

English II Honors: Literature and Composition Course Syllabus, 2021-2022

Instructor: Lynne Valencia-Hernández – Available for conferences by appointment after school from 2:45-4:00 PM Monday through Friday, *Email:* lynne_valencia-hernandez@dpsk12.org (parents) lvalen2@dpsk12.net (students), *phone:* (720) 423-7002, *website:* <http://lvalencia.tjsspartans.org/>

Course Description Fall Semester:

Unit One: *Living Life:* Students will read and view several videos, short stories, poems, and articles focusing on what it means to live life and find happiness. All of the selections build toward an understanding of a life well lived, and the importance of connection and relationships. The culminating task where students will synthesize evidence from the selections to create an Advice Column on how to live life and find happiness and be able to answer how people should live their lives? How can people find happiness?

Unit Two: *Introduction to Literary Theory:* Students will read several short stories and poems to analyze how the texts reinforce, critique, or challenge the definitions of *race and ethnicity*, *masculinity or femininity*, and *class conflict*. Students will analyze how critical assumptions of categories of race and ethnicity have been used in ways that have empowered and oppressed and that the differentiation of peoples is reflected in and reinforced by language. Also students will understand the textual reflections of racism and ethnocentrism (viewing one's own culture as appropriate for all) demands an attention to the cultural history and belief systems of the social group(s) being portrayed and discussed. Students will use a critical lens to analyze racism and ethnocentrism in texts from the past and how they may have relevance to the ways we live our lives today and can serve as a starting point for positive forms of social change in the future. Additionally, students will use the gender/feminist lens to analyze texts for perceptions of masculinity and femininity; it is important for women to create a feminine/feminist way of writing and reading, and that any text cannot exist outside of a gender frame of reference. Lastly, students will learn to apply a Reader-Response lens in order to analyze how a text reflects the experience, beliefs, and understanding of its reader.

Unit Three: *Things Fall Apart:* (Modern tragedy, intro to tragic hero and literary elements) Students begin the unit learning about the historical significance of the African continent's colonization. They also view and listen to the Ted Talk "The Dangers of the Single Story" to evaluate the portrayal and bias that involved with telling a story through defined lenses. Students then read Chinua Achebe's novel *Things Fall Apart* on the effects of colonialism in Africa to closely examine the role of a tragic hero and the purpose of traditions to answer the prompt: Why are traditions important and how do we determine if a tradition is worth carrying on? Also, students will read and analyze *The Headstrong Historian*, by Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie to explore contemporary post-colonial lens and the correlation of the two texts and their impact on current societal issues.

Spring Semester:

Unit Four: Digital Storytelling: A digital story is a multimodal narrative that combines photographs, video, animation, sound, music, text, and often a narrative voice. Students will use the 7 elements of a digital story: Point of View, Dramatic Question, Emotional, The Power of the Soundtrack, Economy of Language, and Pacing. Students will create a digital story that narrates their own experience living through the COVID 19 Pandemic. They will answer *what has been lost? What has been learned? What has changed?*

Unit Five: Atrocities and Remembrances: (Bridge to impact of historical tragedy on literature, genre study: graphic novel) Students read Art Spiegelman's graphic novels *Maus* to answer: to answer: What kinds of captivity and freedom does the author explore in *Maus*. What stifles or prevents people from being completely free? How do they circumvent and defy the rules imposed on them and attempt to live ordinary lives despite revolution and war? Students will also analyze literary nonfiction, fiction, speeches, visual sources, and selections of art and music to more deeply understand historic atrocities as well as the relationship between responsibility and human tragedy.

Supplies needed:

- Composition Notebook (black and white marbled)
- Binder w/dividers
- Notebook paper
- pens/pencils (pen is preferred); red pen (or other color for editing); highlighters
- Headphones (earbuds)

Google Apps for Education Use: For many of your assignments, you will need to use Google's suite of Apps for Education and or Schoology. Denver Public Schools utilizes Google's suite as they ensure your privacy and protect personal information as required by the Federal law. While I understand that some students may not have Internet access at home, all online assignments will be given several days to complete. If you know you will have issues, plan ahead to come in at lunch or before/after school to use one of the classroom laptops, the Shield Center, or the school library.

Make-Up Work/Late Work: It is expected that students complete homework on time and individually, unless the assignment is explicitly to be done in pairs or groups. LATE WORK will be penalized 25% for each day it is late and will not be accepted after 3 days from any student for any reason with the exception of excused absences, IEPs, and 504s. To reward self advocacy, students can recover up to 90% of graded work that has been docked for lateness by coming into office hours and making teacher- suggested revisions. If a student has an excused absence, it is

the student’s responsibility to get any missing assignments and turn them in within the 48 hours allotted by school policy.

Grading and Turning in Work

Grades will be determined based on your ability to meet Common Core State Standards in Reading, Writing, Speaking, and Listening. We will be using what is known as **Standards Based Grading** — which is to say that students will have the opportunity to complete an assignment as many times as necessary in order to reach mastery of those given standards.

The gradebook is divided into two categories: Practice and Standards. Standards grades are for work that is graded for proficiency on the Common Core academic standards, and makes up 75% of your overall grade. Practice grades are for assignments that help you practice necessary skills, and make up 25% of the overall grade.

We want you to succeed, and of course, to pass. However, the skills you will be learning and refining in this course will require you to try, and maybe even fail, multiple times before you master any of them. Therefore, Unit Assessments tied to priority standards will be required to “make up” if not turned in. These Unit Assessments must be turned in **AT LEAST TWO WEEKS** before the end of the semester. Students will be able to turn in all of their ”Practice” assignments at the end of each unit. You should work with your teacher to come up with a plan to make up specific assignments that show you moving toward proficiency on the priority standards. Please do not simply complete a bunch of past assignments and expect them to automatically improve your grade. Grading is no longer a "points game" but based on students' proficiency with the Language Arts skills.

GETTING EXTRA HELP: Not turning in an assignment and/or assignment because you did not understand it is never an excuse in our class. This is because we are here to help you succeed. If you are struggling with an assignment, an idea or concept, inspiration, or whatever it is that is limiting your ability to become a successful student in this course, we will help you. We are willing to help during lunch or after school to ensure that you receive the support you need. However, it is your responsibility to come to us if you need help with something. We are all human, and by nature imperfect. If you need help, please reach out.

Standards Based Grading Proficiency Bands	
Exceeds Expectations	100%
Meets Expectations	85%
Approaching Expectations	75%

Partially Meet Expectations	65%
Attempted/Incomplete	55%
MISSING	45%

Plagiarism and cheating: Unless specifically instructed to work in groups or pairs, work is to be done individually. Work that is copied from another student or source is considered plagiarized and students will receive no credit, and possibly a referral for disciplinary action. This includes copying work from other classes. Please see the student handbook for more specific information.

Tests/Quizzes: When given, tests and quizzes are directly related to the content we are covering and are almost always announced at least one day in advance.

Grades: All homework, projects, written work, and tests are assigned a point value and placed in either the Process, Product, or Final Exam category. Each category is calculated at a different weight (Process 25%, Product 75%) which then is combined for a final grade in the course.

Checking grades/progress: Parents/guardians and students are strongly encouraged to monitor academic progress and grades. Schoology and Infinite Campus are a computer-based grade, attendance, and behavior tracking system and is the easiest and most thorough resource for keeping up to date with grades.

Attendance: Attendance in class is extremely important. School policy is followed for attendance.

Tardies: Students are expected to be in the classroom prepared to study when the bell rings. The accumulation of tardies in any classes will quickly add up to disciplinary action, including lunch detentions and possible in-school or out-of- school suspension.

Cell phones and other electronic devices: Thomas Jefferson High School has a strict policy against the use of cell phones, music players, or video game devices. Cell phones are expected to be put away and on silent once a student enters the classroom. We may make use of smartphones and chrome books during class at the discretion of the teacher.

Dear Parents or Guardians,

I am very pleased to have your son or daughter in my class. I value getting to know all of my students and helping them to draw upon their strengths to be successful learners. I emphasize respect and dignity in my classroom. These are values that are very important to me, and I expect students to demonstrate self-respect, tolerance, and acceptance of others. Discussing and debating ideas is an important part of what we will do this year, so it is vital that students feel safe and respected. I am looking forward to working with you and your child this semester. Back to School Night is September 4th, from 5:00 to 7:00 PM. I hope to see you there.

Sincerely,

Lynne Valencia-Hernández, NBCT

The following portion shows that you have read and understood the course guidelines, and asks for information so that I may contact you if the need arises.

(Please complete and return this page to me via your student. Thanks for printing neatly.)

_____ Student Name
Course/Period

_____ Parent(s) /
Guardian(s) Name

_____ Home Phone
Cell Phone E Mail Address

_____ How would
you prefer I contact you, if necessary? Is there a best time?

We have read and understood the course syllabus.

_____ Student
Signature/Date Parent Signature/Date