

Ninth Grade English Studies I: Composition and Literature

Course Description and Syllabus

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Course Description:

English Studies I (Ninth Grade) is a course designed to develop the basic skills of students as mature readers and writers through the analysis of complex texts in the genres of fiction, nonfiction, poetry, and drama. Students will read and analyze a variety of works by numerous authors recognized as masters within each genre, highlighting various aspects of rhetorical strategy and stylistic approach that reflect the *Qualitative and Quantitative Dimensions* of the *Common Core Standards*. The course includes studies in each of the following areas: an examination of basic logic through the *categorical syllogism* and *formal and informal fallacies*; dramatic structure through *Freytag's Pyramid* and Aristotle's *Poetics*; essay structure through the *Toulmin Model of Argumentation*; and context and intertextuality through the concept that "No poet, no artist of any kind, has his meaning alone" (T.S. Eliot). Grammar and vocabulary studies will be integrated with textual studies through *close reading* and analysis. By examination of the purposes and means of writing, students will develop their own written expression and improve their language awareness while discovering the depth and richness of literary studies. The course is designed to provide a sound foundation for further study in English Literary Studies at the high school and college level.

Course Themes:

The "macro," or overall, theme of the course is *Coming of Age*, which is reflected in both the themes of many of the texts selected for study (several are *bildungsromans*) while also serving as a metaphor for "coming of age" as a young writer/scholar in building a foundation for the ninth grade student for the rigors of high school and beyond. The "micro" themes of the course also include "coming of age," as a responsible adult within a democratic society and as a citizen of an ever changing global society. Themes of race, class, and cultural difference are highlighted in many of the selected readings. Students will be provided opportunities to engage in *dialectical discourse* with the text through close readings and written expressions that reflect the themes discussed throughout the course. Additional themes include the *intertextuality* of texts, the dialectic of history, and the narrative framework that shapes political and social discourse in shaping human history, thought, and culture.

Course Goals:

The goal of the ninth grade course is to move students beyond an emotional, self-centered expression of ideas and away from a rudimentary and formulaic approach to composition and discourse to a more sophisticated and intellectually mature response, befitting the level of discourse and expectations of college-level courses. The course will review and reinforce basic

grammatical and structural mechanics of the essay in written discourse (effective thesis statement, paragraph structure, formal summary and conclusion, etc.); however, the course's main emphasis is on the most effective rhetorical and stylistic approaches employed by effective writers—both past and present—in an effort to increase student awareness and interest, while improving overall written expression. Students will be asked to produce their own original essays in a variety of forms and styles, on a range of topics. The ultimate goal of the course is to develop critical readers and effective writers who are able to produce thoughtful, meaningful written expression on a variety of subjects. Ultimately, the course seeks to produce serious writers and thinkers equipped to play a meaningful role in the public discourse of American thought and culture and the larger, evolving global society.

Course Syllabus

FIRST ADVISORY

I.) Establishment of the Fundamentals and Basic Structure of Literary Analysis (Essay) and Formal introduction to Fiction:

- 1.) **Traditional Outline and Structure of the Essay:** Topic Sentences, Thesis Statements, Body Paragraphs, Formal Summary and Amplified Conclusions in the Traditional Essay.
- 2.) **Dramatic/Artistic Structure and The Traditional Essay:** Freytag's Pyramid of Dramatic Structure and its Similarities to the Structure of the Traditional Essay.
- 3.) **Aristotle's Poetics and Traditional Story Structure:** *Beginning, Middle, and End*
- 4.) **Aristotle and The Categorical Syllogism:** *Major Premise, Minor Premise, Conclusion*
- 5.) **The Toulmin Model of Argumentation:** Claim, Support/Data, Warrant
- 6.) **Assignment #1: Essay on Dramatic Structure and the Structure of the Traditional Essay:** (Due date TBA).
- 7.) **Vocabulary:** From Summer Reading Texts and In-class Discussion/Instruction
- 8.) **Context and Intertextuality:** *No poet, no artist of any kind, has his meaning alone* (T.S. Eliot); *Book Talking to Book* (Virginia Woolf); *The Imaginary Library* (Harold Bloom); *Tradition and The Individual Talent* (T.S. Eliot)

II.) Formal Introduction to the Study of Literature:

- 1.) What is Literature?
- 2.) Genre
- 3.) Key Factors in the Analysis of Literature (Especially Prose Fiction)
- 4.) Narrative Structure

(Course Syllabus, English I, First Advisory, 2015-2016, continued)

- 5.) Aesop's Fables and the elements of literature (in-class assignment)
- 6.) The *Bildungsroman* (Coming of Age Narrative)
- 7.) Interrogating the Text: How to Question What You Read
- 8.) Introduction to Close Reading

III) Introduction to Fiction:

Summer Reading Assignment Review: (Summer Assignment Due 1st Week of School); Counts as first assignment of first advisory.

- 1.) Jamaica Kincaid's Annie John : Selected excerpts and Close Reading
- 2.) Khaled Hosseini's The Kite Runner: Selected excerpts and Close Reading
- 3.) Introduction to the compare and contrast essay
- 4.) Introduction to MLA format and citation guidelines

Writing Assignment #2: Write a 2-4 page compare and contrast essay on Annie John and The Kite Runner, using MLA citation guidelines. **Due Date: TBA**

Midterm Exam: Date TBA

Close Reading Assignment: Due Date: TBA

In-Class Writing Assignment: Due Date: TBA

IV.) Final Exam: Freytag's Pyramid, Vocabulary, Essay Structure, Genre, *Bildungsroman*, Close Reading, Annie John and The Kite Runner. **Due Date: TBA**

V.) Notebook Check-Up (Equal to Test Grade in Value): Last Week of Advisory In-Class.

End of First Advisory

SECOND ADVISORY

I.) Introduction to Fiction (cont'd) and Introduction to Non-Fiction:

- 1.) In-class close reading of Toni Morrison's novel The Bluest Eye
- 2.) In-class Writing Assignment #1: The Bluest Eye, Date TBA
- 3.) Vocabulary Assignment #2: The Bluest Eye, Date TBA
- 4.) Midterm Exam: The Bluest Eye, Date TBA

(Second Advisory Course Syllabus, English I, continued)

II.) Introduction to the Non-Fiction Essay/Narrative as Literature:

Text: James Baldwin, The Fire Next Time (In-class Close Reading)

- 1.) What is Rhetoric?
- 2.) The Elements of Rhetorical Style in Non-Fiction Literature
- 3.) The Traditional Rhetorical Triangle (Aristotle): *Subject, Speaker, Audience*
- 4.) The Modern Rhetorical Triangle: *Context and Purpose*
- 5.) The Three Modes of Persuasion: *Logos, Pathos, and Ethos*

III.) Formal and Informal Fallacies: In-class examples from contemporary media/literature

- 1.) *Non sequitur*
- 2.) *Either/or Fallacy*
- 3.) *Faulty Generalization*
- 4.) *False Analogy*
- 5.) *Begging the Question*
- 6.) *Argument Ad Hominem*
- 7.) *Argument Ad Populum*
- 8.) *The "Red Herring"*
- 9.) *The Pathetic Fallacy*
- 10.) *The Slippery Slope Fallacy*
- 11.) *The Straw Man Fallacy*

Homework Assignment #3: Find one example of each of the above stated informal fallacies from any type of literary text and be prepared to discuss in class. **Due date: TBA**

IV.) Assignment #4: In-Class Close Reading/Writing Assignment, The Fire Next Time, Date: TBA

V.) Assignment #5: In a well-written essay, write a 2-4 page essay explaining why James Baldwin's The Fire Next Time is both an Appeal to Reason (*Logos*) and an Appeal to Emotion (*Pathos*). Reminder: Make sure your essay has a clear thesis statement and proper MLA citation format with Works Cited page.

VI.) Final Exam: The Fire Next Time

VII.) Notebook Check: Date TBA (Reminder, Counted as a Test Grade)

END OF SECOND ADVISORY

THIRD ADVISORY

(Course Syllabus, English I, 2015-2016)

I.) Non-Fiction (continued) and Introduction to Rhetorical Strategy and Debate.

Text: Ta-Nehisi Coates's Between the World and Me

1.) In-Class Close Reading of Between the World and Me

2.) Assignment#1: In-class essay on Between the World and Me

3.) Assignment#2: Compare and Contrast Essay of James Baldwin's The Fire Next Time and Ta-Nehisi Coates's Between the World and Me. Due Date TBA

4.) Midterm Exam on Between the World and Me (Vocabulary and Key Concepts)

II.) Introduction to the Art of Debate: Protocols, order, rubric, and responsibilities

1.) Preparation for in-class debate (two weeks)

2.) Notes and Outline for formal in-class debate (will be graded and counts as Assignment #3 for Third Advisory)

III.) In-class Debate: James Baldwin's The Fire Next Time and Ta-Nehisi Coates's Between

The World and Me both examine American History and the ongoing difficulties faced by African Americans in light of the nation's inability to live up to its ideals. The class debate will concern which writer, Baldwin or Coates, is the most accurate in his assessment of the circumstances (both historical and actual) facing African Americans and which writer makes the most persuasive argument through the use of rhetoric.

This debate is a major project/assignment and will count as the Final Exam for Third Advisory. Students who are absent for the formal debate will have to take a final exam covering both books, rhetoric, and the formal and informal fallacies.

IV.) Notebook Review: Remember, this counts as a TEST grade!

END OF THIRD ADVISORY

Fourth Advisory

(Course Syllabus, English I, 2015-2016)

Poetry and Drama

I.) Introduction to Poetry:

- 1.) The Elements of Poetry
- 2.) Figurative Language and the Power of Metaphor
- 3.) Meter and Rhyme Scheme
- 4.) Scansion
- 5.) Structures and types of poetry: Open and Closed forms

Selected Poems from Poetry Anthology (Various): TBD by Instructor in consultation with class

(Poetry assignments will be determined by class interest in selected poems/poets and will be based upon in-class close readings of selected works; there will be two such formal papers—one in-class and one outside of class—for fourth advisory)

II.) In-Class Demonstration of the Power of Metaphor from Camille Saint-Saens's *Carnival of the Animals*.

III.) Midterm Exam: The Power of Metaphor and the mystery of "The Brown Bag" (in-class demonstration; all participating students will receive a midterm test grade for this assignment; absent students will have to take a formal makeup exam on the elements of poetry and write a short essay on selected poem s)

IV.) Introduction to Drama:

- 1.) The Elements of Drama
- 2.) The Relationship between Poetry and Drama (Elevated Diction)
- 3.) Blank Verse
- 4.) What exactly is a play?

Assignments: The class will read William Shakespeare's Romeo and Juliet and August Wilson's The Piano Lesson. There will be an in-class paper written for each play.

Final Exam: Comprehensive, based strictly upon notes given in class (that is, your notebook!).

Final Notebook Check: Remember, this counts as a test grade!

END OF FOURTH ADVISORY

Grading Policy

This course emphasizes the *process* of close reading and effective writing and does not rely upon traditional evaluation methods of frequent testing, quizzing, worksheets, and homework assignments, though exams, projects, and homework assignments are occasionally given. The only measure for student success is student effort. Any student can get an “A” in this course.

All students who initially turn in their papers on time are allowed to write and re-write papers as many times as necessary within each grading period. Students **who do not turn in papers on time** when they are due **will not** be allowed to re-write late papers. Students who turn in their papers on time can improve their grades up to and including a mark of “A,” no matter how many times a paper is re-written **within** a given term, up to the week **before** grades are submitted (in order to give the instructor enough time to actually correct papers with feedback). Students will receive whatever final grade achieved by the end of each advisory.

While students are allowed unlimited re-writes **within** a given term (up to a week before grades are submitted), students **are not** allowed to turn in papers from previous terms, once a term ends and a final grade is given for that term. Students are also not allowed to re-do final exams, even if those final exams are written assignments (essays) or take-home tests.

Effective reading and writing is a *process*. Any student who engages in that process will achieve success. The only students who will not do well in this course are those who either do not show up for class, or are chronically late, or those who choose not to turn in any work at all and do not take advantage of the multiple opportunities to re-write their work. In such circumstances, the parent will be contacted long before the crisis point. There really is no reason for any student to fail the course, no matter what level of ability s/he may currently possess.

Grading Scale

A= 93-100; A-=90-92

B+= 87-89; B=83-86; B-=80-82

C+= 77-79; C=73-76; C-=70-72

D+= 67-69; D=64-66;

F= 63 and below

Students are Evaluated in the Following Manner:

Participation (warm-ups, constructive comments, attention, follows all class rules): 10%

Practice and Application (class work, homework, presentations): 40%

Assessments (essays, exams, quizzes, projects): 40%

Notebook (3-ring binder (only), organized, with dividers, all handouts, in-class notes):10%

In addition, students with ten (10) or more unexcused absences in an advisory will receive a grade of “FA” (failure due to absences); students with five (5) or more unexcused absences in an

advisory will receive a grade reduction for that advisory. Students with thirty (30) or more unexcused absences within an entire school year shall receive a failing final grade (F) for the year and lose credit for the course.

In most advisories, 3-5 essays and a midterm and final exam or project are given, totaling 5 major assignments, or more. Occasionally, a homework assignment or project (like the 3rd advisory debate) may be substituted for a paper or multiple papers, but will be weighted to reflect the same percentage of the grade as the paper(s) it replaces. The best way to succeed in this class is to simply do your best. No one is trying to hurt you. Everyone at this school loves you and wants nothing more than your absolute success. In order to achieve it, however, you have to **do *your* absolute best.**

(Please Read the Following letter from Mark Williams, Chair of the English Department)

“I am what time, circumstance, history, have made of me, certainly, but I am also so much more than that. So are we all.” James Baldwin

“Literature is the most beautiful of all countries.” Jose Marti

Welcome to the English Department of the Duke Ellington School of the Arts for new and returning students. It is our singular goal to radically reconstruct the way you, students, engage with, understand, and offer up responses to text, with the first strategy being to broaden your understanding of what text means and the attendant dialogue that is implicit therein, meaning how one text speaks to another, meaning intertextuality. It is essential to your growth as artists, scholars, and thinkers that you understand this because that is what will make you extraordinary, that is what will make you competitive in the university pools and artistic markets, which is precisely what the Duke Ellington School of the Arts aims to do, to grow the extraordinary. Our argument is that in order to do that your work in the English Department is paramount, irrespective of what arts department landed you here.

As we begin the year consider the above two quotes, know them, and embody them as they are your first two examples of dialogue in thought, of intertextuality. The latter, from the great Cuban thinker, asks you to consider that literature is a way for all of us to travel and not be limited by regional, national, or continental boundaries. Within that, the great American writer, James Baldwin asks us to consider that these boundaries are a part of our political, social, and economic identity but in no way is that identity monolithic, or singular. These two men, one, American, the other, Cuban, illuminate a dialogue about literature and identity which the English department seeks to engage you in for the entire time you are here at Ellington, irrespective of grade level. That dialogue seeks to free us all from rigid, limiting, literary canons, and politically correct discourse, more specifically the rhetoric of diversity. The dialogue that exists between these two men, that we as a department are asking you to be a part of, has to do with considering that there are no limits to what you can do artistically, a part of that being intellectually, there are no limits to the places you can go as a thinker and a maker of art. The English Department is asking you to consider that you are simply limitless.

To that end, five tenets that you must master, must claim to that end (all involve consistent reading);

Vocabulary – You must build this skill set towards naming and capturing the complexity of who we are.

Composition – You must understand the mechanics and structure of language and writing to effectively name.

Research – You must learn how to research meticulously (not first Google search result) to add layers and depth and backbone to what you seek to name.

Rhetorical Strategy – You must consider different strategies writers employ towards what they are trying to name so you have referents for ways of naming.

Critical Thinking – You must learn to give, receive, and share in critique.

These five tenets of the English Department all go to growing you as an artist and making you competitive towards university pools and artistic markets.

You must purchase or secure the following texts for the English Department per grade level (timing on when per your English syllabus) and if you do not your grade will be seriously affected. Finally we take this work quite seriously and we expect the same from you and thus want to see that in the way you conduct yourselves towards the end of being more than “time, history, and circumstance”, of being, limitless.

Mark A. Williams

Chair of English Department

Chair, Literary Media and Communications and

Head of Dramatic Writing

Texts for Freshman: The Kite Runner, by Khaled Hosseini; Annie John, by Jamaica Kincaid; The Bluest Eye, by Toni Morrison; The Fire Next Time, by James Baldwin; Between the World and Me, by Ta-Nehisi Coates; The Poetics, by Aristotle; The Piano Lesson, by August Wilson; Romeo and Juliet, by William Shakespeare.