

KAP English 2015-16  
Laurel School  
Jeanne Stephens

This is a college-level course for seniors who want to explore major literary texts from a variety of critical perspectives. We will examine Bronte's *Wuthering Heights* through feminist and psychoanalytic lenses. For literature of the Irish Renaissance, we will add the perspective gained by reading texts in their historical and political context. We will do an extended unit on works by the major writers of the Irish Renaissance--Yeats, Synge, O'Casey and Joyce—to see how their writing drew upon Irish colonial history and Celtic mythology and to explore how these texts contributed to and were influenced by the political upheavals of the early twentieth century.

In the second semester we will do a close reading of *Hamlet*, noticing how the contemporary writer David Wroblewski drew on this classic play in his novel *The Story of Edgar Sawtelle*. In addition to analytical writing on *Hamlet*, students will write a creative interpretation by setting a scene from the play in another context, supplying a cast, soundtrack, and stage directions. We will then read three classics of modern literature: Henrik Ibsen's ground-breaking play *A Doll's House*, Joseph Conrad's controversial novella *Heart of Darkness*, and the modernist novel *Mrs. Dalloway*, by Virginia Woolf. Throughout the year we will examine the role of culture in shaping the individual, looking at the fate of those who surrender knowingly or unknowingly to social norms as well as the sometimes painful or paralyzing self-consciousness of intelligent characters who seek to escape the repressive conventions of society. The final three texts will help us reflect on societal attitudes towards race, class, sexuality, and gender.

### **First Semester**

Summer Reading: Wroblewski, *The Story of Edgar Sawtelle*; Naylor, *Mama Day*

Emily Bronte, *Wuthering Heights*

Literature of the Irish Renaissance

History and mythology, including Swift, "A Modest Proposal"

Assorted tales from the Ulster and Fenian cycles of mythology

Yeats, *Cathleen Ni Houlihan* *Dreaming of the Bones*, and selected poetry

Synge, *Riders to the Sea*

O'Casey, *The Plough and the Stars*, *Juno and the Paycock*

Joyce, *Dubliners*

Films: *Michael Collins*, *The Dead*

### **Second Semester**

Shakespeare, *Hamlet*

Henrik Ibsen, *A Doll's House*

Joseph Conrad, *Heart of Darkness*

Virginia Woolf, *Mrs. Dalloway*

Assessment is done primarily through formal analytical papers, 4-5 pages in length. In addition to occasional in-class essays, you will write informal entries for online discussions of reading assignments. Class participation is an important aspect of student performance and will contribute to your grade. There will be opportunities for creative work in both

semesters.

### **Expectations**

For each unit, you will receive an assignment sheet, which will help you plan in advance. I will expect you to have done your homework, but I realize that there are times when you have a legitimate reason for being unable to do the night's assignment. Please tell me in advance when you anticipate a problem. Formal papers are assigned well in advance, and you will have no other homework for one week, so papers should not be late. Extensions for legitimate reasons will be given, but only if you ask several days before the due date. A grade penalty of 1/3 a grade per day will be assessed to late papers. I will honor the test calendar and do my best to avoid dates when you have other major assignments.

For some texts, you will write responses on Haiku. You will know the reading assignments in advance so that you can plan ahead. Haiku entries are due at the start of class; late ones will not be accepted and will receive a zero. Procrastinating will result in the need to write responses to all the final reading assignments, which adds unnecessary stress. Haiku entries are graded according to effort rather than accuracy, so they are a great way to raise your KAP English grade.

I welcome you to discuss your reading with your classmates, but all formal papers should be composed alone. I will be glad to help you at any stage, from getting started to revising the final draft. Please use me rather than peers or parents as a tutor. The English Department prohibits the use of study guides like Cliff's Notes or on-line resources like SparkNotes. These sources rob you of the opportunity to develop your own ability to understand and interpret a text.

Homework schedules will be posted regularly on Haiku, as will copies of handouts, extra contextual information, and other course content. My expectation is that you will check Haiku each time a new work schedule is posted, and also any time you get an email notification that something new has been posted to the KAP English site.

This class follows the English guidelines and policies as laid out in your Laurel English Handbook, which is available on the KAP English homepage.