Course: Black Voices Room OO4 **Year: 2016-2017**

Teachers:	Molly Vasich (room 004)	Justin Peik (resource teacher)	Keno Evol (TruArtSpeaks, artist/poet/educator)
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Office Hours:	After school in 004 or by appointment	Wed & Fri 7-8am in media center or by appointment in office in 312C	By appointment.

Course Description:
Black Voices is an English class for juniors and seniors anchored in contemporary African American literature as well as non-fiction texts. This course bridges in-school and out-of-school learning and creates space for Washburn students to develop their own voices in dialogue with contemporary African American texts and issues. Teaching artists from TruArtSpeaks will lead bi-weekly arts literacy workshops, and the class will move fluidly between the high school campus and local art spaces.

Course Structure:
In this unique, one semester class, students will participate in bi-weekly Spoken Word workshops led by an artist educator from local non-profit arts organization, TruArtSpeaks. The work of TruArtSpeaks focuses on "the importance of supporting, encouraging, developing, and creating spaces for youth and community voices while utilizing elements of Hip Hop and Spoken Word culture" (from TruArtSpeaks website). Throughout the semester, students will develop and share their own Spoken Word pieces and creative writing inspired by and in dialogue with the themes and texts we explore in class.

On non-workshop days, students will unpack and contextualize passages from assigned texts, share and revise their writing projects with peers, and engage in deep dialogue about the issues and themes significant to African American artists and communities.

Required Materials:
- pencils or pens (blue or black)
- a notebook
- a folder or binder for keeping class materials

Curriculum & Assessments

Unit 1: Language, Community, & Identity, August 29th-Sept 30th	
Anchor Texts	*Between The World & Me,* Ta-Nehisi Coates
Supplemental Texts (not limited to)	• "On Being White & Other Lies," James Baldwin • "A Letter To My Nephew," James Baldwin

Key Assessments	• Portfolio Part I:
	  ○ Narrative Poem (with work statement)
	  ○ Epistle Poem (with work statement)
	• Personal Biography
	• Shared Inquiry Discussions

Formative	• Participation In TruArtSpeaks Workshops

Assessments & Activities (ongoing through every unit)	• Participation in field trips • Contextualization/Topic research • Writing prompts & share-outs • Assigned reading responses • Text annotations & coding • Reflective writing, check-ins

Unit 2: Systemic Racism & Schools To Prisons Pipeline, October 3rd-November 2nd	
Anchor Text	*The New Jim Crow,* Michelle Alexander
Supplemental Texts (not limited to)	• Angela Davis "Are Prisons Obsolete?" • Selections from "Code Switching" Podcast Series

Key Assessments	• Portfolio Part III:
	  ○ Poems (TBA forms, with work statement)
	  ○ Short podcast
	• Shared Inquiry Discussions

Unit 3: Intersectionality, November 7th- December 9th	
Anchor Texts	*Kindred,* Octavia Butler Selections from *Black Feminist Thought,* Patricia Hill Collins
Supplemental Texts (tentative)	• Film clips from *Lemonade* • Selections from Roxanne Gay's *Bad Feminist* • Film clips from *The Help* • Audre Lorde, "The Master's Tools Will Never Dismantle the Master's House," "Poetry Is Not a Luxury" and "The Transformation of Silence in Language and Action" from *Sister Outsider: Speeches and Essays*

Key Assessments	• Portfolio Part II:
	  ○ Poems (TBA forms, with work statement)
	  ○ Short film of poem (audio, visual, text tracks)
	  ○ Critical review of poem, film, or album
	• Shared Inquiry Discussions

Unit 4: Resistance Movements, December 12th-January 26th	
Anchor Text	Selections from *A Good Time For The Truth: Race In Minnesota*, edited by Alexs Pate
Supplemental Texts (tentative)	• Patrisse Cullors, "We Didn't Start A Movement, We Started A Network." Medium.com, Feb. 22, 2016. • Jelani Cobb, "The Matter of Black Lives." The Nation, March 14, 2006

Key Assessments	• Portfolio Part IV:
	  ○ Poems (TBA forms, with work statement)
	  ○ Persuasive Essay

	• Final Spoken Word Performance • Artist Statement • Shared Inquiry Discussions

Further Description of Black Voices Assessments:

Portfolio

Over the course of the semester, students will make regular contributions to a creative portfolio. During each curriculum unit, students will practice techniques essential to the form and style of specific genres of writing and digital media. At the end of the unit, students will submit selected pieces of revised and polished writing for assessment as well as a work statement reflecting on the choices they made as writers.

Shared Inquiry Discussions

Once a week (typically Fridays), we will have formal discussions on the week's assigned readings. Students will be assessed on their ability to form and articulate interpretations of the readings based on textual evidence. Further, students will demonstrate their understanding of devices and techniques that we explored throughout the semester. Discussion leaders will develop the discussion questions and maintain a respectful and positive discussion environment.

Field Trips

Over the course of the semester, students will attend three field trips that highlight contemporary black voices in our local art scene. Before, during, and after the field trips, students will engage in dialogue (talk backs) as they unpack the work, draw connections to class topics and current social movements and events, and ask questions about the purpose/aim of the art.

Final Spoken Word Performance

At the end of the semester, students will perform a spoken word piece at a final performance event. Participation in the final performance in mandatory and part of the student's final grade in the course.

Creative Writing Grade Scale

Grade Scale	Percentage Range	Definitions
A	100-93	**Exemplary Work** – The student is working at the highest level with consistent, high quality work. The student participates actively in class. The student is a leader and assists others in the class.
A-	92-90	
B+	89-87	**Proficient/Thorough Work** – The student is doing very good, above average work. The student consistently participates in class. The student engages positively with others in the class.
B	86-83	
B-	82-80	
C+	79-77	**Satisfactory/Acceptable Work** – The student is work at grade level and does good work. The student participates in class. The student works well with others in the class.
C	76-73	
C-	72-70	
D+	69-67	**Minimal Passing Work** – The student is doing minimal work in class or is missing a lot of work. The student contributes minimally to class activities. The student engages minimally with other students.
D	66-63	
D-	62-60	
F	59-0	**Unacceptable Work** – The student is not working to grade level or is not doing the work at all. The student does not contribute well to class activities. The student does not engage positively with other students.

Grade Criteria

Gradebook Category	Weight	Description
		Participation in TruArtSpeaks Workshops & Fieldtrips

Formative Assessments	30%	Investigative Topic Work
		Writing prompts, text annotation, reading responses
Summative Assessments	70%	Portfolio Contributions (see above for details)
		Shared Inquiry Discussions
		Final Spoken Word Performance

General Grading Procedures

- Missing work will be marked as "Missing" (M) in the gradebook until the assignment is completed and submitted.
- Assignments submitted late will be marked with a /L in gradebook.
- Assignments not done by the due date or failed assignments can be made up independently within **2 weeks of the assignment's due date, however grade will receive no less than a 10% deduction.**
- Assignments not completed and submitted within this first time frame (2 week) will change from M to "0" in the gradebook. **After two week deadline has passed, these assignments cannot be made up unless student has communicated with teacher.**
- Assigned work with an excused absence may be submitted **1 day late** without penalty.
- Assignments submitted late will receive feedback at teacher discretion.
- Incomplete summative assessments will be entered into the gradebook as "0" until completed and submitted.
- There will be revision opportunities for select assignments **if student submitted original assignment on time.**
- Plagiarism is not tolerated. If any portion of your work is **plagiarized**, you will receive a zero on the assignment. **You will not be given an opportunity to redo the assignment.**
- Grading modifications may be made for students with IEPs or 504 plans.
- Grades will be updated at least every two weeks.

Grade Make-Up: *See* General Grading Procedures.

Missing and Late Work*: See* General Grading Procedures.

Re-Dos and Revisions: There are no retakes for any summative assessments. *See* General Grading Practices *regarding revisions for formative assessments.*

Attendance and Absences: You are expected to be in class on time every day. If you are late or absent, you will miss class activities and essential information that will affect your grades. It is your responsibility to find out what you missed in class. You can find daily powerpoints, handouts, and assignments on the class website. **Please do not ask me during class time about what you missed.** You must view the website first, and then you can email me or see me after/before school with any follow up questions. I am not going to look for you.

Hall Passes: Students need a signed planner or pink hall pass to leave the room.

Phones & Electronics: See school policy in planner.

Tardies: See school tardy policy in planner.

Black Voices
Student and Parent Information Sheet
Return by Tuesday, September 6th

I have read and understood the expectations of the Black Voices syllabus.

_____ _____

Student Signature *Date*

_____

Student E-mail

Dear Parent or Guardian:

Parent involvement is very important to me. Please read the entire syllabus and discuss the responsibilities of the course with your student. I ask that you also include as much information as possible in the sections below:

Thank you,

Molly Vasich

Parent/Guardian Name: _____Date: _____

Parent/Guardian Signature: _____

Phone (mobile): _____

Phone (home): _____

Phone (work): _____

E-mail: _____

Please circle the e-mail address or phone number at which it will be most convenient for me to contact you.

Please share any of your student's strengths or talents that you would like me to be aware of (*continue on back if necessary*).