

AP Literature:

COURSE DESCRIPTION: This is an AP course in Literature, meaning it's a college-level introductory course on literary fiction, drama, and poetry. We will approach our works from a variety of different critical, theoretical, and ideological perspectives, depending on your backgrounds and interests. In other words, it means that this course will be "speaking-intensive" and presupposes that you are equipped with enough of the fundamentals of literary criticism to achieve these aims.

While we will read an innumerable amount of poems, and even some nonfiction (gasp), our course will primarily focus on reading and conversing about eight major works (one of which is long), dating from antiquity to modernity. They are works that are largely considered "classics" or, in the magnificently vague and corporate language of our overlords at the College Board, "works of considerable literary merit." What this means is that these works are considered by many to be extremely worthy of being read and discussed because they either *say* something or *do* something. Consequently, I hope to talk about the implications of the "canon"; about why some books get taught in English courses and others do not; and what adjectives like "important," "good," and "influential" even mean with respect to literature.

In essence, we can talk about whatever you wish—provided that we do it well.

COURSE FORMAT: This is, by and large, a discussion-based course. What we learn will be driven primarily by the questions, comments, ideas, and energies you bring to our discussions. In other words, we will learn about our texts by actively engaging them and each other in regular meetings.

WRITTEN & ORAL OBLIGATIONS:

1. Nine essays will be assigned at intervals over the school year. Of these, six will be in-class essays (approximately 2-4 pages in length) and three will be written out-of-class (approximately 3-5 pages in length). Each essay will be based upon a previous College Board essay prompt, passage, and/or poem. It is expected that these essays will represent your very best, most thoughtful, and most careful work. I will be available for voluntary writing conferences either during zero period or lunch. As always, you will have the option to revise your essays for additional credit, which I highly recommend (however, please note that "revising" your work does not simply entail fixing spelling and grammar errors).
2. You will be required, moreover, to submit a one-page response to one of the works we read in each unit this year (i.e. 3 per marking period). These mini-papers should deal with some critical question about the book's meaning, technique, quality, etc., and should use a close reading of the text to support its points. They will usually be due on the last class-day we discuss each book. The minipapers must not be reiterations of old class

discussions—they need to represent your own thoughts about some feature of the book that you find interesting and that we really didn't get the chance to discuss or discuss deeply, in the way that you had hoped. The mini-papers also need to adhere to the conventions of quality, cogent writing—they will be graded. At the marking period's end, a composite grade for all your mini-papers will be calculated as follows: 3 papers graded S will result in the numerical equivalent of an A+; 2 Ss will = B; 1 S will = C-; 0 Ss will = F. Note: No late mini-papers will ever be accepted—if you have to miss class on the day one is due, you need to turn it in early.

3. There will also be six “oral” obligations of some-sort over the course of the year, 2 per marking period. These will take place in the form of “chalk talks,” debates, recitations, etc. Like the mini-papers, these will be graded on an S- or U-basis. Also similarly, these will be officially scored in grade book as a composite grade: 2 presentations graded S will result in the numerical equivalent of an A+; 1 = C+, 0 = F.
4. In an AP course, it seems a little silly to *require* participation. Some students who are cripplingly shy, or who can't always formulate their best thoughts and questions in the rapid back-and-forth of a group discussion, are nevertheless good, serious students. On the other hand...our class can't really function if there isn't student participation. It will just be me giving a so-so ad-lib lecture for 40 minutes, which (trust me) will be horrible in all kinds of ways. There is, therefore, a small percentage of the final grade that will concern the quantity and quality of your participation in class discussions. But the truth is that I'm way more concerned about creating an in-class environment in which all students feel totally free to say what they think, ask questions, object, criticize, request clarification, return to a previous subject, respond to someone else's response, etc. Clinically shy students, or those whose best, most pressing questions and comments occur to them only in private, should do their discussing with me solo, outside class. If my scheduled office hours don't work for you, please email me so that we can make an appointment for a different meeting time.
5. Lastly, there will be nine personal progress checks over the course of the “AP year” (again, three per marking period). These progress checks will be facilitated by AP Classroom and are intended to prepare you for the exam in May. Despite my qualms about the College Board, I do want you to nonetheless succeed on that exam, so these practice tests will also be graded to ensure that you a) take them and b) take them seriously. They will not be scored on accuracy, though, because that feels cruel for something standardized test-based; rather, they will be scored using the same S-/U-system described above: 3 progress checks graded S will result in the numerical equivalent of an A+; 2 Ss will = B; 1 S will = C-; 0 Ss will = F.

COURSE RULES & PROCEDURES:

1. There's sometimes a lot of reading; and for the course to function, everybody's got to keep up all the time. A blunter way to say this is that you are required to do every iota of the assigned reading, on time and with care, exactly in the format requested. Schedules and energies vary: please drop this course if you anticipate having difficulty keeping up when things get heavy. There is no such thing as "falling a little behind" in the course reading; either you've done your homework or you haven't. Chronic lack of preparation (which is easy to spot) will lower your final grade by one whole number.
2. Your out-of-class essays and revised in-class essays must be typed and printed in regular font. They must be double-spaced, with one-inch margins all around, and stapled. It must adhere to MLA formatting rules. Your last name and page number must appear in the upper-right corner of every page. I should receive two copies: one physical and one digital (through Turnitin).
3. An extension on an out-of-class essay will be granted only under truly extraordinary circumstances, and only if the extension is negotiated in advance.
4. Your handwriting must be legible. What I cannot read, I will mark "U." Feel free to use block capitals, to skip every other line, or do whatever else you need to do in order to make your mini-papers maximally easy to read.
5. Part of your grade for written work will have to do with your document's presentation. "Presentation" has to do with evidence of care, of competence in written English, and of compassion for your reader. Your out-of-class essays, in particular, must be proofread and edited for obvious typos and misspellings, basic errors in grammar/usage/punctuation, and so on. You are totally permitted to make neat handwritten corrections on your essays' final versions before you hand them in. You are also welcome to contact me with questions about proofreading, grammar, usage, etc., as you are working on revising and editing your essays. But papers that appear sloppy, semi-literate, or incoherent will be heavily penalized, and in severe cases, you will be required to resubmit a sanitized version in order to receive any credit for the essay at all.
6. Adhere to the rules of the WHS Handbook.
7. Strive to be intentional, positive, and sincere.

THINGS YOU NEED:

1. A large, roomy pocket folder.
2. A notebook that you use solely for this class.
3. A writing utensil.

CONTACT:

1. It is best to come and see me in person if you have any quick, specific requests—my door in 213 is always open.
2. If you feel you need additional assistance with our work, I am available every morning during zero period (7:15 AM - 8:15 AM).
3. If you need assistance outside of school hours, please feel free to contact me by email (dnovis@weehawken.k12.nj.us) as frequently as you need. Please note, however, that I may not respond to emails outside of school hours right away depending on availability and my proximity to my phone or laptop.

GRADING:

Here's a percentage-type breakdown:

- Essays = 40%
- Presentations = 15%
- Mini-paper composite = 15%
- Personal progress check composite = 10%
- Attendance, participation, quality of participation, improvement, enthusiasm, etc. = 20%

Please note: In the fourth-marking period, when the class style changes, this percentage-type breakdown will inevitably change, as well. It will then be 50% student choice project, 25% mini-papers, and 25% participation.

I use an appropriate AP Literature rubric to score each essay. The numerals work out to the following scores when computing grades, according to the following scale:

- 6 = 100 = A+ = Mind-blowingly good
- 5 = 91 = A = Extremely good
- 4 = 82 = B = Good
- 3 = 73 = C = Average
- 2 = 64 = D = Subpar
- 1 = 55 = F = Markedly poor—we need to talk
- 0 = 0 = ? = Obvious

Late work will be subject to a one-mark deduction per day late (i.e. 7→6 for essays; O→S for classwork; etc.).

There is **no** extra credit offered during the marking period. Grades can always be improved via revision opportunities.

PLAGIARISM/USE OF A.I.: Plagiarism, including the use of generative artificial intelligence, is strictly prohibited in this course. Plagiarism is, as I'm sure you know, the presentation of someone else's work as your own and hence cheating. An important caveat is that, with A.I., you are not only plagiarizing a particular individual but the myriad of individuals whose work was compiled for the large language model it was based upon; as such, its output is just as suspect.

To be more specific about the use of A.I., I have a very complicated relationship with it: I understand its immeasurable utility in a number of situations, but I am also acutely aware of the threat it poses to academic integrity, critical thinking, and originality. Resultingly—given that the three areas that it threatens are the three areas that I most highly value in this course and strive to improve in each of you—I have decided against its use wholesale. This goes beyond a mere copy/paste of writing it spits out for you; it also includes outlining, proofreading, and quote selection, parts of the writing process that develop and demonstrate your ideas and craft just as much, if not more, than the actual drafting does. If you struggle in these areas, I suggest that you attend office hours or find yourself a writing partner that you trust to bounce ideas off of and honestly evaluate your work.

To ensure that plagiarism, in all of its forms, is unemployed, I regularly make use of both TurnItIn and EssayGrader AI's detection features. Please note, I read and grade all written work myself; I use these tools only for the detection of plagiarism in submitted work (because who better to detect AI than AI?).

TurnItIn and EssayGrader AI are products supplied by the school district to evaluate, among other things, plagiarism in students' writing. These detectors, like many on the market, are not perfect; however, they are the best systems we have available for detection currently. Given their imperfections, though, I do give some wiggle room: work has to meet a 20% confidence level before it is officially considered plagiarism. Furthermore, I consider the student's initial draft, timed writing, and Google Doc workflow, among other things, before I make an accusation of plagiarism. Nonetheless, if plagiarism is detected, it results in an automatic "0" on Realtime, with no chance of revision—even if just one part of the entire assignment was plagiarized, the whole assignment is invalidated. Students may appeal a decision, but it is not a guarantee that it will be overturned without good reason or evidence to suggest the contrary.

Students are therefore encouraged to ensure that all work is original or, otherwise, properly cited.

SCHEDULE OF ASSIGNMENTS:

<u>MP</u>	<u>Unit</u>	<u>Topics, Readings, Major Assignments</u>
1	1	Entering the Conversation

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● <i>Oedipus the King</i> by Sophocles ● <i>Metamorphosis</i> by Franz Kafka <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ ESSAY: FRQ-2 Style (In-Class) ○ ESSAY: Humanity (Out-of-Class)
	2	Sound & Sense <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Various poems <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ ESSAY: FRQ-1 Style (In-Class) ○ PRESENTATION: Poetry recitation
	3	Identity & Culture, Pt. 1 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● <i>The Awakening</i> by Kate Chopin <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ ESSAY: Internal events (In-Class) ○ PRESENTATION: Chalk talk
2	4	Identity & Culture, Pt. 2 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● <i>A Doll's House</i> by Henrik Ibsen <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ ESSAY: Awakenings (Out-of-Class) ○ PRESENTATION: Debate
	5	Conformity & Rebellion, Pt. 1 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● <i>Hamlet</i> by William Shakespeare <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ ESSAY: Psychological (In-Class) ○ PRESENTATION: Creative writing recitation
	6	Metaphysical Poetry <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Various poems <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ ESSAY: FRQ-1 Style (In-Class)
3	7	Tradition & Progress, Pt. 1 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● <i>Chronicle of a Death Foretold</i> by Gabriel Garcia Marquez <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ ESSAY: Distortion (In-Class) ○ PRESENTATION: The Real in “Magical Realism”
	8	Tradition & Progress, Pt. 2 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● <i>Things Fall Apart</i> by Chinua Achebe <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ ESSAY: Characterization (In-Class) ○ PRESENTATION: Legal system trial
	9	Conformity & Rebellion, Pt. 2 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● <i>Death of a Salesman</i> by Arthur Miller <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ ESSAY: Fathers and Sons (Out-of-Class)

4	10	War & Peace (aka, AP Exam Preparation)
	11	Student Choice

CAVEATS:

1. All of the above is subject to change at a moment's notice. These changes won't ever be *because I feel like it*, though; rather, it will be based upon my observations in the classroom. Certain approaches might turn out to be a waste of time. Therefore, your leading of discussions may increase or decrease and extra work may be added depending on how well-prepared you all are and how quickly you catch on to the concepts and techniques of "close reading."
2. I have high standards for the work that you turn in. If you have had me in the past, you should know this by now; if you haven't, ask your peers who have. Re-read this syllabus; I am gravely serious about what I have outlined above. Many teachers say this kind-of tough-stuff at the beginning of each year, but they either don't actually enforce it consistently as the year moves along or actually mean it in the first place. I do, however, mean it and mean to enforce it. I may be more lax than other teachers in some respects, which might give off the impression that I am easy-going and careless, but I am very concerned about the production of sincere and quality work. If you want to become a better writer, reader, and speaker, then I believe that I am a good teacher to have. If you want to fluff your GPA, firing off papers that you have B.S.'d, riddled with errors, formulated with sentences that are incoherent, or completed the night before—which you assume will be accepted because you "tried"—then you have come to the wrong place.
3. Once the exam is over and we enter "Student Choice," there is a tendency for many students to suddenly take the class less seriously or not seriously at all. The expectations outlined above are relevant for the *whole year*, not just through the exam. If you intend to slack off in the fourth marking period, do it at your own peril.

NOTA BENE:

This course has been designed to explore and address some of the most prevalent personal, political, and social topics in our world today. As such, I feel it is my responsibility to notify you that all of these units will approach themes and language that may be considered "mature" in nature. For instance, some of these works include instances of drug and alcohol usage; mental health crises, such as PTSD and suicide; gender, racial, or religious prejudice; sex; sexual violence, such as incest and rape; and physical violence. In addition, the course texts may utilize explicit, vulgar, or derogatory language in order to express these events. If you are in any way uncomfortable reading or discussing any of the material, please let me know and I will try to arrange an alternative assignment.

My goal is not to stir controversy or force beliefs but to provide a safe and educational environment for discussing these issues and to teach you to think critically about difficult situations with rigor and maturity. In addition, while the course may engage with such topics, their role in the novel is generally to broaden and complicate many of the text's central themes and reflect certain elements of real life, and, therefore, do not degrade the novel's overall value. In my experience, I have found that students are more than capable of approaching difficult content maturely and skillfully, and I have full confidence that this year will be no different.

Moreover, in lectures or discussions, I may use outrageous examples to clarify points or provoke discussion; if you are offended by something that is said, please accept my apologies in advance and express your concern to me after class. I will not share concerns with the class without permission, and I will try to respond to them earnestly.

While we encourage informal discussion, I insist that you always speak to others in the class in a respectful way and avoid comments and behaviors that are disparaging. Speaking informally but respectfully about sensitive subjects is an important skill, and this class will help you learn it.

All topics in class will be presented in a tasteful and academic manner so that there is no compromise between my responsibility as the teacher, the district's and professionals' standards, and parent/guardian concerns. You will not be required to read vulgar passages aloud, just as I will not read vulgar passages aloud; my class is more concerned with sophisticated literary analysis than it is with agitating.

With that being said, if you or your parent/guardian feels that the content within a particular unit is inappropriate, or you feel that you will not be able to handle the unit in a mature fashion, please contact me and/or indicate on the permission form below. In this event, a new lesson plan covering similar themes in a novel with a less graphic presentation will be devised.

RATIONALE:

All of the texts that have been selected for this course have been grounded in professional guidelines set forth by the National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE) and the American Library Association (ALA). Specifically, these books have been chosen because they

- are considered exciting, challenging, and valuable texts.
- are regarded as works of "considerable literary merit" by the College Board.
- are aligned to the New Jersey State Standards for 11th grade ELA.
- meet at least the minimum recommended Lexile score for AP Literature & Composition.
- address all of the educational objectives relevant to its respective unit.

Signature Page

Please read the statement below and sign the appropriate lines within and at the bottom of the page.

I certify that I have read and understood the syllabus in its entirety and understand the requirements and expectations stated within. I am aware of and comfortable with the class material and rigor. I agree to all of the policies and guidelines stated within.

If you agree with the above statement, sign and date in the appropriate line below.

Student name (print): _____

Student signature: _____

Date: _____

Parent/Guardian signature: _____

Date: _____