



2020/'21 COURSE SYLLABUS

AP Literature &
Composition

Kennedy HS
Mr. McCarthy
Room C201

Part One: Course Outline

Purpose of the Course—Why are we taking this class?

Reading, writing and communicating effectively are absolutely essential to maintaining freedom, justice and dignity in our world. Further, we develop a powerful understanding of ourselves—and our world—by studying literature and other texts. AP Lit and Comp is intended to empower students with the skills necessary to thrive in this world and gain access to success. It is also intended to give students the tools to critique and improve their world.

I have chosen curriculum, activities and work for this course with the goal of preparing students to have confidence and success on the AP Exam. It is my intention that all students will take this exam in May ***because they have become mentally tough scholars who can act with poise as they face this daunting challenge.***

Assumptions

- All students intend to succeed in this class and pass the AP Exam
- All students are able to succeed in this class and pass the AP Exam
- Students want to succeed in life: they want to have the ability to live the way they want to live once they become adults

Learning Goals

Students engaged in this course will grow to be dynamic writers, critical thinkers and strong readers. They will develop the language arts skills necessary to succeed in college, the workplace and society. Students will exhibit mastery of the standards set by the State of California (Common Core). They will be ready to write college-level essays about the literature and other texts that they read. They will be able to perform well on the written and the multiple-choice portions of the AP Exam.



Reading

Students will read a variety of texts. With each, they will be learning some specific literary elements, techniques and theories. All of our reading is also meant to serve as a “bank” of material with they will be able to use when sitting for the AP Exam.

Texts

Oedipus the King
Hamlet
The Stranger

1984
The Importance of Being Earnest
Ethan Frome

Of the following texts, I will choose two of the following to study second semester—based on needs/interests of the students

A Marriage Proposal
One Flew over the Cuckoo’s Nest
Catcher in the Rye
Lord of the Flies
Cat’s Cradle

Heart of Darkness
The Stranger
One Flew Over the Cuckoo’s Nest
Siddhartha

Several Short Stories and Pieces by Orwell, Swift and Wilde
Selected Poetry
Several Contemporary Expository Texts
Several Pieces of Literary Criticism

Writing

AP Prompts

The majority of the writing tasks in the class will, in some way, be designed to help students score well on the essay portion of the AP Exam. As such, many of the writing tasks will involve and AP-like prompt that relates the themes/texts we are studying at the time. Students will learn how to translate the prompt, receive multiple levels of feedback (teacher, peer and self) and in some instances write multiple drafts of these essays for the purpose of skill development.

Polished, Multi-draft Essays

We will write one of these essay each semester. They will involve the literature we are reading and will be based on literary analysis. In addition, we will be writing Personal Statements for this course in the fall semester—the UC style prompt.

Creative Writing

With most of the material with read and study, students will also have opportunities to create their own poetry and stories. This can be a great way for them to demonstrate skills and mastery of literary concepts.



Course of Study

Fall Semester

Introduction to the Journey— Summer task, prompt breakdown and initial feedback

Elements of Narrative/Story— Basic boot camp; *1984* + another novel chosen from survey feedback

Genre Study— Defining the characteristics of the genres in literature

Poetry Analysis— What are elements of poetry? How do we perform an intelligent analysis of it? This is a deep dive into poetry with the use of our knowledge of poetry elements from the fall semester.

Personal Statement— Workshops, writing and feedback using the UC prompt

Spring Semester

Tragedy: Classical to Modern with *Oedipus the King*, *Hamlet*, *Death of Salesman*, selected poetry and essays

Elements of Narrative/Story continued

Satire— Chaucer, Swift and Wilde: Poems, Plays, Essays and Pamphlets

Modern Novel— Two novels: one will be my selection for the whole class, one will be selected by the student from a given list. (See texts above)

Modern Drama-- Williams

AP Exam Practice— Starting roughly the first week of April

Contact Information

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Room C201

John F Kennedy High School



Part Two: Our Contract for Grades

Dear Scholars,

This week, we start semester of your final year of high school English class. You'll notice that the way you're graded in this class is going to seem unconventional—particularly the way that I score your writing and put it in the grade book. The major purpose of this course is to help you grow your abilities to read texts (and understand them-- no matter how difficult they may be to read) and to write your ideas onto paper in a way that achieves your desired purpose. The conventional approaches that I've used in the past to help you improve your skills in these areas haven't worked as well as I've liked. I'm inviting you to join me in trying something different. It's something I think will be much more effective.

The AP exam in May is not the main purpose of this class. The exam is actually a tool that measures how well we did in fulfilling our purpose listed above with the particular context of the Literary Analysis discipline. Doing well on the AP Exam is a significant feather in the cap of students who take this course because it indicates that they are able to cultivate and develop their reading and writing abilities within a particular philosophical discipline. High scores on that exam are a great predictor of post-secondary success in things like College Composition Course, College Honors Programs, Law School, or Graduate work in the Humanities.

For this academic year, we will work with a Grading Contract. You'll notice that it is very clear how you can achieve an A, B, C, D or F. As a student and now as a teacher, I have experienced and observed that the grading of essays (or any type of writing) can be problematic. When we submit a piece of writing, the teacher grades it (gives it a score based on "quality" or "mastery of standards" or "excellence") and puts it into the gradebook, and it has an effect on the course grade of the student. When we get it back, it has a bunch of comments on it that usually serve to justify the grade that we have received, but they don't seem to *really* help us understand our actual growth in our writing skills. We are so focused (rightfully so) at maintaining our grade point average that we get consumed with how this will affect our grade in the class. Most of the time, we neglect to go back and revisit the feedback in a way that improves our future writing. This is a problem because the whole purpose of the course is to improve our writing. Therefore, a 100% score will be given to writing assignments that are done on-time and in the spirit that I've asked you to do them.

Don't worry. *Your writing efforts will be seen.* You'll still get plenty of feedback. I will still give you plenty of indication of how well you are doing with your writing. Please take advantage of all of this feedback and "scoring" as a tool for you to calibrate your approach to writing. Always know that I will read everything you submit, but you won't always get direct comments/scores from me all of the time. Sometimes you'll get the feedback from your peers, or you'll actually evaluate yourself. My hope is that you'll begin to rely on your colleagues, yourself AND me for your needs in writing achievement. You must become strong and confident in your own ability to know whether or not what you have written is good. I also want you to know how to truly listen to the input from other people.

Together we will work to achieve goals of the course. Your job is to meet the requirements of the contract. I'll be trying my hardest to create a culture in our classroom in which you support each other as well. The group we have in this section this semester is truly unique. The combination of minds (with all of our different knowledge, experience, talent, insight, hopes, fears, loves, hates, etc. that these minds bring the room) will literally never be brought back together again. It's a once in a life time experience for us all to be together in this way, and I hope we all take advantage of this time where our paths cross in this way.

Our Grading Contract

To Achieve an A in the course for Semester 1, you must:

- Do all that is required to earn a B, **AND**
- You must score "6" three times on AP Exam Essays **OR** You must contribute to the knowledge and/or well-being of the class with a presentation (3-10 minutes) at some point in the semester. In the coming weeks, I will show you a list of the types of things that work for this option. If you plan to do this, you must talk to me for pre-approval. If I approve your idea, we will schedule a time for you to present to the class. If you have an idea for an alternative way to meet this requirement, see me. If it makes sense as an alternative, I'll approve it.



Our Grading Contract (continued)

The default grade for you in the course is a B. You are guaranteed a B in the course for Semester 1 if you accomplish the following:

- For the Contract Writing Labor Category-- Essays, Paragraphs, Reflections, Creative Pieces, Peer Review Activities
 - End with 80 percent minimum. When you submit completely, with full effort and on-time, you will receive a score of 100% even if the assignment isn't perfect. Scores could go down on these assignments if they are incomplete—the percentage of incompleteness will be decided upon my discretion.
 - Ignore 0 (zero) assignments
- For the Contract Reading Labor Category-- Reading a text, AsYouReads, Discussion Questions, Other Homework Associated with Reading, Group Reading Activities
 - End with 80 percent minimum. When you submit completely, with full effort and on-time, you will receive a score of 100% even if the assignment isn't perfect. Scores could also go down on these assignments if they are incomplete—the percentage of incompleteness will be decided upon my discretion.
 - Ignore 0 (zero) assignments
- For the Contract Skills Labor Category-- Root Squares, Check Your Head, Language Practice
 - End with 80 percent minimum.
 - Ignore 0 (zero) assignments

To Earn a C in the course for Semester 1, you must accomplish the following:	To Earn a D in the course for Semester 1, you must accomplish the following:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • For the Contract Writing Category <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ End with a 70 percent minimum ○ Ignore no more than 1 assignment • For the Contract Reading <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ End with a 70 percent minimum ○ Ignore no more than 1 assignment • For the Contract Skills Labor Category-- <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ End with a 70 percent minimum. ○ Ignore no more than 1 assignment • For the Roots Assessments <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ End with a 70% minimum • For the Grammar Assessments <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ End with a 60% minimum 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • For the Contract Writing Category <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ End with a 60 percent minimum ○ Ignore no more than 2 assignments • For the Contract Reading <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ End with a 60 percent minimum ○ Ignore no more than 2 assignments • For the Contract Skills Labor Category-- <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ End with a 60 percent minimum. ○ Ignore 0 (zero) assignments • For the Roots Assessments <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ End with a 60% minimum • For the Grammar Assessments <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ End with a 60% minimum

Students who don't earn an A, B, C, or D will receive and F for the course.

Signature (due to COVID, student will sign in a google form)

Date

Signature

Date

Student Print Name:

Teacher

K.C. McCarthy