

Course Title: We The People of American Literature Honors/CPA
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Course Description

We the People introduces students to issues of difference, identity, and literary representation through the careful analysis of texts drawn from a wide range of voices and multiple genres. Students explore how authors negotiate the complex relationships between aesthetic, cultural, and political dimensions in their work. By the end of the semester students will demonstrate an ability to analyze literary texts and develop a critical vocabulary and set of reading and writing practices for approaching a wide range of human differences. The genres we will read/view include memoir, film, poetry, film, short stories, flash fiction, novels, and graphic fiction. In addition, students will participate in book clubs to further develop their understanding of the diversity within American literature.

AN IMPORTANT NOTE

This course addresses some very controversial topics about gender, race, and equality. I will present a lot of history, research and statistics to support the assertions made in this class. We must remember to approach every unit with an open mind and have respect for everyone's opinions. While conversations may become provocative, they will not become heated, hurtful or in any way be made as an attack. **Respect** is my number one rule in my classes, and it will **not** be broken. This classroom is a safe place for EVERYONE, and it should be a place in which everyone is happy to come and to learn. Each member of this circle is essential, valued, and worthy of being treated with respect and kindness.

Titles/Authors We Explore

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. Our whole class novel is *There, There,* by Tommy Orange.

In this course, students will read a variety of short stories, poems, and excerpts from novels including but not limited to the following authors: Sylvia Plath, Maya Angelou, Audre Lorde, James Baldwin, Amanda Gorman, Sharon Olds, Alice Walker, Margaret Atwood, Joyce Carol Oats, Sherman Alexie, Pages Matman, Chimamandai Adichie, Maxine Hong Kingston, Nikole Hannah Jones, James Fitzpatrick and additional American authors.

Units of Study

The following lists the units we will explore throughout the semester as well as a brief description. I have not specified the texts for every unit, as the list is fluid.

Unit 1: Constructing the Self

This unit examines how identity is formed. We will read several articles, pieces of memoir, watch Slam Poetry, and listen to experts discuss how society impacts our self views. Part of it will be self-exploration; you will be introspective and think about how your identity is created, who influences you and impacts your choices, how you see yourself in the larger scope of the world, what obstacles you face because of your identity, do you see differences and are you actively or passively involved in the social construction of difference.

Unit 2: Understanding the Need for Diversity in Literature

This unit explores the importance of hearing more than one voice in American literature and why it is important to expose young children to diverse authors at an early age. We will read several articles, explore children's literature and watch TED Talks to get multiple perspectives as well as discuss the contemporary challenges facing marginalized groups.

Unit 3: Founding Documents

This unit explores traditional and nontraditional texts as foundational American documents. It challenges the idea of the American dream and the fact that it was not established for all groups when our country was founded. We will start off at the beginning and move through history to see how and if anything has changed to make the American dream attainable for everyone.

Unit 4: Native Voices

This unit explores a variety of voices of American Indigenous people. We will explore their cultures, traditions, histories and struggles. In addition to poetry and nonfiction pieces, we will read the whole class novel, *There, There*, by Tommy Orange.

Unit 5: Feminism

We will look at feminist movements throughout our history and hear women's voices in literature. Throughout this unit, we will examine the struggle for equality with a focus on discrimination, objectification, and stereotyping.

Required Readings and Units (subject to change- this is a preliminary list)

- **Unit One: Constructing Self-** Authors include but are not limited to- NY Times, Kingston, Platt, Gorman, Shakur, Alexi, Brooks, Fitzpatrick.
- **Unit Two: Understanding the Need for Diversity-** Authors/Sources include but are not limited to- NY Times, PBS, NEA, TED Talk, International Library Congress, Adichie, NPR.

- **Unit Three:** Founding Documents- Authors include but are not limited to Jefferson, Hannah-Jones, Marshall, Rockwell, Lincoln.
- **Unit Four:** The Pursuit of Justice/Ernest Gaines *A Lesson Before Dying* or Tommy Orange *There There*
- **Unit Five:** Feminism: *The Feminist Mystique* Betty Friedan, *Clothes From Arranged Marriage* by Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni, “The Flowers” by Alice Walker, “Where Are You Going, Where Have You Been?” by Joyce Carol Oats, “Helen of Troy Does Countertop Dancing” by Margaret Atwood, “The Applicant” by Sylvia Platt, “Still I Rise” by Maya Angelou, “A Litany For Survival” by Audre Lorde, “Looking Back in my Eighty-First Years” by Maxine Kumin, and “Living in Sin” by Adrienne Rich, “Right of Passage” by Sharon Olds.

CLASS POLICIES

ELECTRONICS POLICY (Excerpt from the Student Handbook)

Once the bell rings to begin class, all personal electronic devices (including but not limited to: cell phones, headphones/earbuds, wearable technology, etc.) must be silenced (not on vibrate) and cell phones will be put in a space provided by the classroom teacher. Headphones, earbuds, etc need to be put out of sight and not worn. Unless otherwise directed by the teacher, cell phones will remain in this predetermined area throughout the entirety of the class period. Students will not be able to take their cell phones with them if they leave class to go to the bathroom, locker, etc.

- 1.) **HOMEWORK:** Homework serves many purposes and takes many forms. Sometimes it is a reading assignment, a review of what we did in class, or preparation for the next class. Other times it is a writing or research assignment aimed at making you a better writer, communicator, and critical thinker. It is important that ALL assignments are done completely, ON TIME, and with an honest effort. **Late or incomplete assignments result in a zero, regardless of whether or not the work is made up at a later date.** Please make sure that any paper you pass in contains a full heading.

- 2.) **RESEARCH PROJECT:** All students taking this course are required to complete a semester-long research project about a topic we will explore in class and also present the research.

NOTE: UNLESS YOU HAVE A SPECIFIC ACCOMMODATION FOR PRESENTING IN A SEPARATE ENVIRONMENT, YOU ARE REQUIRED TO PRESENT IN FRONT OF YOUR CLASSMATES.

- 3.) **BOOK CLUBS:** In order to further expose you to a variety of texts outside the traditional literary canon, you will be grouped in a Book Club, which is independent

reading outside of class. You will come together in your groups periodically to discuss your book, and you will complete a final project to present to the class.

- 4.) **DEADLINES:** You will know the due dates of major assignments well in advance. If you are absent the day a paper or essay is due, you still need to upload it to the Classroom (unless we have spoken and there are extenuating circumstances). If one of these major assignments is late, I will deduct ten points per day. Tests and quizzes missed due to absence must be made up as outlined in the student handbook.
- 5.) **ACADEMIC HONESTY:** Any work you submit in this class is expected to be your own. Copying the work of a peer, stealing a classmate's original idea, paraphrasing a published literary critic, buying a paper off the internet, or cheating in any other way is considered plagiarism, a violation of the rules of our student handbook. Should you choose to be academically dishonest in this class, I will contact your parents and your administrator. You will earn a zero for the assignment. In cases of cheating in which one student copies from another student, both students will be considered equally culpable of dishonesty and will receive the same punishment. (See the WRHS writing manual and the student handbook for more information on academic dishonesty, **the use of AI** and plagiarism).
- 6.) **ATTENDANCE:** Just a friendly reminder that you are only allowed 8 unexcused absences from this course for the year.