English 151 - AP English Literature and Composition: 2014-15 Course Syllabus[1]

Avon Grove High School's AP English Literature and Composition course will focus on the intensive reading of works of recognized literary merit at the college level, and is designed to comply with the curricular requirements described in the College Board's *AP English Course Description*. In this class, we will attempt to understand the ways in which writers use language to provide meaning by critically reading selected texts, thoughtfully discussing these works in class, and exploring the wide variety of texts we encounter through writing assignments, as follows:

🕮 Reading in AP English

"Read the best books first, or you may not have a chance to read them at all." -Thoreau

The most important requirement for this course is that you read every assignment—read it with care and read it on time. I've chosen literature that you'll hopefully enjoy **or** at the very least receive intellectual stimulation from. We'll attempt to move past the canon into the 21st Century, but classics are classics for a reason! (Good ol' *Macbeth*…) As this is a college-level course, you may encounter some material that may be deemed controversial. Please treat this material objectively and with maturity, and see me with any personal concerns you may have regarding this matter.

- **Short Stories**. Digestible gems of words will be taken from your brand new *Bedford* book and also photocopied from various tomes of short story collections. My favorite to read, my favorite to teach.
- **Poetry**. Mostly from the *Bedford*, which is organized by what the poems are known best for—rhythm, form, sound, diction, tone, symbol, and so on. Poetry Thursdays! AND a Poetry discussion leadership unit in the Winter/Spring.
- **Novels**. We will revisit the summer reading title *Crime and Punishment* right after we familiarize ourselves with some AP Lit skills (using the New Critical lens), and applying Foster's advice from *HTRLLAP* throughout the year. Others include *The Amazing Adventures of Kavalier and Clay, Grendel,* and a selection of dystopian title choices for literature circles to accompany *The Handmaid's Tale.* (Including: Ishiguro, Huxley, Orwell, William Gibson, and Atwood's *MaadAdaaM* trilogy).
- **Plays**. *Macbeth*, *A Doll's House*, *Doubt*, and *A Raisin in the Sun.* Field Trip, hopefully.
- **Films**. There is a difference between films and movies, and we'll only occasionally supplement the literature by viewing segments of films such as Hitchcock's *Rope*, and following the AP Exam, we'll decide on either Cunningham's *The Hours* or Woody Allen's *Midnight in Paris*.
- **Expository Prose**. Articles to supplement our reading, informational chapters of *The Bedford*, etc.
- **Independent Reading**. In addition to the readings we'll be doing in class, you are expected to add "works of literary merit" to your existing reading repertoire, at least one per academic quarter. I suggest reading the titles that interest you, and if you'd rather read more books than needed, do yourself a favor and do so. Also, the 'dead white male' canon is becoming a thing of the near-past, so if you would like to choose a modern work not appearing on the suggested list, go for it, but clear the title with me before you do so. You may not read titles we formally discuss in class for fulfillment of independent reading requirements. This is your responsibility, and extremely importance to your success in AP Lit—if and when I remind you of Independent Reading deadlines, do not be stunned. Read steadily instead of cramming a book/play in a weekend or night, y'know? One analytical essay on your chosen independent reading selection will be composed in class around the end of each quarter. **SSR Fridays when we have time. Wuhoo!**

[1] I apologize that this syllabus is so hefty, but much of it was used for the AP Course Audit—some things are boring and bureaucratic, included simply to appease the folks from the College Board. The good news is that you're sitting in an authentic, certified AP© classroom !

🕮 Writing in AP English

- ***Writing to Observe***- Identification of literary works' textual details: Writing techniques employed by authors (structure, style, tone, incorporation of themes), use of literary devices (figurative language, allusions, characterization, etc.), and examining the social and historical ideologies influencing the literature.
- ***Writing to Explain***- Interpretation of the meanings of the texts we encounter, with specific reference to textual details to support these interpretations, and occasional use of outside sources to validate these interpretations.
- ***Writing to Evaluate***- Analytical essays that specifically refer to the text at hand will consist of both timed in-class writing and longer out-of-class writing assignments.
    - Regular in-class prompt essays, 40 minutes each. Neatly handwritten; readability is important! Get into the habit of writing by hand and then transferring to a word processing program for longer assignments to develop fluidity in your writing and fully connect the wires from your brain to your pen.
    - Formal analytical essays on summer reading choice titles, to be turned in on the second day of school for peer and teacher revision
- ***Writing to Explore***- In-class journals, independent reading journals (dialectic notebooks,) various creative responses, and reflective personal writing throughout the year.
- ***Portfolios*** - to collect all of the writings you do for this class! You will need to keep a log of positive and negative responses to your papers to improve your writing. These will have some girth to them by May…
- ***Writing Process***- Peer editing, opportunities for revision, and teacher conferencing will occur at selected times throughout the year. However, the AP exam contains timed essays, so keep this in consideration.
- ***Writing Assessment***- Will be based on the guidelines provided for each assignment. Additionally, all writing is expected to contain the following default elements:
    - Effective word choice, utilizing a wide-ranging vocabulary
    - Inventive sentence structure that is interesting to read and stylistically sound
    - Appropriate organization of ideas, thesis-driven coherence, and a subtle use of transitions between well-developed paragraphs
    - Use of specific, illustrative detail to support analytical assertions, and minimal summary of text
    - A thesis statement, underlined in each paper, will allow me to comment on how well your writing achieves its purpose
    - Identification of the Meaning of the Work as a Whole (hereafter referred to as the MotWaW) should be in each essay. You'll be sick of hearing me talk about this.

  A prerequisite to this course was a high-level writing ability, and for this reason all papers must be free from careless errors such as confusion of their/there, tense shifting, subject-verb agreement, and so on. My number one pet peeve is improper title formatting (?). Excerpts from your papers will be taken to create "Things to Work On" lessons, in order to address recurring issues with student writing (anonymously.) Also, commendable papers (or sentences pulled from these) will be run off to use as paradigms. We will be selecting Focus Correction Areas (FCA's) based on individual skills that are introduced or discussed in class as well as areas needing improvement. Some FCA's will be for everyone, and some will be chosen by students—'I'd like you to look at [*this*] when grading my paper.'

  Essays will be graded on a 1-9 scale to simulate the rubric used in grading the AP Lit. Exam:
    - 9 – A+
    - 8 – A / A -
    - 7 – B+
    - 6 – B / B-
    - 5 – C
    - 4 – C-
    - 3, 2, 1… don't get a 3, 2, or 1

🕮 Participation in AP English

✓ **Engagement and Participation is Essential in AP English.** Good literature requires interpretation from the reader, and different insights on texts need to be expressed in class. A collaborative learning environment is the key to success and enjoyment of the class, so <u>everyone is required to participate, and will be graded on participation.</u> This assessment will happen during class seminar periods, as well as cumulatively at the end of each marking period. Additionally, class discussions only take off if you provide input and <u>listen to one another</u>. That means you need to pay attention to your classmates when they're speaking instead of dislocating your shoulder in a valiant attempt to thrust your raised hand into the air higher than your neighbor's so the moderator will call on you next. I <3 it when students can moderate their own discussions, seriously.

🕮 Some Administrative Mumbo Jumbo

- **Marking period grading is now weighted, as follows:** 30% Reading Assessments (Tests, quizzes, projects, etc.); 35% Writing Assessments; 10% Vocabulary; 15% Classwork, Participation, Small-Group & Whole-Class Discussions; 10% for Homework. Although there are no quarterlies, we will be doing in-class essays on independent reading toward the end of each MP.

- **Ask three, then ask me when returning from absence.** Get the digits or email address from three responsible acquaintances you have in the class. If you are absent, *'ask three, then ask me.'* Huh? Ask three of your friends what you missed while you were out before you ask me: we should expect that at least one of them was paying attention and snagged you a copy of the handout everyone received/notes taken while you were sitting at home feigning illness and playing video games: "um, Cletus isn't here today, can I please have an extra copy of that thing you're handing out so I can give it to her tomorrow?" I'm serious, if I hear this throughout the year, I'll be even happier than usual, and you'll certainly benefit from that. Oh, and letting me know prior to expected absence is also greatly appreciated. I'll attempt to keep my teacher site updated with handouts and pertinent .pdf's for you…but please double check with trusted peers in case things in class outpace the weekly website updates..

- **Make up missed quizzes.** If you are absent on the day of a test or quiz, you can come in before or after school only to make it up. If this is impossible for you, don't miss quizzes. I put it in my gradebook as a zero until you make it up. <u>After 4 school days without making it up, the zero remains</u>. You need to approach me about missed quizzes and tests; I won't approach you. Quizzes are returned only after all students in both classes have taken them!

- **The MLA Manifesto** provides you with a paradigm for formatting your papers so they adhere to MLA formatting and also our school's Collins formatting protocol concurrently. Please look this over (a copy is on my website if you didn't get one when you get this syllabus), compare your papers to it, ask questions about it for clarification if necessary, and keep it in your English folder or binder.

- **Materials.** Please bring a journal, a planner <u>that you use</u>, a pen (for writing essays), a pencil (for mock MC tests), something to take notes on (college-ruled loose-leaf or college-ruled spiral-bound), and something to gather your handouts (binder or folder). Have your independent reading book handy, and keep your *Bedford* covered.

(No matter what I do I can't get these lines to disappear or the bullets corrected. Sorry. Maybe doodle something bookish here?)

A Final Note

- **Half** of this course will be geared toward preparing you for the AP exam (Thursday, May 7th, 2015). The AP English Literature and Composition Exam employs multiple-choice questions that test your critical reading of selected passages. The exam also requires writing as a direct measure of your ability to read and interpret literature and to use other forms of discourse effectively. We will take practice multiple choice exams released by the College Board from years past, dissect the questions, and discuss the rationales behind correct answers on these tests. We will also examine the elements of various free response prompts, and review methods for organizing your ideas prior to writing a response.

- **The Other Half** of this class will be geared toward reading, writing about, discussing, and enjoying literature at a deeper level than in other classes. I assume that if you've come this far, you already have an intrinsic love of words—and with this appreciation, you're halfway to a '5' on the exam anyhow!

Class Texts:

Foster, Thomas C. *How to Read Literature Like a Professor: A Lively and Entertaining Guide to Reading Between the Lines*. 2003

Myer, Michael, ed. *The Bedford Introduction to Literature: Reading, Thinking, Writing. 8th Edition*. 2002

Princeton Review: Cracking the AP English Literature Exam, 2009 Edition

I'm always excited to work with students who love to read, write, and discuss literature, and look forward to the upcoming year. Feel free to contact me out of class if you need to discuss anything course related (or not, as I'm SAP certified as well.) Email works best:; twimer@avongrove.org will work only when the firewall has been disabled so please ask for a confirmation email if you're contacting me about something time-sensitive.

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Please sign this form after you have reviewed the above information, bookmarked my website: http://www.avongrove.org/twimer.aspx, and read the 'MLA Manifesto.' After signing, please cut the line above and turn this portion in ASAP.

Student Signature_____ Print Name_____

Parent Signature_____ Phone #_____

Email _____

Date_____