

Teacher: Andy West**Course Description/Overview:**

This course examines American Literature including pieces from a variety of time periods and 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 / Semester 1 – What, if anything, is universal in American experience? How have I been shaped by America's cultures?

Quarter 3 / Semester 2- How will I participate in the American cultures?

Year-long Writing Target: Moving beyond the "5-Paragraph Essay Format" essay

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

- Seek to understand themselves and our world through literature
- Develop the intellectual and emotional enjoyment of literature
- Understand the major contributions to the body of American literature made by diverse authors, of diverse backgrounds and identities
- Demonstrate the ability to analyze a literary work and the ability to synthesize aspects of different works, making connections regarding theme, style, and/or structure.
- Produce 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.

Class Expectations:

1. **Be patient and tolerant during this unprecedented pandemic and unprecedented distance learning model.** While it is true that teachers and students are both always 'learners,' it is especially true this year. The content of our course is substantially changed, and the means of engaging that content are unlike anything any of us have experienced before. I the teacher will be patient and tolerant of student needs and experiences, and I ask that students extend the same courtesy to me.
2. **Please focus on *learning* first and *grades* second; please *own* your learning.** What do I mean? I mean, take the responsibility to make the most of our class activities. Don't do

things just for points or just for a grade. Do them in good faith, with the goal of **learning**, in the 'Language Arts' (reading, writing, speaking, and listening). This is going to be especially true this school year, as it is harder for me to monitor each student's progress, and interact with each student individually, from a distance. Instead of asking yourself, how can I do the least amount of work possible, please be more mature and instead ask yourself, *how can I get the most out of this activity?*

I believe that grades and learning are *not* the same things. Grades are a measure of work quality and certain behaviors. *Learning* is the development and acquisition of skills and knowledge. Learning is growth and increased independence. I believe that if a student focuses on learning, the grade naturally follows. If a student focuses on the grade, learning does not always follow, or sometimes it is about playing a system or performing a certain way. Instead, I ask you to focus on *learning*. This is one way that I ask you to take 'ownership' of your learning.

3. Please **respect yourself, your classmates, our room, the curriculum, and me**. This is going to be especially true in distance learning in general, and in Zoom meetings in particular.
4. **Zoom Protocols:**
 - Zoom is a relatively new classroom meeting platform; in many ways, the rules for etiquette in an on-site classroom also apply in a Zoom setting:
 - Please be respectful of your classmates and me the teacher
 - Please listen attentively to others' points of view
 - Please participate and do not impede a lesson and or others' learning
 - Additionally, Digital Zoom meetings do have some other expectations for appropriate behavior and etiquette:
 - Please mute your microphone when you are not talking
 - In some cases it will make more sense to leave your camera on; in other cases, it will make more sense to turn it off; this will be a topic we will 'learn into'
 - Please use the 'raise your hand' feature when you want to add a comment or question
 - Please be mindful of what is in the background of your camera; consider using a 'virtual background'
 - Please be mindful of your appearance, gestures, clothing, and, perhaps, pets
 - Your goal should be to be an active, productive class participant and not a distraction, hindrance or intentionally or unintentionally antagonistic or disruptive class member; in those cases, I may take action to mitigate any negative impacts on the learning environment
 - Please don't simultaneously text / communicate with a classmate(s) about the goings on in class, while they are going on; observers (including me) can see this—and it's just rude
 - If and when we use "breakout sessions, please behave in respectful and productive ways; failure to do so may result in disciplinary action
 - I plan to sometimes 'cold call' on students during zoom meetings; please be engaged so that you are ready and able to respond in real time [you will have the opportunity to (privately) communicate with me about this policy]
 - I will not record a zoom session unless I have made clear to all students that I am about to do so; in those cases, students will have the option of turning off their cameras and participating in voice only

- I will not 'post' any recording unless I have made clear to all students that I am about to do so; if I were to do so, I would take steps to minimize student presence in that recording, and keep it chiefly focused on me, the teacher
 - I may record 'breakout sessions in order to monitor student interaction, but I will neither share nor post that recording with anyone (unless with an administrator of the school if there is inappropriate behavior)
 - What else should we add to this Zoom protocol list? ...
5. **Phones:** are a distraction during class. Plus, being on one during class is rude. Please turn them off and put them away. Thanks!
 6. **Synergy:** gradebook and attendance and communication... um... Well, let's see--
 7. **Don't plagiarize.** The penalty for plagiarism is a zero for the assignment. No exceptions. What is plagiarism, exactly? Well, it's easy to learn online...

<https://guides.library.ucmo.edu/c.php?g=141935&p=929106>

8. **Absences and the late policy:**

for an excused absence: you have two school days to make up any missed work. Thereafter, the unexcused late policy applies. This is the same as the school-wide policy. If you have an extended absence, we will work together to make up any missing work once you've recovered.

for an unexcused absence or unexcused late work: I will deduct 10% of the *earned* grade for each day an assignment is late, up to 5 days or 50%. I count each day that school is in session as a "day" regardless of whether your class met that day or not.

9. **Deadline extension policy:** our ultimate goals are quality work and maximum learning. If you need extra time for an assignment, talk to me **before** the due date. I'm usually flexible. I'd prefer you took an extra day or two and did something quality rather than rushed. I should say, however, that 11pm, or 2am the night before it's due is probably too late to just send me an email.
10. **"I-had-a-thing-going-on-back-then" make-up policy:** I try to assign a minimum of "busy work." Assignments that I ask you to complete are directly linked to other on-going objectives, themes, and reading assignments. If you ask to complete an assignment weeks after it originally occurred, it does indeed become "busy work." So let's not do that.

But I also know that sometimes a student can get in a jam. In that case, make a suggestion to me. Send me an email, for example, and say, "Mr. West, I'm missing this thing from a month ago, and was hoping to get partial credit for it by doing this other thing I just thought up, which is actually pretty connected to what we're studying right now..." If *you* take the initiative, I'm happy to make it work. By the way, the same goes for **extra credit**. I don't offer extra credit exactly, but if *you* have an idea, run it by me. We can make it work. [Please note that these policies are really just elaborations on Policy #2 above: please focus on learning not grades, and own your learning.

11. **using the internet for ideas of what to write about:** using the internet for ideas of what to write about borders on plagiarism and actually prevents you from ever learning how to come up with ideas on your own. Yeah, sure, some web site might have a “better” idea about that motif than you do, but when you use that web site, you never practice the skills to develop your own ideas. You reduce yourself to a repeater, not a free, independent, critical thinker. I believe that this is where many student writing problems begin.

Grading policies/practices:

- Please remember that grades are a means and not an ends; please remember to focus on learning first and grades second
- Please do not think that the teacher must read and / or provide feedback on any and all work in order to make it ‘worthwhile.’ Our goal is learning. Sometimes a great deal can be learned from an assignment without necessarily received feedback on it.
- I will strive for assignments worth more points rather than fewer; in general, an assignment’s worth will be somewhat analogous with how many minutes the assignment probably took—for example, a 15-minute assignment will be worth something like 15 points; an essay might be worth something more like 150 points (that’s 2.5 hours of work)
- Some assignments will be for ‘credit’—if you complete it, completely and in good faith, you will earn full credit
- Other assignments will be graded using an A (98%), B (86%) or C (76%); in general, I do not grade work with D’s or F’s—if there is a significant issue with work, I will instead communicate directly with you (email, digital feedback) and help you to get the issue resolved so you can earn a fuller grade
- I will calculate grades with the following ‘weights’:
 - 40% Classwork (small assignments, study questions, homework, etc)
 - 30% Essays
 - 30% Assessments (quizzes, tests, reflections, and presentations)
- I’m sure that there’s something I’ve left out here.....

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

Supplies for the course:

1. a **notebook** for note-taking and/or for journaling activities
2. the **text** we are currently reading at the time
3. **organization skills** for the google classroom and communications

Final word: While we face unprecedented challenges this year, junior year American Lit is the best year of high school English. And English, of course, is the best subject. I am committed to making it your best year of English yet, and I hope you’re gonna love it!