**AP Literature and Composition/Advanced Composition Mrs. Tiffany DiMatteo, MT, NBCT English IV Syllabus tiffany.dimatteo@yorkprepsc.org**

**2016-2017** [**http://tiffanydimatteo.weebly.com**](http://tiffanydimatteo.weebly.com)

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“A true piece of writing is a dangerous thing. It can change your life.” Tobias Wolff, *Old School*

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**Introduction**

Welcome to AP English Literature and Composition/Advanced Composition. The study of literature is a passion for me, and you will learn the language and landscape of that passion during the course of this year.

If you are here, you have successfully completed and distinguished yourself through English 11 Honors. I will expect a high quality of work, tantamount to a college-level survey of literature, as outlined in the *AP English Course Description*.

**Approaches to Writing**

The writing you undertake in this course will fall under different categories, but all of it will strive to meet the same goal: the thoughtful expression of a personal connection and critical interpretation of the text.

Through a reader’s journal, you will use your writing as a method to understand the text. Your journal will also serve as a badge of honor at the end of the course; it will be filled with your personal thoughts about the literature you have read and to which you have responded. You will comment on character and plot development, writer’s style, tone and diction, and literary devices, like imagery and symbolism. These will be checked for completion and complexity of thought. You will also write reaction and response papers that will show your understanding of the text and ability to reference the work. These will be used to generate class discussion of issues and themes related to the work.

You will also use writing as a method to explain your perspective of the text. This will be showcased through timed essays, given in class. We will write one of these essays for every work to provide you an opportunity to hone your skills and practice for the AP exam. Your interpretation lays the groundwork for all references to the text, and you must be able to discuss characters without dispensing advice to them, and to analyze literary devices without relying on a blanket judgment such as, “I liked the novel because of the characterization.” Your ability to create, explain, and maintain a specific argument, using text examples, will be developed.

**Expectations**

The study of literature is an exploration of the human condition. You are well aware that by completing this course and taking the AP exam for English Literature and Composition that you may earn college credit, so this in essence becomes a college-level literature class. With that in mind, be aware that this class and these works of literature deal with all manner of the human experience, both the good and the bad; this includes mature language and content. We deal with heavy themes in this class, and it is your responsibility to be both mature and critical as we address these themes. My responsibility is to provide a safe environment in which to have appropriate, literature-based discussions of such themes. You are under no requirement to like every text, character, or action that you will read, and please understand that applies to me as well. To quote Mr. Keating from *Dead Poets Society*, “We don't read and write poetry because it's cute. We read and write poetry because we are members of the human race. And the human race is filled with passion.” Passion is both beautiful and ugly, and great students of literature examine the nature of that passion and analyze what that says about our humanity. All assigned readings are approved and recommended by the AP College Board. *If you or your guardian has any questions about a work, do not hesitate to contact me to discuss it.*

It is absolutely necessary that you come to class prepared every day. You must keep up with reading and assignments, and I strongly encourage you create a schedule that incorporates significant time for reading, thoughtful reaction, and personal analysis, so that you do not feel overwhelmed. In my years of teaching text-centered, advanced literature classes, it seems that once students fall behind, it is very difficult to catch up because of the compounding of the work and reading. Don’t allow yourself to get into that situation.

The AP English Literature and Composition Exam will be given on **Wednesday, May 3, 2017,** in the morning session. This is the required and natural culmination of the year of study, and by earning a 3 or higher, it is possible that you will receive college credit for your coursework.

We will have a tight schedule, and maintaining an accurate agenda/calendar is necessary to success in this course. Expect for every other class period to involve *actively* reading 25-50 pages, providing a written response in your reader’s log. Every week you can anticipate poetry explications and vocabulary. Papers, projects, and other homework will be assigned regularly.

**Overview of Class Activities:**

Annotating and colormarking texts; Reader’s journal; Vocabulary study; Review AP rubric; Review past AP exam questions and responses; Practice AP exams; Writing workshops; Peer editing; Short response/reaction papers; Long response papers ; Instructor-suggested revision; Socratic seminars

**Course Literary Focus: Interpreting IDENTITY**

**i·den·ti·ty**  (noun) The condition of being oneself or itself, *and not another*. [emphasis added]

**I: Development of Identity** “Wondering just who I am, who I am, who I am/ Oh, who am I?”

Summer reading: *A Doll’s House* by Henrik Ibsen \* *Things Fall Apart* by Chinua Achebe

Short stories by Sherman Alexie, James Baldwin, Maxine Hong Kingston, D.H. Lawrence

*King Lear* by William Shakespeare *\* A Thousand Acres* by Jane Smiley

We will focus this unit on character development: how does the writer’s style reveal the protagonist’s journey? How does a character develop as an individual? What are the primary events that inform one’s identity? We will address these questions via divergent texts that contain many of the same questions that people face today—albeit in different ways. We will also respond to other major literary elements of narrative structure, plot development, and symbolism.

**Writing and Study Focus:** The development of meaningful, critical personal interpretation will be our focus as we begin using active reading strategies that focus on annotation, colormarking, and your reader’s journal entries, which will show a response to the literature that represents literary devices, plot or character development, and writing style. We will also begin practicing for the AP exam through short, multiple choice reading selections, and we will examine what exactly the AP graders are looking for by familiarizing ourselves with the writing rubric.

**II: Philosophy and Identity** “The road to hell is paved with good intentions.”

*\* The Stranger* by Albert Camus *\* The Death of Ivan Ilych* by Leo Tolstoy *\* A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* by James Joyce

Have you ever considered this question: If you could know the exact time of your death, would you want to know? What are the implications of such knowledge? Questions like these address the intersection of philosophical issues and death, and that is the focus for these three works. One could say they deal with “the big questions”: what is life? What happens after we die? How should one approach mortality? What is the relationship between mortality and morality? What are the ethical concerns of life and death? These questions will be raised as we read these three works, and we will explore ways in which both authors and philosophers have sought answers.

**Writing and Study Focus:** You will choose selections that represent new meaning or provide literary significance—such as theme, symbolism, imagery, and figurative language—in your reader’s journal; we will continue to incorporate vocabulary study in context of the novels we study. AP practice selections will be given consistently. You will write response/reaction papers that address a specific theme, image, or symbol, and you will show your proficiency in extrapolating a close reading of text details into a thoughtful and critical interpretation of the literature. We will also deconstruct your writing in workshop-style lessons that will focus on improving the particular hallmarks of excellence: logical organization, varied sentence structure, developing a writing voice that is your own, and appropriate use and balance of textual evidence.

**III: Horror and Identity** “And I can’t change /even if I tried/even if I wanted to”

*Heart of Darkness* by Joseph Conrad \* *The Metamorphosis* by Franz Kafka \* *Beloved* by Toni Morrison

In this unit, we will examine three very different treatments of horror in literature. Starting with a horror masterpiece of English literature, we’ll examine the man, the monster, and the impact on the reader. James’ novel introduces elements of the supernatural as a function of the horror novel. Morrison’s work is much more about emotional horror, but she uses elements from both Shelley and James, along with other preceding literary movements. We will examine how all of those come together to create perhaps the most horrifying novel of all, which also serves as the bridge to our final unit.

**Writing and Study Focus:** As we are now halfway through the academic year and are approaching the AP exam in May, we will accelerate our exam practice and evaluate different methods of writing for success on the exam. We will also regularly practice the multiple choice portion of the exam, and discuss in detail the extract and responses. Timed, in-class practice sessions will be used for the writing portion of the AP exam. In addition to discussing our personal reaction to the works, we will read and consider the critical analyses of other writers, and determine how best to incorporate outside literary analysis as support for personal interpretation.

**IV: Identity Crisis** “I’m Nobody! Who are you? Are you Nobody, too?”

*Hedda Gabler* by Henrik Ibsen \* *Daisy Miller* by Henry James

This unit will prove that one need not be forty-year-old insurance salesman to suffer an identity crisis; it can be brought on by any number of life events, including marriage, birth, death, or a connection to the supernatural. We will examine these texts using all previous considerations of identity—development, perception, morality, and mutability—in order to understand how and why these characters struggle with their identities.

**Writing and Study Focus:** This being our final unit before the exam, we will continue reading logs to maintain a personal connection and response to the literature; vocabulary study and incorporation will continue as well. Final practice exams will be analyzed in workshops to provide constructive criticism and best prepare you for the real thing.

**Honor Code**

The YPA Behavior Policy states that “YPA will require good manners, respect for self and others, appreciation for property, honesty, punctuality, reliability, and responsibility from all students, staff, parents, and community participants.” It is imperative that you practice a high level of personal integrity both in and outside of the classroom, and that you know plagiarism in any form is treated as a serious violation. Your work should be exclusively the production of your own brain and personal interpretation of a text. Any word, phrase, or idea from another source deserves a citation. ANY assignment which is copied from any source without citation will result in a zero—and should the assignment be the work of another student, both students receive zeroes. Due to the personal nature of literary interpretation, students are not to reference any materials which summarize or offer commentary on literary texts without the express sanction of the instructor.

***IN MORE EXPLICIT TERMS, DO NOT USE CLIFF NOTES, SPARK NOTES, BOOKRAGS, NOVELGUIDE, OR ANY OTHER***

***“STUDY” MATERIAL WHICH FULLY SUMMARIZES OR INTERPRETS A TEXT SO YOUR BRAIN DOESN’T HAVE TO.***

**Assessments and Grades**

Grades in this course are based on the points system. Your grade is reflection of the total number of points you have earned divided by the total number of points possible. For example, if you earn 9 points out of a 10 point reader’s log, you earned a 90% for that assignment. Every class assignment will be given a points value; the more complex the assignment, the higher the points value. Count on 700-1000 points per quarter. The beauty of the points system is twofold: 1) point values can be flexible, and 2) any extra credit goes into the pool with everything else.

Semester 1: Semester 2:

Q1=40% Q3=50%

Q2=40% Q4=50%

Midterm=20%

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Approximate point values: Classwork: 10-25 pts Quizzes: 25-50 pts Projects: 100-200 pts

Homework: 10-25 pts Essays: 50-100 pts Tests: 100-200 pts

**Late Work Policy**: Work is considered late if it is not turned in on time (I believe “duh” is the appropriate response here). **“On time” means that any assignment which is known more than 1 period in advance is expected on that date, regardless of absence** (this means excused or unexcused). For example, poetry explications and vocabulary will be checked every week without fail. Missing the class period prior does not excuse you from that assignment or allow you to turn it in late without penalty. However, man is fallible, so the late work policy is as follows:

* Grade earned is reduced by 10% when the work is turned in at any point after the time it is collected and *8:10 the next morning*.
* Grade earned is reduced by 30% when the work is turned in by the *beginning of the next class period*.
* Grade earned is reduced by 50% when the work is turned in at any point after that, but within the same unit.
* Work turned in AFTER a unit is complete is not scored.
* For weekly vocab and poetry, you will receive ONE opportunity to turn in late work; afterwards, it will be a zero.
* Please be aware there are assignments that will not be accepted late **for any reason**; this includes any group projects or essays/writing assignments that can be emailed.

**Absences:**

In a yearlong course, you are allowed 10 absences before automatically failing the course. THIS INCLUDES EXCUSED ABSENCES. Sickness is usually unplanned, so please be aware of this as you plan college visits, vacations, and other trips. You may ask me about your attendance status before or after school.

This class is heavily weighted toward discussion. Your presence is important! Your thoughts, comments and perspective are valuable and necessary in order for the course to be as meaningful as possible. I consider our classes to be meetings. Just as you would alert anyone else with whom you had a meeting, I will expect that same courtesy from you whenever possible. Please email me as soon as you can to alert me to your absence and so I can provide you with any necessary work.

**Required supplies:**

--a *sewn-binding* composition book for your reader’s journal (you may need more than one)

--a 3-ring binder with dividers—I pass out a lot of materials and you will need to access it quickly

-- highlighters in 5 colors

--a personal copy of any work we read. Participating in *active reading*—writing notes, thoughts, and questions in the margins—is particularly helpful and effective and excellent preparation for college.

**Not required but helpful:**

--*MLA Guide for Writers of Research Papers* by Joseph Gibaldi—all essays are required to be in MLA format. Know it. Love it.

--a literary dictionary, like *The Penguin Dictionary of Literary Terms and Literary Theory*

--a dictionary and a thesaurus

I look forward to an enjoyable and productive year of working with you!