

August 28, 2018

Dear Seniors,

Welcome to the last English class some of you will ever take. I say this not because I'm trying to be snide or I'm mad that the humanities department failed to convert dozens of you into future liberal arts majors. This is a STEM school after all, and I encourage everyone here to follow their genuine interest and aptitude. I'm not bitter. However, I admit that I feel the weight of responsibility in leading a course that I believe is essential to your future success and, perhaps, happiness.

It's comical how many people I've spoken to about teaching English at a STEM school have the exact same reaction. These people, with jobs as project managers, vintners, and doctors, all say the same thing: "Oh yeah. I'm expected to communicate effectively every day. I write all the time. I need to interpret the words, written and spoken, of diverse speakers. I totally see why English is important." I used to brace myself for an argument defending the merits of teaching an English class at a STEM school. Now, I know better: successful people take the skills and knowledge they learned from one place and apply them to their own life. They recognize the connection.

This class strives to develop those skills and knowledge. This class seeks to make the connection. To do this we will be taking intentional, diverse perspectives of the literature we read by practicing literary theory. This connecting thread will follow us throughout the year as we reason, argue, and criticize texts. Because our course is discussion-based, our success requires intellectual engagement and participation. Things don't work unless you're here, physically and mentally.

Personally, I'm looking forward to this year. The slate has been wiped clean and possibilities abound. Before you graduate and move on with your life, I hope you see this as an opportunity to learn and bolster yourself. You might say, "Good riddance to English class" in June, but know this: English class will always be there in the background silently correcting your grammar.

Sincerely,

Mr. Bresnahan

Required Materials

One blank spiral notebook (100 sheets minimum, perforated pages required)

Absences

You are responsible for making up assignments you missed while absent.

Step One: check PowerSchool where daily updates are posted to see what we did in class that day and if homework was assigned

Step Two: catch up with peers about missed content

Step Three: make an office hours appointment if you need help

Due Dates

Students are expected to submit both homework and major assignments on their due date. Students will be supported in meeting deadlines in the following ways:

- Due dates are negotiated for major assignments (essays, projects, tests) with the whole class.
- **Student-initiated** conversations during office hours to explain extenuating circumstances are encouraged. Hint: it is far more effective to negotiate a due date extension **before** it is due than after.
- Students who miss a due date will be given the opportunity to complete the work during supervised office hours.
- Assignments will be accepted until the end of each unit. "Missing" work will convert to a "0" grade after that.

If a student fails to submit major assignments on time, there will be escalating consequences that follow the below sequence:

- The assignment will be recorded as "missing" in the gradebook.
- Contact home is made.
- The student will attend office hours to finish the assignment.
- The student will meet with the school counselor to determine the source of the problem and develop a plan to address the situation.
- For reporting purposes, there will be firm cutoff dates to evaluate student work. **If work is not submitted by these due dates, Skyward may indicate "incomplete" to reflect insufficient assessment evidence exists to make a fair evaluation of student performance. Students may receive an "NC" based on insufficient assessment evidence.**

Grading

100-90 = A, 89-87 = B+, 86-84 = B, 83-80 = B-, 79-77 = C+, 76-74 = C, 73-70 = C-,
69 and below = NC (no credit)

Office Hours

Take advantage of office hours! Appointments will be given priority over drop-ins. This is your opportunity to get individual help, ask questions, and stretch your intellectual muscles. **Monday-Friday: 6:50-7:30 AM; Monday-Thursday 2:20-2:50 PM**

Quarter	Primary Text	Supporting Texts	Skills and Concepts	Summative Assessments
1	<i>Into the Wild</i> by Jon Krakauer	<p><i>Critical Theory Today</i> by Lois Tyson</p> <p>Essays and excerpts by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Jay-Z • David Sedaris • Annie Leibovitz • Bob Dylan • Lena Dunham 	<p>Develop “voice” within a personal narrative</p> <p>Apply reader response critical theory to a variety of texts</p> <p>Investigate the effects of isolation and reinvention via literature and current events</p>	<p>*Reader Response Test</p> <p>*Personal Narrative (College Essay)</p> <p>*Literary Debate</p>
2	<i>Pride and Prejudice</i> by Jane Austen	<p><i>Dear Ijeawele, or a Feminist Manifesto in Fifteen Suggestions</i> by Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie</p> <p>Visual media</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PBS NewsHour • <i>Bride and Prejudice</i> 	<p>Investigate the role of social and economic forces in society via literature and current events</p> <p>Demonstrate a high level of understanding and critical thinking via public speaking</p>	<p>*Marxist Criticism Essay</p> <p>*Literary Lecture Series Final</p>
3	<i>Hamlet</i> by William Shakespeare	Kenneth Branagh’s 1996 version of <i>Hamlet</i> , plus additional film productions	<p>Apply diverse critical theories to <i>Hamlet</i></p> <p>Develop and strengthen production as needed by planning, revising, editing, re-writing, or trying a new approach. Trust the process.</p>	*Multi-draft film project applying critical theory (psychoanalytic, feminist, New Criticism)
4	Popular culture and critical theory: selections from music, film, television, podcasts, etc.		Finish strong. Start strong.	<p>*Individual Self-guided Project</p> <p>*Graduation Materials Production</p>