**AP Literature and Composition Syllabus**

# Mr. Mirano

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# “A book must be the axe for the frozen sea within us.” –Franz Kafka

# “The real voyage of discovery consists not on seeking new landscapes, but in having new eyes.” –Marcel Proust

**Course Overview**:

This class will focus on developing insights, appreciations, and skills (critical reading and analytical writing) that lead to advanced levels of facility with literature and composition. These skills are what will enable success on the AP Literature exam. Our reading will be wide and expansive, stretching from British to American literature across genres and time periods. This reading should be an exciting interaction between you and the writer. You must bring your memory to the experience and you have to feel comfortable reaching for and exploring ideas.

Please remember, AP English Literature is designed to teach beginning-college writing, and it follows the curricular requirements described in the AP English Course Description.

In class, we will discuss the tools of some of the great writers in the last 500 years. We will discuss the way they structure a text and the way they write—their particular style (diction, syntax, figurative language, imagery, and mechanics)—and the effect. Think of the class not as a memorization of literary devices or a regurgitation of fact; rather, think of it as a subjective art form and workshop for you to experiment with your own writing.

Throughout the year, this writing will vary from narrative and expository to creative and experimental. First, we will write to understand, then we will write to explain, and finally we will write to evaluate. Through writing to understand and explain, we will reach a level where *we can* evaluate the effectiveness of a literary piece and even imitate it. Finally, we will write original creations of our own to reflect and contemplate the human condition.

Be aware—this class will become a writer’s workshop. We will write, we will peer review, and we will revise certain pieces of writing into polished drafts. We will also produce a writing portfolio via turnitin.com that serves as a representation of our personal writing archive. Through workshop, you will be exposed to critique on behalf of your style, including choice of diction, ability to vary syntax, ability to organize writing, and ability to balance main ideas (themes) with specific illustrative details and rhetoric in order to form an effective whole.

All in all, I expect you as an individual to write with care and with feeling; and as a class, I expect us all to read with vigor and to discuss with empathy and courage.

**Year Long Questions:**

* What is the author attempting to convey, and why?
* Why am I writing, and for whom (and how can I adjust accordingly)?
* What “moves” do effective writers make and how can I take advantage of them in my own writing?
* How can I refine my writing?
* How does this book make me smarter about today’s world? (What does the book mean in our world and for my future?)
* What is the value of literature?

**Major Units**

Semester 1

* Elizabethan Drama: *Hamlet* (William Shakespeare) + Exploratory Essay
* Romantic Literature: *Jane Eyre* (Charlotte Bronte)
* Victorian Literature: *The Importance of Being Earnest* (Oscar Wilde)
* Early Modernism: *Heart of Darkness* (Joseph Conrad) paired with
* *Apocalypse Now*\* (FF Coppola)
* S1 Final Exam: Literary Terms Final

Semester 2

* Modernism: “The Dead” (James Joyce) & The Modernist Vision: T.S. Eliot and modern poetry + Ernest Hemingway
* Existentialism Unit: *The Stranger* (Albert Camus), *Waiting for Godot* (Samuel Beckett) + *The Truman Show* (Peter Weir)
* Post Modern Literature: *White Noise (*Don DeLillo)
* S2 Final Exam: Full MC

\*Parents please note: The film *Apocalypse Now*, which adapts and allegorizes

*Heart of Darkness*, is rated R for violent content. Despite this, the film genuinely enriches a reading of an often difficult and impenetrable work. If you have any concerns your student viewing this film, please let me know.

**Reading**

In this course, we will study imaginative works from the Elizabethan Era all the way to the postmodern era. We will use supplemental texts such as poems, short stories, essays, criticism, and memoirs to further explore our major works, their themes, context, and influence on future literature. We will push this study further by including visual texts such as films and paintings. Finally, we will look at current issues as they relate to the given text to consistently question how relevant that text is to our world and us today.

Intermittently throughout the year, we will breakaway from our longer works to study achievements in the contemporary short story. From this, we will explore the question: what can the short story achieve?

**Writing**

* Narrative
  + The Exploratory Essay (Common Application Essay)
    - Students will write an exploratory essay that is generally a short, autobiographical exploration of some significant personal idea, experience, or problem. Its author should seek to examine, as opposed to prove, and the best exploratory essays are impressionistic, subjective, and inductive.
  + Imitation—routinely, we will imitate the style of given authors in order to push our yearlong question: what are the techniques of the great writers, and how can I apply them to my own writing? Specifically, I will be looking for your knowledge and application of appropriate structures and styles as outlined within the assignment’s parameters (i.e., the student’s capacity to understand and apply the techniques of art used in the literature we’re studying). These techniques include structure, theme, and style (diction, syntax, figurative language, symbolism, and tone). Although we may begin these assignments in class, I will expect them to be typed and proofread (especially spell-checked) before being handed in to me or turnitin.com. Often, these too will be workshopped during class.
* Expository
  + Literary Analysis Essay—*Heart of Darkness*
    - Students will perform a close reading of the novel. They will write a short analysis that focuses on Joseph Conrad’s use (and tone towards) one of the following: a motif, symbol, foil, double, character or specific setting. From this analysis, students will form interpretations on the overall meaning of the work considering its social, cultural, and/or historical values. Finally, they will judge HOD for its social, cultural, and historical values.
  + Consider The \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Satire Project
    - Students will read David Foster Wallace’s "Consider the Lobster” and consider his style in analyzing both culture and self. (He uses a tongue-in-cheek, satirical style (much like Don DeLillo before him) which highlights the kitsch nature of “the masses”.) Students will, then, take the position of a much-put-upon intellectual writer tasked with reviewing the tawdry and vulgar side of life, and write an essay reviewing a kitsch event/place/phenomenon that uses the same sort of satire as contemporary writers like Wallace and DeLillo.
  + AP Timed Writes
    - Students will write several short critical papers (including cross text analysis), explicating poetry, drama, and longer works. These critical essays are based on close textual analysis of structure, style (figurative language, imagery, diction, syntax, symbolism, tone) and social/historical values.

\*\*Critical papers must be typed, double- spaced, and proofread (especially spell-checked) and will be approximately two-to-three double-spaced pages. I will often require a rough draft of papers. Writing will either be workshopped during class or given direct feeeback from me. If given feedback from me, I will refer to a holistic nine-point rubric found on our class website.

**In-class Writing & Quizzes**

We will consistently have reading quizzes that will ask you to examine a quote from our major work and determine the subject or speaker. These quizzes are to ensure that you are reading. Students should bring a free-writing notebook to each class so they are prepared for informal writing exercises, which are designed to explore what they learn as they read. In-class writings will primarily be AP-based examinations, though there will also be quick-response, in-class writings as a basis for discussion.

**AP Exam**

*Should I take the exam?* At some point throughout the year, every student will ask himself or herself this question; and it is a good and genuine question. Why take the test if I already received credit my junior year? Why put myself through the stress? (Not to mention, the financial cost). In all honesty, only you can answer this question. My advice is to be true to you, and to look inward instead of outward for an answer.

Nonetheless, the test *is* a good test. As I like to say, it is a North Star for a great majority of your study in English Language Arts throughout high school. In our class, it will be a framework. Everything I bring to the classroom has (in a smaller or larger sense) something to do with the test. It’s emphasis on critical reading and writing is, I believe, exceptional preparation for the rigors of college.

**Points and Grades**

The following is an approximate list of the types of assignments for this class. The instructor will review guidelines and expectations before every due date.

Major Writings/Assignments 20%

Reading Quizzes 20%

Bellwork, Classwork, and Homework 20%

Speaking and Listening 20%

Participation 10%

Final: S1—Literary Terms, S2—Full AP Multiple Choice 10%

Grades for this course will be calculated using total points earned. Letter grades correspond to percentages in the following manner:

A = 100-90% B = 89-80% C = 79-70% D = 69-60% F = 59-0%

If you wish to speak with me about anything class-related, please schedule a conference. I will not discuss grades during class.

**Some Final Thoughts**

This class is not about grades, but about learning. I also want students to have the experience of college-level learning, something most high school students do not have available to them. College-level learning is not primarily about rigor — though that’s a part of college — but about responsibility and acceptance of one’s self as a more mature student, reading and thinking about and writing more mature texts. The difficulty of the texts is a stimulus for students to make their own decisions about published authors, about themselves as writers, about their colleagues as writers, about the deep and ongoing questions that relate to what it means to be a responding, acting human being both individually and as part of a society.

I intend the course to be stimulating and demanding, one in which a student will grow in relation to who he or she is, rather than in relation to established “standards” developed by state or federal mandates. True learning, I believe, comes from self- demand, rather than society’s expectations. School is the last stronghold in this regard, a place where experimentation occurs for its own sake, where ideas are generated to be considered and examined for their own sake and not because there is a bottom-line expectation of so many widgets made in a certain amount of time for a certain “production” quota. The student, in combination with his or her colleagues and me, will create the parameters of this course.

Learning is an organic, interactive process; it is not predicated on my filling students with information, as though they were empty vessels. My students and I will learn together.

**Policies & Expectations**

Deadlines/Attendance

* Assignments are docked 10% if they are late, and will only be accepted up to one week after the due date.
* (Under certain circumstances and with my approval, 1/2 credit will be given to assignments turned in later than one week after the due date.)
* If you are unexpectedly absent on a day that something previously assigned is due, plan on turning the work in on the first day back at school.
* Similarly, if you miss a quiz or exam due to an unexpected excused absence, make arrangements for a make up on the day you return.
* Make ups will not be permitted if the absence is unexcused, and late homework will be penalized accordingly.
* PLEASE NOTE: Should you miss class due to a sport, school activity, or expected absence, you must consult with the instructor prior to the actual absence.

Expect bell-work every day. Bell-work points cannot be made up if you are late to class without a valid reason. Similarly, if you are late in this manner and miss part of a quiz, test, or writing assessment, you will not be allotted additional time. Students legitimately absent or late will be excused from bell-work.

Finally, in regards to scored discussions: weekly scored discussions function as assessments, as you are required to respond to complex prompts without the aid of the internet or supplemental sources and scored based on the efficacy of your responses. Accordingly, if you miss a scored discussion you will be required to respond in writing to specified prompts in order to be excused from the discussion, so long as your work is thorough and turned in via hard copy within 48 hours.

Participation/Conduct

Participation is absolutely and always required. Abide by the acronym SLANT:

* Sit up
* Listen
* Ask and Answer Questions like a scholar
* Nod your head
* Track the speaker.

Ask yourself: Am I engaged in this class? Am I doing what I can to understand what is at the heart of the lesson, the unit, and the class? Am I generally on time to class? Am I proactive and timely about absences and making up missed work? Am I respectful?

Each semester will include a participation grade reflecting these issues.

Presentation of Written Work

* With the exception of writing completed during class (bell-work, drills, journaling), written assignments, including drafts, must be typed (double-spaced, 12 pt. font, MLA format). \*\*Handwritten papers will not be accepted.
* Essays will be printed and ready to turn in by the beginning of class on the due date. Make provisions for printing ahead of time (and be aware of library closures if that is your only mode of printing).
* NOTE: An automatic 10% will be taken off of any assignment that is not in MLA format.

Personal electronics

Cell phones must be turned off and out of sight during class, unless we are conducting research. Tablets & laptops can sometimes be used, depending on the circumstances.

Classroom Climate

Our classroom is a safe zone, which means that all people are equal, regardless of race, religion, sexual orientation, political views, economic status, or gender. It is important that we both foster open discourse and respect our differences and each other.

Ethics

Read and reread the texts. Cliff Notes and Sparknotes will always be a temptation in a class with such demanding reading, but relying on these sources as a replacement to the major texts will only result in a broken process. In other words, this class will mean nothing and you will gain nothing from it if you do not read the major texts deeply with care and feeling. If you engage in the texts, the class will be a reward, as you *will* become a better reader, writer, and thinker. The only way to get better at anything is through consistent practice, and that is the class: practice for life. It is truly a class of life.

All the same, attempts will be made to cheat the system. Note that the reading quizzes will discourage this behavior. Read your texts. Celebrate when you take the quiz.

Supplies

* Folder for keeping notes & handouts
* Notebook for notes, journaling during class, and other writing activities
* Pens, pencils, highlighters.

**1st assignment: After both you and a parent/guardian have read the course outline, detach the last page, read the course contracts, sign as indicated, and return to Mr. Mirano by the third day of class.**

**Plagiarism Contract**

Plagiarism can be defined as submitting another person’s ideas, words, images or data without giving that person credit or proper acknowledgement. Plagiarism, a form of academic dishonesty, is tantamount to stealing and will not be tolerated. You should be aware that you need to acknowledge sources when you:

• use phrases, quotes, or ideas not your own.

• paraphrase the work of another even though you may have changed the wording or syntax.

• use facts or data not considered common knowledge.

• submit a paper from an essay service or agency even though you may have paid for it.

• submit a paper by another person even though he or she may have given you permission

to use it.

• work on assignments with another student if partner/group work has not been assigned.

You should also note that plagiarism not only encompasses written work, but also computer data, research, musical scores, video programs, and visual arts.

Plagiarism reflects on character; therefore, you should avoid inadvertent plagiarism. **You will also be held responsible for unintentional plagiarism.** Plagiarism is a serious issue, especially in an academic environment. Teachers must be able to rely on the integrity of a student’s work in order to maintain a climate for successful learning. We will discuss methods for avoiding plagiarism as the school year progresses. When you are unsure if acknowledgement is needed, ask your teacher.

The penalties for plagiarism begin with an automatic failing grade for the assignment. This may significantly lower your final grade. Furthermore, plagiarism, a form of cheating, will automatically result in a referral to administration. Repeated plagiarism will result in more serious consequences, according to the University High School conduct code.

I, \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, am aware of the serious nature of

plagiarism and will not use or submit someone else’s work without acknowledgement. Furthermore, I will not misrepresent someone else’s work as my own, or help anyone else to plagiarize my work or another’s.

Student signature \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Date\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

**Course Outline & Policies Contract**

Students & parents/guardians: please sign below and return this document to class to let me know that you have read and understand the course outline and policies.

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Student (PRINT NAME)

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Student (SIGNATURE) Date

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Parent/guardian (PRINT NAME)

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Parent/guardian (SIGNATURE) Date

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Parent/guardian E-Mail Address (legible, please!)

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Parent/guardian daytime phone