



Course Syllabus

Humane Letters I

9th Grade

Instructor: Ms. Skyler Patton
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(Please allow a 24 hour turnaround on business days)
Tutoring: Tuesdays/Thursdays Lyceum, room 213

Course Overview

This course will investigate the evolution of American thought through primary texts of American authors, as well as selected commentaries on American life and government. By the end of this course, you will have cultivated a sophisticated appreciation of our cultural heritage as a democratic republic. This course centers on the unifying texts of the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution; the consequences of and responses to these documents echo throughout the two hundred years of history and literature that you will explore. As we investigate our democratic tradition and the pursuit of equality, you will continue to develop your own relationship to the ideas of truth, goodness, and beauty. Close reading of original texts will foster sincere dialogue, and improve skills in seminar discussion, literary analysis, critical thinking, and analytical writing. Tutoring is available at set hours and by appointments. It is strongly encouraged at the first sign of difficulty with a particular assignment or a general classroom practice.

Class Materials

The following items will be necessary for each class:

- A pencil, a blue or black pen, and highlighter
- Course Reader (Contains exercises, poems, speeches, etc., will be provided)
- Ruled paper for note taking
- A separate notebook or section of a binder specifically designated for U.S. History notes, quizzes, etc.
- *Land Of Hope* (history textbook, will be provided)
- Current reading assignment texts (**a list of these with ISBN numbers is on my website under Helpful Links**)

Course Objectives

Humane Letters seeks to help you improve your ability to think analytically and critically, paving the way for you to draw your own truthful conclusions. Students should improve their critical thinking skills and their seminar etiquette throughout the year. Students should master appropriate behavior during seminar discussions and historical debates. Students should be able to formulate evidence based opinions derived from information that they have read in primary and secondary sources; they should be able to articulate their opinion -- with appropriate evidence -- either verbally or in an essay.

Course Expectations and Evaluation

I expect much from you, because I know you are capable of amazing achievements. I will not tolerate distractions from learning. In order to be respectful of me, your fellow classmates and ultimately yourself, several things must happen:

Take your academic progress seriously. We both want you to advance not only your historical knowledge this year, but also your reading, writing, speaking, and thinking skills. In order to do this, it is necessary to follow in-class directions, participate during class time, and complete your homework. If you do this, you will succeed in increasing your academic growth. If you ever have a question or need extra help, please talk to me. My door is always open to you.

Come to class ready to learn. Arrive on time with materials in hand, personal conversations paused, restroom business completed, and with enough calories to power you through the period. Homework is to be completed outside of class and should be ready to turn in at the beginning of each period.

Allow others to learn. Follow the Scottsdale Preparatory Academy Behavior Code. Remember that you are not the only one to use school property. Treat it with care. Respect others trying to learn.

Consequences. If your misbehavior is serious or does not stop, you have shown me that you need guidance – and that you want further correction.

Rewards. On the other hand, I am eager to spot hard work. I have been known to celebrate student diligence when I observe regular excellence. Learning is a huge reward in itself, but outstanding behavior and achievement deserve praise.

On Sensitive Topics - We will be talking about sensitive topics at times pertaining to religion, morality, justice, politics, race, and values. At these times, students must remain respectful and avoid heated arguments that attack other people's views or beliefs. We should have discussions on these topics, but they cannot be taken personally or used as attempts to attack other students. Any attempt to attack another student will result in disciplinary measures.

On Religion - One cannot be a great student without understanding the impact that religion has made; therefore, we will learn about religion in class. However, any teaching on religion will be taught in the historical or literary context. These discussions are meant to better learn about the people and what they believed in their time, and it should not be misconstrued that the teacher's beliefs are being pushed on a student. Personal beliefs will not be focused on, but we will seek to understand how religions affected people's lives in history and literature.

This course will be demanding and covers a great deal of material. You will be evaluated based on the following:

- **Discussion Participation** (30%)

Participation begins by arriving in class every day prepared and with the appropriate materials (see above list). As Humane Letters is a seminar-style class, participation is **vital**. The ideal student is consistently focused, prepared and thoughtfully engaged with both the text and the discussion each day. Additionally, the student strives to engage in true Socratic dialogue by responding to fellow students as well as the seminar leader, and furthering the seminar by posing their own questions.

- **Quizzes (20%)**

Reading quizzes will occur at the beginning of class with frequency. Most quizzes will be based on the previous night's readings. They will consist of a few literature and history questions that should be simple if you are sufficiently prepared for class. Use of notes is sometimes permissible on particular history documentary quizzes, but use of books is not.

- **Tests (25%)**

Tests will usually cover two chapters from *Land of Hope* and will be interspersed throughout the quarter. Most tests will be returned with scores in a week. There will also be a cumulative semester exam that is worth 10% of your semester grade.

- **Essays (25%)**

Two major essays will be assigned per quarter. We will spend a significant amount of time on critical reading and writing to ensure that you are comfortable and proficient with formal academic writing. Most essays will be returned with comments in two weeks. All essays will be done in handwritten form, and they will be kept in a writing notebook which stays in class. If you are absent during the writing workshops, then you can spend time before or after school/at the writing lab making that up. That time will be equal to the time missed.

Homework

Homework is essential to meeting the course expectations. Plan for fifty minutes (for an average student) of homework each night. Homework will most often consist of careful reading and annotation of current texts and will prepare students for quizzes, annotation checks, seminar participation, and essay writing.

Assignments, Absences and Late Assignments

Upon your return from absences, you are expected to be caught up after that same number of days have passed; all assignments are also due at that time. Use Google Sites to be up to date on class readings and prepared for the current quiz on the day you return.

If you miss a daily quiz due to an illness, it will be noted as excused and will count neither for nor against you. If you miss a test or major quiz, you must arrange a make-up time with me as soon as you have returned.

If an external or athletic commitment coincides with an essay or project **due** date, it is your responsibility to submit the assignment upon return to campus. Otherwise, the assignment will be counted as late. If work days are missed, equivalent time will be given to catch up. Any late assignments will lose 50% after the first day they exceed a deadline. A zero will be assigned if the work is not turned in on the second day after it is due unless special arrangements were made prior to the absence.

Asking for Help

If you are routinely spending more than an hour on the reading assignments, or are having difficulty with reading quizzes or class participation, you would likely benefit from tutoring. As soon as you feel you are having difficulty, arrange to see me. Nearly an hour of undivided attention to reading homework is the standard demand of a Humane Letters course; make sure this time is allotted as your foundation for success.

Tutoring Hours

Tuesday and Thursdays Lyceum in room 213. Reach out to me for additional tutoring, particularly around tests or essays.

Scottsdale Preparatory Academy

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Syllabus Acknowledgement

Finally and Most Importantly,

If you do not bring your text or you do not demonstrate that you have read in good faith by passing reading quizzes, then you will not be able to participate in seminar discussions for the day, which will result in a non-passing grade for participation that day.

Please fill out the information below and have it ready to turn in the next class day as your first assignment.

I, _____, acknowledge that I have read the class syllabus and understand the expectations, materials, and content important to success in this course.

Student Signature

Date

Parent/Guardian's Signature

Date