

**Teacher: Andy West**

**Course Description/Overview:**

This course examines American Literature including pieces from a variety of time periods and from a diversity of voices. Students study major writers and their works by drawing connections and extending understanding from the text to themselves and the world. Through collaborative and strategic processes, students explore themes and issues related to American identity. Students will analyze readings and then compose responses through discussion, activities and written and oral expression. The course is designed to help students develop critical thinking skills, view reading and writing as meaningful processes, understand the importance of discussion in academic and social communities, and take control of their literacy development.

**Common Major Units and Themes:**

Quarter 1 - Who controls the story?  
Quarter 2 - What are the American Myths?  
Quarter 3 - How have the American cultures shaped me?  
Quarter 4 - How will I participate in these cultures?

**Learning Goals and Objectives:** *Students will...*

- Better understand themselves and their world through literature
- Develop their intellectual and emotional enjoyment of great art, especially literature
- Understand that major contributions to the body of American literature have been made by diverse authors. They will recognize that a literary work may reflect the author's background, the milieu in which they live, and the audience for which they write.
- Identify and discuss, with specific references, the common values and themes expressed in the body of American literature.
- Demonstrate their ability to analyze a literary work and the ability to synthesize aspects of several works, making connections regarding theme, style, and/or structure.
- Produce increasingly complex expository, persuasive and narrative writings.
- Demonstrate the ability to develop an original claim about a text and support that claim with specific textual evidence.
- Demonstrate proficiency with Standard English prose as per department writing rubrics. (establishing **claims**, **developing** claims with evidence, utilizing **cohesion**, crafting impactful **introductions and conclusions**, using appropriate **style and conventions**).
- Demonstrate an ability to think critically about philosophical, cultural, religious, political, economic, and social issues.

**Required materials:** I ask students to have these with you at all times:

1. a notebook for class notes, journal writing, essay brainstorming, etc
2. a folder for storing class handouts, returned work (useful in preparing for tests and exams)
3. the book we are currently reading at any given point

**Class policies, procedures, and expectations:**

1. **Please be responsible** for yourself and for your learning. Please don't make excuses.
2. **Please respect** yourself, your classmates, your learning, the curriculum, our room, and me.
3. **Please focus primarily on learning** and not primarily on grades.

4. **Plagiarism** is the use of words or ideas that are not your own and failing to cite their original source. Changing the words around or rewriting something in your own words and style, based on something you have read or are reading online is still plagiarism if you don't cite the sources. Please do not plagiarize. Please do not plagiarize and then say that you did not know that what you were doing was plagiarism. When in doubt, include a citation. If you're still in doubt, ask me. If it means that your essay is a day late because you needed to clarify with me how to handle sources, even those indirectly consulted, I will not count the essay as late. The penalty for plagiarism is a 0 for that assignment.
5. **Late Policy:** you lose 10% of the earned credit for each school day that the assignment is late. After 5 days, the most you can earn is 50% credit of, again, the earned grade (so, 50% of a B = 42.5%). For an excused absence: you have two school days to make up any missed work. Thereafter, the unexcused late policy above applies. All school days count, regardless if you have our class that day. I reserve the right to suspend the late penalty, at my own professional discretion, in individual cases.
6. **Extra handouts** are stored in the drawers in the classroom. Many important documents are also posted on my school webpage. If the drawers are empty, and it's not online, please photocopy a friend's.
7. **Rewrites of papers:** when the actual learning will justify the extra time and effort, you may rewrite a major essay for up to one letter grade improvement. Rewrites must change the substance of the paper not just the editing. Please get rewrites approved beforehand. Don't simply rewrite for more points. If you want more points, come up with something more productive to do for extra points.
8. **Extra Credit:** I do not offer extra credit. Sometimes, however, an interesting tangent comes up in class. If you want extra credit, suggest to me a project or additional assignment and we will negotiate how many extra points you can earn. Extra credit must be initiated by the student. You cannot complete major extra credit at the end of a semester.
9. **Phones:** are a distraction to class. Even if just on your desk or in your lap, your phone commands your attention and disengages you. I am absolutely sure that phone use in and around class is inversely proportional with learning (*and, sometimes, grades*). Plus, it's rude. Please turn it off and put it away. Thanks!
10. **Please don't share information, either electronically or personally, about homework, quizzes, tests, etc.** that you have already taken / completed and which your friend has not. I consider this cheating.

## Grading Policies:

### Underlying Grading Principles:

1. grades are a means and not simply an end
2. students should be able to **earn** whatever grade they desire
3. students, parents, and the teacher should focus on learning first and grades second

**Points:** Grades will calculate on a straight points system, with individual point totals based on the importance of the assignment. In general, a homework assignment might be worth 20 points, a test might be worth 80, and an essay might be worth 100. The class will tend toward several large assignments worth more points rather than many smaller assignments worth fewer. There are not 'categories for grades in the gradebook. Not all assignments receive points.

I grade essays with letter grades. These letters will convert to points in the gradebook as follows:

A = 95-99% A- = 90-94% B+ = 87-89% B = 84-87% B- = 80-83% C+ = 77-79% C = 74-76% C- = 70-73%.

--I give frequent 3 point little reading quizzes. It's not many points but they can have a big impact on your grade. You have to do the reading in this class; the reading is the hub around which everything else in class revolves.

--All my classes' grades (assignment lists, due dates, your scores on those assignments, your overall grade, etc) are available on the school's PASS webpage. You will need your student ID number a pre-set password to access this info.

### **Review and tips for success:**

1. Please be responsible for yourself and your learning. Be active rather than passive. Please don't make excuses.
2. Please complete all the reading homework by its deadline. If you have a busy week coming up, get ahead this weekend!
3. Missing assignments are most often the source of low grades in my classes. Because grades are calculated on straight points, a little 10-point assignment, when the whole semester has 1000 points, still translates into 1% OVERALL! You will struggle to earn an A or B if you have multiple zeroes in the gradebook, especially a missing essay.
4. I will give partial credit for a partially completed writing assignment, so **turn it in**—even if it's unfinished or not up to your standards. Sometimes a student says that they are not 'finished' or are not happy with a partially completed writing assignment, and then they end up never turning anything in and earning a zero. It is much better to turn in the partially completed work and then move on. I promise that I won't 'judge' you for that, but rather will respect your mature judgment in getting at least a part completed.
5. Students who develop a personal discussion with me about their writing are the ones who develop the most and are ultimately the most satisfied with their writing.
6. Make our activities meaningful to yourself; don't waste time! If something's *boring*, say so (respectfully) and then immediately offer a new idea. I love student input and suggestions. I love student ownership of their learning. To say something's boring and then sit back, cross your arms and leave it at that is unacceptable.
7. I believe that in most cases (but not all) any student can get about any grade they desire. At the same time, the responsibility for *earning* that grade is yours and not mine.

**Final Note:** I love literature. For real. I love conversation and engagement—they're probably my main teaching strategies. I will work hard to make class fun, funny, rigorous, serious, academic, mature, colorful, intellectual, artistic, musical, and not often boring. I ask you to please bring your full personality and interests to our class. Be real. I love it when a student brings something to share, starts class with a comment that opens a random conversation, or says "I don't think that's true," or says "I've got a better idea. How about we..." I structure class based chiefly on the idea that I am not the most important part of your educational experience. You are!

### **Contact Information:**

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web site: <http://www.wlhs.wlww.k12.or.us/Page/3718> Close to all handouts, assignments, schedules, and homework are linked to the pages of my school web site