AP English, Language and Composition

SYLLABUS

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*Welcome!*

**Endings, Beginnings, and Your Story**

Who are you? What is your story as you journey through one ending to a new beginning?

Remind yourself. Nobody built like you, you design yourself... - Jay-Z, “A Dream”

I know several lives worth living. - Mary Oliver, “Humpbacks”

If you don’t know the kind of person I am

and I don’t know the kind of person you are

a pattern that others made may prevail upon the world

and following the wrong god home we may miss our star. - William Stafford

You are at the beginning of one ending in your life. Who are you as you journey through your senior year? What do you care about? How do you interact with those who are seemingly different from you? What do you bring with you from your family, friends, and culture? Who and what are you in tension with? When you leave Westminster, what other narratives (people, music, film, books, ideas) will travel with you?

This is a course about recognizing and developing YOUR own story (what you value, what matters to you) while simultaneously being aware of the stories of others and how you interact with these narratives.

**Primary texts**

Danticat, Edwidge. *Brother, I’m Dying.*

Douglass, Frederick. *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass.*

Eggers, Dave. *Zeitoun.*

Hurston, Zora Neale. *Their Eyes Were Watching God.*

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

Krakauer, Jon. *Into the Wild.*

McCarthy, Cormac. *All the Pretty Horses.*

Nichols, Mike (prod.). *The Graduate.*

Oliver, Mary. *American Primitive.*

Thoreau, Henry David. *Walden.*

Wilson, August. *Piano Lesson.*

In addition, you will read short creative nonfiction and stories throughout the semester related to the longer works. These shorter works are intended to further expand the diversity of authors and content. You will also watch spoken word and slam poetry (primarily through VH1’s *Def Poetry Jam* and HBO’s *Brave New Voices*), as well as shorter films, to complement your readings. These pieces will appear digitally on the class wiki.

**Materials for class**

Text

Notebook or binder dedicated to English

Folder in which to keep handouts, freewrites, and returned work, all of which should be saved

and brought daily. Handouts will be kept to a minimum. However, it is vital that you

always have access to your writing, as your writing assignments often draw from

previous process writing.

**Schedule**

Semester I

*Beginning the semester: writing, reading, and discussion community groundwork*

The Graduate*; substantial clips from* Monsoon Wedding*;* Eat Drink Man Woman; Boyz in Da

Hood*; and* Mooslum

*Short analytical paper involving film terms*

*Short memoir piece (triptych)*

Into the Wild/American Primitive/Walden

*Short memoir piece using other genres*

Their Eyes Were Watching God*/Frederick Douglass’* Narrative*/selections from W.E.B. DuBois,*

*Alice Walker, and David Crews*

*In-class essay incorporating pieces of nonfiction and fiction*

The Piano Lesson*/accompanying worksongs, blues pieces, artifact analysis, and slam/spoken*

*word poetry*

*Creative slam piece, poem, or song*

*Personal photo essay weaving image, photo, and music*

*Exam: film analysis and DBQ-esque writing (we will practice for this AP essay question type)*

Semester II

*All the Pretty Horses*

*One Flew Over the Cuckoo’s Nest*

*Brother, I’m Dying*

*Zeitoun/selections from William Stafford*

*Final Project/Digital Portfolio*

**Course assessments**

30%

Homework and reading quizzes: freewriting, careful reading, reading journals, announced and

unannounced reading checks

20%

Participation: freewriting, reading aloud, responding thoughtfully to the writing of others,

listening, talking with an awareness of others, using the wiki effectively and respectively

50%

Major writing assignments

Creative writing: writing and revising creative nonfiction and poetry

Analytical writing: in-class and short out-of-class analytical essays, all of which will

examine textual elements in terms of a thesis. Analytical papers will also weave in personal story.

**Writing philosophy**

I believe in process, meaning that you should have the opportunity to freewrite, draft, revise, and receive lots of feedback before receiving a grade on your writing. You will always be able to revise for a higher grade. I will never simply assign you a paper; instead, I will work with you in class to brainstorm and draft your essays and creative pieces. I will model and teach how to do timed writing and how to craft a strong essay. You will have ample opportunity to practice throughout the given semester to prepare for your first semester exam and your second-semester project.

**Some final comments**

Please be aware that I don’t accept late homework; missing homework receives a zero. Homework is posted on the class wiki every night.

All papers are due at the beginning of class, unless otherwise noted. Make sure that you have access to a working printer prior to deadlines. Don’t email me your paper. Papers are docked 10 points for each day they are late.

On the other hand, please get in touch with me via phone or email BEFORE class if at all possible to let me know of unusual circumstances that may affect your completion of an assignment. I am understanding and will be accommodating.