

American Literature and Composition / Mr. Williams / 2016-2017

Welcome to American Literature and Composition. This is a class that will challenge you to develop close reading skills, as well as to enhance the sophistication level of your present writing skills. In addition, each student must prepare him/herself to consistently strive for a high level of critical thinking when discussing various literary works.

Daily Supplies: Two number 2 pencils, two pens (blue or black ink), and a notebook /binder with loose-leaf paper (no spirals). The notebook/binder is for taking notes, to keep handouts and to file returned assignments. Also, assigned readings/handouts must be brought to class every day unless otherwise noted (be prepared when the bell rings).

I firmly believe every student can be successful in my classroom. In fact, I expect every student will be successful in my classroom. In order to help each individual learner in American Literature and Composition achieve this goal, I plan to implement the following:

- A positive learning environment where students feel comfortable to take risks in improving their reading, composition, communicating, and thinking.
- Instructing primarily from a student-centered approach to learning; this includes inquiry-based research, academic group work, projects, etc.
- The use of differentiated forms of assessment in my classroom.
- Creating an environment that is fair, where students feel comfortable approaching the instructor with any questions regarding the learning processes of this class.
- Developing a solid foundation of skills for students to build upon and apply in future high-level English classes.

While I believe the implementation of the above procedures will greatly assist you in achieving success, there are other factors that you are responsible for that are equally important:

- Students will abide by the district attendance policy. In addition, three tardies to class result in a detention with the instructor that must be served before/after school within two days. Also, other unexcused absences include any that are not validated by a parent/guardian or those that have not been prearranged with the instructor.
- As a general rule, homework is due at the beginning of class the next day unless otherwise specified by the instructor. This is especially true with all reading assignments (quizzes, etc.). I believe this is the best path to consistent success in the classroom. Additionally, late work is not the preferred policy of the classroom; if the student is/was legally absent on the day of a homework assignment, he/she must make prompt arrangements with the instructor to complete the task in a timely manner. Also, in other cases, I will make each decision on late work acceptability based on plausible extenuating circumstances presented by the individual student.
- As an addendum to the stated homework expectations, the standard make up time for an excused absence in the classroom follows district guidelines: no more than twice the number of days of the excused absence; however, students should strive to complete/turn in all major projects by the established deadline date.
- Plagiarism is cheating and constitutes an automatic grade of “0” on the assignment(s).

Other basics:

- ☯ Rule #1: We respect the learning environment in this course.
- ☯ No homework from other classes is permitted.
- ☯ Please do not use your phone, tablet computers or other electronic devices in this class, except for approved academic tasks. This includes music, unless permission is granted by me.
- ☯ No coats in the classroom.
- ☯ Hats are not allowed in the school hallways during the regular school day; needless to say, they are not allowed in this classroom. Additionally, no other head coverings are permitted, unless specifically approved by administration.
- ☯ No food or drink in the classroom.
- ☯ Please do not write on my desks.
- ☯ This course will require a significant amount of close reading both in class and as homework.
- ☯ When required, it is an expectation students shall make every effort to complete their papers and homework assignments on a computer or an alternative acceptable technology (PCs are available for student use in the school's media center or computer labs). There will be a number of exceptions to this rule, but I will let you know when this is applicable.

Grading: Grades will be calculated according to the number of points accumulated for each quarter grade. The two-quarter grades will be averaged in conjunction with the midterm or final exam to determine the grade at the end of the semester.

The majority of the student's grade will be assessed through various class work, homework, quizzes, project scores, and tests.

- ❑ Expect unannounced quizzes to ascertain whether readings have been completed and/or interpretive critical thinking is taking place.
- ❑ Expect vocabulary quizzes that are ancillary to your regular work in this course.
- ❑ Expect journaling exercises on a regular basis.
- ❑ Expect in-class, timed "blue book" impromptu on course content that will require preparation on your part before the assessment is administered.
- ❑ Expect inquiry-based assignments/learning both in the classroom and at home.
- ❑ Expect skill-building assessments that include multiple-choice passages and written compositions/essays/impromptu over the course of the school year. This is designed to prepare students for the SAT/ACT/Michigan Merit Exam.
- ❑ Expect both minor and major projects that will entail precision and hard work.
- ❑ Expect composition assessments that require close reading, thinking, and writing /typing at home.

- ❑ Annotating assignments (at home and during class discussion) on a consistent basis is an excellent step toward the goal of high achievement.
- ❑ Participation is expected and results in extra credit if practiced consistently.

Note 1: Each graded assignment receives an individual denominator value (e.g. – 10 points, 25 points, etc.). The denominator value is various. For instance, a content reading quiz may be worth 10 points, while a project may be worth 50 points. All denominator values are then added together. The student's overall numerator is then divided by the overall denominator to determine the grade range.

Note 2: Some teachers establish a baseline for minimum points on an assignment, irrespective of whether the assignment was submitted or not. With my courses, all students receive 40 percent of the points even if the assignment was not submitted. As an example, if a student receives 8 points (40%) on a 20 point assignment, this means the assignment was either never submitted or the student actually earned between 0 and 39% on the assessment. I believe using this baseline system helps to promote an overall positive and respectful learning environment for students; however, if you see less than 40 percent on any assignment (e.g. – 0 to 39%), this means in addition to obtaining an original low grade, a student's daily conduct is having a negative impact upon the learning environment (e.g. – disruptive, sleeping in class, etc.). Therefore, the actual percentage (below 40) that a student originally earned is assigned in Pinnacle.

<u>Grade</u>	<u>Percentage</u>
A+, A, and A-	89.50-100.0
B+, B, and B-	79.50-89.49
C+, C, and C-	69.50-79.49
D+, D, and D-	59.50-69.49
E	0-59.49

(Your Signature)

(Date)

As a final thought, let me reiterate once again I will do everything I can to make sure you are successful in this class. I'm excited to have each of you as a student and expect we will have a great year together.