



Contemporary Literature Grand Haven High School



Course Number:

Grade Level: 11th-12th

Credits : .5

Prerequisite Courses : N/A

Course Description

This trimester course is designed to expose students to contemporary American writing and expression published since 1945 and to provide students with a framework that enables them to respond to literature in personal, critical, and creative ways. Students are expected to engage actively in the process of reading, discussing, summarizing, and analyzing the literature and to create meaningful connections. Student responses will be individual and collaborative, oral and written. The overall goal for this course is that students seek pleasure, knowledge, appreciation, and a lifelong passion for the written word.

In the words of Steve Almond from the book *Tiny Beautiful Things*: "...the essential work of literary art [is to] make us more human than we were before. We need books...because we are all, in the private kingdom of our hearts, desperate for the company of a wise, true friend." You will make the acquaintance of many such friends in this course. Welcome.

Course Objectives

By the end of the course students will be proficient with:

- Participating collaboratively and productively in groups, fulfilling roles and responsibilities, posing relevant questions, giving and following instructions, acknowledging and building on ideas and contributions of others to answer questions or to solve problems, and offering dissent courteously.
- Evaluating own and others' effectiveness in group discussions and formal presentations.
- Developing ideas using a variety of prewriting techniques, which may include brainstorming, free-writing, journals, consulting with others, conducting library research, and analyzing audience.
- Demonstrating understanding of literature by paraphrasing, summarizing, critiquing, analyzing, or composing a personal response; distinguishing between a summary and a critique.
- Demonstrating the ability to build supportable generalizations using selected details that are suggestive, concrete, and relevant.

Building Behavioral Expectations

TEAM GH ... One Team, One Family, One Grand Haven. Be Kind. Always.

It is our expectation that ALL GHHS students, staff and parents will ... always give their best **EFFORT** in everything that they do, work hard to be **INCLUSIVE** of each other, show **RESPONSIBILITY** in class, the hallways, cafeteria and at events, and **WORK TOGETHER** at all times!

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- Interpreting the meaning of literature by drawing on different cultural, theoretical, and critical perspectives and understanding the connections to prior knowledge and personal experience.
- Reflecting on personal understanding of reading, listening, and viewing; setting personal learning goals; and taking responsibility for personal growth.
- Editing and revising writing so that it conforms to the standard conventions of academic prose – that is, so that academic audiences can read the writing without having their attention and understanding diverted by numerous problems in grammar, spelling, punctuation, and format.

Student Expectations

This is a writing class. Students will write everyday.

Students can expect to think critically and deeply about a variety of subjects, in order to help fuel writing topics.

In many cases, writing is meant to be shared. Therefore students can expect to share all or some of their writings with their classmates. Students will not be forced to share their writing that is deeply personal in nature, if they are not comfortable doing so.

Students in the class must RESPECT the writing of others, including listening without judgement and refraining from telling others outside of class what is shared by classmates within the class.

Communication

Students and parents are encouraged to communicate with the teacher whenever they have a question or concern. Teacher contact information can be found on the ghaps.org website. Parent Internet Viewer is a great tool to monitor current grades, and the student may always ask the teacher for a current grade report, too.

Grading Policy

Contemporary Literature adheres to the department of English grading scale found in the student handbook. Please note that teachers in the English department do not accept late work, except as allowed for excused absences as outlined in the handbook.

Classroom Expectations and Grading Criteria

□ Participation - 50%

Be prepared. The two main components of this course are independent reading and discussion. You are required to read independently after school every day and come to class fully prepared for discussion and written response. The format of the course requires every student to be responsible for his or her own reading and critical response. You are required to both speak in informal small and large group formats as well as in writing. As we are studying the writing as it pertains to our contemporary setting, it is imperative that we bring our unique understanding of the texts to our

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peers in discussion. This will make for a much more lively and engaging class! Adhere to the social contract as determined by the class. It is expected that we will all do our utmost to uphold the tenets of this contract as agreed.

□ Assignments and Assessments - 50%

Assignments for this class include both informal and formal writing, individual and group projects and discussion questions, occasional reading quizzes, as well as a variety of other means of enhancing the learning. Assignments are to be turned in on time and completed thoroughly. Work that is not turned in on time when it is due will not be accepted for credit, unless it is late due to an excused absence.

Scope and Sequence

Contemporary Literature will be broken into the following units:

Memoir: *The Glass Castle* (and/or *Angela's Ashes*) and numerous mentor texts, excerpts and essays, and student sample writings, culminating in a student-drafted memoir.

Novel units: *Life of Pi*, *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest*, *The Godfather*, *The Color Purple*, *Ordinary People*, and/or *A Separate Peace*, culminating in presentations and/or essays with final summative tests concluding each unit

Literature Circles: Student centered small groups, reading and responding critically to student-chosen texts that reflect important aspects of the contemporary voice. This unit finishes with jigsaw and whole class presentations.

Final Exam

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