

## KAP/English 4 Syllabus

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### The Writer as Mirror of Culture and as Agent of Change

*In the words of James Baldwin, "You write in order to change the world...if you alter, even by a millimeter, the way people look at reality, then you can change it."*

#### Overview:

In this class, you will explore works of literature to analyze and evaluate how they have reflected social conditions and sought to influence those conditions and issues they raise (e.g., poverty, child labor, fair wages, racism, gender equality.) In response, you will produce academic commentary (essays and research papers) as well as original pieces that address these same issues. Most creative writing will be in the genre of your choice (e.g. poetry, fiction such as short stories, novellas, and plays or nonfiction, such as memoirs, letters, newspaper articles, and interviews). Because writing is such an essential component of the class, every Friday will be devoted to writing workshops. Conferences will be held during that time, as well as peer sharing. Rubrics will be used for peer feedback and author analysis.

This course is offered in conjunction with Kenyon College and every student receiving an A or B grade will receive college credit. Consequently, I expect all aspects of your participation, whether written or oral, to reflect critical thinking, reflection and self-analysis on the college level.

#### COURSE GOALS:

1. To understand the way we use language to provide meaning and affect the way others see and respond to the world.
2. To expose our minds to literary works which represent a wide variety of cultures, eras and perspectives.
3. To consider the social and historical values a work reflects and embodies.
4. To be able to read and critically analyze imaginative literature in a multitude of genres, including poetry, fiction, creative nonfiction, and film.
5. To learn to listen actively and attentively, to express ideas—both orally and in writing—with clarity, concision, and insight, and respond with respect and civility to opposing viewpoints.
6. To analyze how a writer makes meaning through structure, style, and themes, as well as literary elements such as figurative language, imagery, symbolism, and tone.
7. To refine our own literary voices by writing in a variety of genres on a variety of issues, and by revising thoughtfully and thoroughly before declaring a work.
8. To become engaged with literature so that we become more fluent, erudite, and insightful readers.

#### Materials and Your Own Teaching Responsibilities:

Our reading this year will include the following works, in whole or part:

- *Invisible Man*
- *Grapes of Wrath*
- *Bleak House*
- *Mother Courage and Her Children*
- *A Doll's House*
- *Things Fall Apart*
- *The Handmaid's Tale*
- *The Color Purple*

In addition, we will read selected short stories, essays, poems and song lyrics. We will also analyze selected films that reflect the themes of the class study.

I will provide most of the written materials; however, each marking period you will be required to submit one literary work (poem, song lyrics or short story) that you feel relates to our course focus and we will analyze it in class. We will create a calendar for these assignments. On the days that you share a piece you have chosen,

you will teach the class. This means that you must prepare background information, provide any useful supplementary materials (e.g., pictures, videos or audios), and lead the class discussion. In addition, you must devise some kind of exit question or informal assessment of your presentation, and you must grade the submitted work according to an appropriate rubric.

### **Universal Questions:**

These are some of the questions that we will consider no matter what we read or write and that will drive our learning this year. You may certainly raise them in the class sessions that you lead:

- How do writers mirror their culture? What can we tell about society from different eras and countries through the writing?
- How is a reader's perspective changed by exposure to differing viewpoints?
- How can writers serve as agents of change in society?
- In what ways are texts influenced by the life experiences of authors?
- What techniques do writers use to convey meaning and purpose? Which techniques do you think are most effective?
- When and how does writing become propaganda?

**Required Materials:** Three-prong folder with dividers, loose-leaf notebook paper, ink pen, flash drive

**Homework:** Besides preparation for the class sessions you will lead, homework for this class will consist of an extension of the classwork. For example, reading may be assigned for the following day's class discussion, or you may have to complete and/or revise a writing project.

### **Class Expectations:**

These are simple—

- **Be Prompt:** I expect you on time for class. This means in the room, not racing down the hall.
- **Be Prepared:** You should have everything necessary for class, including all necessary materials and any assignments that are due. (*Note: No late work will be accepted for any reason except an excused absence or an approved request for an extension. If you should need an extension, you must see me for a form, and you must have a very, very good reason.*)
- **Be Polite:** This means that you treat everyone in the room with civility even when you disagree intellectually or personally, and that respect the space by clean up after yourself and returning materials to their storage areas.
- **Be Productive:** Class begins with bell and ends when you are dismissed. I expect you to be a full participant in our activities the entire time you are present. This means no private side conversations, no work being done for other classes, and **NO PHONES** unless I have approved them for a specific purpose.

### **Grading:**

I use a standard grading system of 90-100 = A; 80-89 = B; 70-79 = C; 60-69 = D; 50-59 = F. Together we will create rubrics and determine point values for each specific assignment that you have this year. I will assess your work based on those rubrics and record your scores in Engrade. I will be glad to answer any questions you may have about them except "What am I getting in this class?" You should always know the answer to that, because once you have your access code, it is your responsibility to register and check your grade regularly.

**I look forward to a year of engrossing reading, lively discussions, exciting writing, and shared discoveries. Welcome to the class!**