

American Literature 2011-2012

Course Description:

We will be asking the question: “What does it mean to be an American?” of the texts we read and of ourselves. We will dig deep to discover for ourselves the authors’ truths about the American arguments (see below regarding Howard Fineman’s book *The Thirteen American Arguments: Enduring Debates That Define and Inspire Our Country*.) We will read American literature in a roughly chronological sequence, though we may digress to seek and make connections among the various periods. Learners will engage in close readings and rigorous discussions in order to respond with creative pieces, analyses and interpretations. We will work with new technologies and publish widely as often as possible. Learners are expected to complete all reading prior to class meetings, to complete all writing assignments when due, and to fully participate in class discussions, contributing in a positive manner.

Course Goals: The main goal for this class is for learners to develop their critical reading abilities in order to make decisions about their place as young adults in the United States. See attached for individual grade level goals.

See also http://www.cde.state.co.us/cdeassess/UAS/Standards_Reference_System.html

Learning Relationship: Educator

Learning Setting: Small group

Learning Resources: *Elements of Literature* (Holt, Rinehart, ISBN 9780030672835); I purchased the best quality/affordable price combination on both Amazon and abebooks. I can rent them for \$8.00, or if you want one to keep, try the online sources. You will also need to purchase *The Thirteen American Arguments: Enduring Debates That Define and Inspire Our Country* as we will refer to Fineman’s framing of the arguments and annotate his text. We will read trade paperbacks, and if you can purchase them you will be able to annotate there as well. We will read *Last of the Mohicans*, *To Kill a Mockingbird*, and at least four others selected by the class (see potential titles handout).

Learner Actions: Learners will use journal-writing to reflect upon their thinking, to try out more sophisticated writing, and to plan their work. Learners will study grammar, usage, and mechanics both as part of their editing and revising processes and as independent topics as needed. Learners will study vocabulary weekly. Learners will compose formal essays with tightly constructed paragraphs serving a variety of purposes (such as compare-contrast, explain, describe, persuade, instruct, summarize, etc.), revise their essays for content, organization and mechanics, usage, and grammar, and edit for final submission. Learners will respond to reading or discussion topic with whimsical, creative pieces regularly. The learner is expected to work on class assignments both in class and as homework. There will be daily reading assignments to complete outside of class. Learners are expected to complete their writing assignments at home and bring the completed work back to class when it is due. Performance expectations include completing all written assignments by their due dates, completing all reading assignments on time in order to discuss them in class, and demonstrating progress in the body of knowledge for the course.

Course Assessment: Learner progress will be measured by performance on assignments, quizzes, and tests. I will use holistic scoring rubrics for assessing writing, will observe skill development in class, and will ask the learner to self-evaluate frequently.

•Assignments: Many learners do well with feedback on assignments, which is my preferred method. Grades will be based upon timely completion (a simple yes or no to both aspects—on time and complete). When necessary, assignments will be scored.

•Quizzes on literary terminology occur regularly.

•Each semester will end with a final exam or equivalent.

I believe that daily work (including regular quizzes with which learners quickly become familiar) is a better indicator of growth than high-pressure tests, so the final exam and other necessary exams will count for very little in the course grade.

The course will use a letter grade system A-F which will take into account learner preparation, class participation, assignment completion, quizzes, tests, writing progress, projects, journal-writing and final exam. Each semester is graded separately.

For learners in grade 9 or higher, ½ credit will be assigned each semester a passing grade (70% or better) is achieved.

Class Schedule and Location:

The class meets Monday through Wednesday from 8:30 a.m. until 9:25 a.m. following the Delta County school calendar. The instructor will notify learners in advance of classes that have to be cancelled, which will be limited to unavoidable circumstances. Learners are expected to notify the instructor of absences prior to the class meeting.

Financial Matters:

The course, as part of the coordinated schedule, costs \$250 per semester per learner or \$200 when five or more learners enroll. Learners will be billed for the semester in October. (Spring Semester: February)

Melinda Merriam

August 30, 2011

I certify that I have read and understand the syllabus for my English class and that I am able and willing to complete all the work required on time.

LEARNER

DATE

I certify that my child understands the course requirements and is capable of completing all work required on time.

PARENT

DATE

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