not be limited to) the following categories:

*Assessments:* These could range from quick homeworks (~3 points) to essays/projects (~100+ points). They will be designed to assess and evaluate student learning.

\*I don’t accept late homework (unless you’re absent of course)

*Coursework:* **Coursework is a critical part of the course.** These assignments provide a place to practice and develop skills and a way for me to assess where you are at in the learning process and where changes need to be made to improve that process. Classwork may include class activities, review work, independent reading, workshopping, projects, reading questions, group work, notebooks, quickwrites, debates, class participation and citizenship, reading journals, and a lot of other things. (usually 5-20 points)

*Essays:* To develop your skills and give you space to demonstrate your abilities, we will be writing a lot this semester, including at least one literary analysis essay. The specifics of each assignment will be discussed when assigned, **but all should follow MLA formatting:** MLA heading, double spaced, 12 point Times New Roman font, correct citations. (usually 20-100 points).

*Projects and presentations:* Students will complete several projects/presentations. These projects will be discussed further when assigned. (40-80 points)

### *Books:* **Course Content**

The following is a preliminary list of titles that we will be reading during this course. As a class, students will also be analyzing numerous nonfiction articles from vetted databases and news sources.

### **Preliminary List of Texts:**

- *The Other Wes Moore* by Wes Moore
- Excerpts from *The Things They Carried* by Tim O’Brien
- *On the Road* by Jack Kerouac
- *The Poet X* by Elizabeth Acevedo

In this course, students will read a variety of short stories, poems, and excerpts from novels including but not limited to: Beatnik poems by Allen Ginsberg, Jack Kerouac, Gary Snyder, short stories- “The Swimmer” by John Cheever, “There Will Come Soft Rains” by Ray Bradbury, “How to Tell a True War Story” by Tim O’Brien, “The Red Convertible” by Louise Erdrich, “Spring is Now” by Joan Williams, “Rules of the Game” by Amy Tan.

In order to foster a love of reading in the students in class and encourage their development as readers, I encourage students to read/research what they are interested in learning more about, and I'm asking for your support in this endeavor. Because I respect your role as caregivers and the traditions you hold sacred, please email if you have any questions or concerns.

**Movies:**

Forrest Gump (1994)