



EARLY COLLEGE EXPERIENCE

“American Studies 1201: Introduction to American Studies” (A.K.A. “American Protest”)

Robert D. Ford – North Branford High School

Overview and Description

This semester course is an introductory American Studies course offered in partnership with the University of Connecticut (UConn). If you achieve a passing grade, you will fulfill half of your English requirement at North Branford High School. If you achieve a C or higher, you will also receive three credits of college credit at UConn, credit that is transferable to other colleges as UConn credit.

The central idea of the class is that protest conceptualizes America. That is, protest in America usually revolves around different conceptions of America, what it can be or should be versus what it actually is or what it is perceived to be. Protest is an act of declaration and definition; to protest is to define an alternate vision of America.

We will explore this central idea through an examination of the history and literature of American protest movements during the 1940s, 1950s, and 1960s, especially the stories of the Beats and Hippies and the Civil Rights and Black Arts Movements. We will also consider how music – from jazz to blues to folk to rock to rap – reflected and in some cases inspired these movements. Though rooted in this time period, we will always look to connect its legacy to contemporary protest and activism, as well.

Texts

Malcolm X’s “The Ballot or the Bullet”

Spike Lee’s *Malcolm X*

Amiri Baraka’s *Dutchman* & Select Poetry

Allen Ginsberg’s *Howl and Other Poems*

Ken Kesey’s *One Flew Over the Cuckoo’s Nest*

Joan Didion’s “Slouching Towards Bethlehem”

Various Other Artists and Activists

- See [Table 1](#) and [Table 2](#)

Required Supplies

Unless otherwise stated, you are required to bring to class every day whatever text (see above) we are currently using or reading. In addition, you are required to have the following in class every day:

- Notebook or folder with plenty of space for handouts.
- Pencil or pen

Homework

Homework assignments will be posted on the board and announced in class. It is your responsibility to record accurately the details of each assignment in your assignment book or planner. If you have any questions about the homework, you should ask me before you leave class. Assignments may take as much as 30-60 minutes. Written homework assignments are due at the beginning of each class. If you are absent, it is your responsibility to see me or email me during the first day that you are back in the building to get material you missed and to hand in any assignments collected while you were absent. Again, if you are absent, I expect you to see me or email me.

Course Requirements in Brief

You will be required to complete all or some of the following during the course of the semester:

- Reading Quizzes, Exercises, Activities, Etc.
- Writing Assignments (in-class, timed and out-of-class, untimed)
- Essays and/or Projects on Major Units
- Independent Reading and/or Viewing Assignments
- Research-Based Assignments

Of course, you are also required to attend, prepare for, and actively and respectfully participate in class discussions. Failure to do so will affect your participation grade.

NBHS Grading

Grades will be assigned in accordance with the +/- system of the school. Generally speaking, there are two categories for grades: Participation and Assessments. Your overall grade for each term (quarter) will be determined in this way: Participation = 20% and Assessments = 80%. Your overall grade is determined in this way: Term 1 = 40%, Term 2 = 40%, and Final = 20%. Please note, "Participation" is not determined solely based on how much you talk in class. Some students are shy and a lack of expression does not necessarily mean a lack of participation. *In this class, "Participation" represents points earned for homework, in-class quizzes and assignments, as well as participation in class discussions.* Failure to participate at a basic level, including by virtue of excessive absences or by failure to complete or turn in work or by failure to *ever* speak in class, can reduce your participation grade, as can negative or inappropriate participation.

ECE Grading & Major Assignments

The course has two major assessments both of which are formal written assignments, though not necessarily an essay. The grades on these assessments represent 70% of your UConn ECE grade. The remaining 30% will come from participation and completion of other assignments related to the course:

1. The first major assessment asks students to analyze the extent to which contemporary civil rights movements, such as Black Lives Matter, are black nationalist. Students select from a list of topics to complete this project. See the [Black Nationalism Project](#) handout for more details.
2. The second, asks students to craft an essay that explains the conception of America offered in the various readings from the entire semester. They will be expected to *synthesize* from the array of literature, from primary sources, such as Allen Ginsberg, Malcolm X, Amiri Baraka, Lawrence Ferlinghetti, Gwendolyn Brooks, Gil Scott Heron, Nina Simone, and Bob Dylan (among others), as well as secondary sources. *Students are required to note and explore similarities*. It is easy to note differences and discrepancies, but many fascinating and compelling similarities exist between the different factions. This essay requires students to find those connections. The expected length of the essay is about 8 pages.

Formal (Typed) Assignments

Any formal written assignment that requires typing (independent reading assignments, formal essays, research papers, etc.) should be typed in MLA format. Generally speaking, this means that it should be typed in 12-point Times New Roman font, it should be double-spaced, and it should have 1 inch margins at the Top, Bottom, Left, and Right. A formal written assignment is due at the beginning of class on the specified due date. A paper submitted after this time will be considered late. For every day that it is late, including Saturday and Sunday and Vacation Days or Holidays, it will lose 20 points. After 5 days, you will receive a zero ("0") on the assignment. Extensions may be granted under certain circumstances, but only if they are requested prior to the due date of the essay.

Revision Policy

In grades 9-11, students can retake or revise certain assessments under certain circumstances as established by mutual agreement of grade-level teachers or as directed by the English department leader. In grade 12 electives, retakes and revisions are provided at the discretion of the teachers of those electives or as directed by the English department leader. Different parameters can be set based on course level (AP/honors, college, or general). Late submissions are not eligible for retakes or revisions.

Proofreading Policy

Any writing assignment that is typed or any writing assignment that follows the formal writing process (brainstorm, outline, draft, revise, edit, publish) that is submitted with a clear absence of proofreading will receive an automatic 50%. The student responsible will have the opportunity to edit and resubmit for credit without penalty by a new due date set by the teacher. Evidence of clear absence of proofreading includes but is not limited to missing capitalization, text-style

writing (e.g. “u” instead of “you”), lack of basic punctuation such as periods, and clear grammar and spelling errors, especially those that are identified and can be corrected by Google.

Academic Honesty

The work you submit must be your own. If you plagiarize (take someone else’s words or ideas as your own) in whole or in part or fabricate sources (invent sources to support your ideas), you will receive a “0” on the assignment, a lowered participation grade, and disciplinary action from the school administration.

Class Behavior and Discipline

The class has three rules: (i) Work Hard, (ii) Stay Focused, and (iii) Respect Others. Any behavior that violates these rules will result in any or all of the following disciplinary actions: a verbal reprimand, a deduction in participation points, a referral to the administration, and/or an immediate dismissal from class.

Tardiness and Attendance

Tardiness is defined as arriving to class after the bell for the start of class has rung. Every two unexcused “tardies” is equal to one absence. If you receive more than 6 absences during the semester, you will not receive credit for this course. Excessive tardiness will also negatively affect your participation grade.

Food, Drink, and Electronics

You may bring water into the classroom, but any other food or drink is prohibited. Any other food or drink that is brought into the classroom - whether opened or not – will be collected. *In addition, please note that violation of the cell phone policy will result in a referral to the office per NBHS policy.*

Bathroom Breaks

Permission to use the bathroom will be given if you ask permission in a respectful manner and at an appropriate time. However, only one person will be allowed to leave the classroom at one time, and I will not always allow you to leave right away. Plan to use the bathroom between classes or during study hall. Per NBHS policy, a permitted break that “extends beyond a reasonable amount of time” is defined as a cut. ***In general, for my classes, a permitted break should not take more than 5 minutes.***

Additional Help

If any assignment or topic is unclear, you should feel free to approach me before or after class for individual conferences and instruction. I also check my email frequently, and you should feel free to contact me at rford@northbranfordschools.org. Check the website - nbhsenglish.com - and Google Classroom for additional resources and support.