

## **SI Course Descriptions 2014-15**

English-

AP Literature and Composition: Romance, Realism, Modernism- Open to 12th Only

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This AP Literature and Composition course takes as its theme “The Search for Identity: Rites of Passage and Self-Discovery in Classic and Contemporary Literature.” The class will consider, through the study of poetry, drama, and fiction, how our understanding of ourselves has shifted over time, as our perceptions of our individual identities and our shared humanity have changed, and the artistic forms we use to capture our essence have been revised and retooled.

We will begin with a study of literature from the Romantic era (late 18th century - early 19th century), a period in which our rapidly expanding understanding of the enormity of our universe filled us with wonder, fear, and awe at our own comparatively tiny place in it. Texts will include *The Scarlet Letter* by Nathaniel Hawthorne, shorter works by Edgar Allan Poe, Ralph Waldo Emerson, David Henry Thoreau, as well as poems by Emily Dickinson, Walt Whitman, John Keats, Percy Bysshe Shelley, Samuel Taylor Coleridge, William Wordsworth, and Lord Byron. We will conclude this portion of the course with a study of *Hamlet*, a work that addresses many of the same ideas and concerns of the Romantic period, although it was written 200 years before this era.

Next we will consider works from the artistic and literary movement termed Realism (late 19th century). Known for their impatience with the flowery language and improbable plots of earlier fiction and drama, writers of this era were driven to confront the social problems of their time head on. They focused on the

lives and troubles of everyday men and women, particularly those who were voiceless and powerless. In this portion of our course, we will read Henrik Ibsen's *A Doll's House* and Kate Chopin's *The Awakening*, two works that concern themselves with what contemporaries called the "Woman Question" -- the debate over the nature and proper place of women, during a time when women were increasingly chafing against the restraints of their traditional roles.

Our study of literary movements will end with a close look at Modernism, a term applied loosely to a collection of artistic and literary works of the early 20th century that break with traditional forms of expression and reach for new, less formal modes of representation. Modernist artists were fascinated by the complexity of the human psyche and were committed to inventing new ways of capturing the messy contradictions and dimensions of the human mind. In this portion of the course, we will read *Intruder in the Dust* by William Faulkner and works by T. S. Eliot, Ezra Pound, and Sherwood Anderson. We will also consider poems by Robert Frost and writers of the Harlem Renaissance, artists who questioned many of the innovations of modernism. Our course will end with a reading of Toni Morrison's *Beloved*, a novel that in many ways builds on, responds to, and expands the romantic, realist, and modernist traditions that preceded it.

This is an advanced literature course in which we will engage in close reading and analysis of complex literary works. It is intended to provide you with an academic experience that reflects the rigors of an introductory college-level literature class. We will read a variety of contemporary and classic texts from all major genres and periods not only to enhance our appreciation of language and literary form, but also to envision ourselves as beginning scholars who have something to contribute to academic discourse. The focus of this course will be on thoughtful, nuanced discussion and written analysis of the readings. You will have an opportunity to develop your critical reading and written communication skills through

discussion, group presentations, informal written responses, timed in-class essays, and longer, more formal papers.

We will also use the city as our classroom; we will take several field trips to performances and presentations that will help us think more critically and fully about the works we read.

This class prepares students who conscientiously complete all coursework for the Advanced Placement Literature and Composition Exam, administered in May.

Rebels, Dreamers, and Freaks -Open to 11th and 12th graders \_\_\_\_\_

This course intends to introduce students to a range of classic and modern literary texts, as we consider the Essential Questions: Is “normal” really normal? How do we define and respond to insanity? To what extent can we rebel against social structures that trap and confine us? What do we need to be happy, and why do we keep chasing after things that inevitably lead to our unhappiness?

We will begin our year together by looking at examples of “insanity” in literature. Who gets to decide what “crazy” means? Sometimes, actions that we might term “crazy” are -- in reality -- understandable responses to the pressures and sickness we face in our culture and in our families. As a class, we will read Ken Kesey’s classic account of insanity: *One Flew Over the Cuckoo’s Nest* to consider Kesey’s depiction of “rational” reactions to an irrational world. Students will also be able to choose one of the following books to read in a small book group: *Feed* by M.T. Anderson, *Girl, Interrupted* by Susanna

Kaysen, *Catcher in the Rye* by J.D. Salinger, *The Bell Jar* by Sylvia Plath, *It's Kind of a Funny Story* by Ned Vizzini, and *I Never Promised You a Rose Garden* by Joanne Greenberg.

This course will prepare students to participate successfully in a college-level intellectual environment. Some activities will focus on time-management issues, and others on handling text complexity and ambiguous literature with greater facility. Improving and polishing the essential skills of clarity of thought in both speech and writing will be particularly emphasized.

In this course, you will develop and improve your ability to think critically – and from multiple points of view – about challenging texts and hold your own in a college-level discussion of literature. Additionally, you will discover that reading is a social act by becoming an active member of short- and long-term reading communities and study groups. You will also improve your ability to work collaboratively to develop, refine, and revise meaningful claims about or interpretations of literature. what they read. Finally, we will use a writing process that enables you to take an idea and develop, refine, and share it with others in a final, edited draft.

Do the Right Thing:

Morality in Pop-Culture, Literature, and Your Life - Open to 11th and 12th graders

“Morality, like art, means drawing a line someplace.”

--Oscar Wilde

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What does it mean to be good? When you look around the world, does it seem like it's good to be bad? What is the value of goodness in a world shaped by money and fame? In this class, we will spend the year looking at how all kinds of texts communicate ideas about good and evil. We will consider how psychologists, writers, and other artists lead us down the paths of good and bad choices and reveal the consequences of each. You will have opportunities to explore your own choices through reading and

writing and discover how your fears and desires have been shaped by the stories you've encountered throughout your life.

Along the way, we will learn about our tendency to see life and ourselves in binary terms: good/bad, black/white, and reward/punishment. We will question how these constructions shape our beliefs and evaluate their value. In addition to analytical writing, each unit will include an opportunity for creative expression, such as memoir, story telling, fiction writing, or dramatic performance. At the end of the year, you will reflect on how your exposure to new ideas, aesthetic experiences (the moments when you get lost in reading/music/art) and personal history shape your philosophy of morality.

Final decisions about texts will be made based on student interest and ability. They will consist of mostly contemporary novels, short stories, magazine articles, music videos, lectures, and TED talks. Each semester will include a comparative paper that can be extended into an English Exhibition.

AP Language and Composition: Ethos, Pathos, Logos

Open to 11th graders Only

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Who listens to you? Who do you listen to? Politicians, advertisers, authors, and artists strive to find the argument, the image, the phrase, and even the word that will spur their audience to action. This language is the art of rhetoric, a powerful tool that shapes and changes our conception of ourselves and the world. As a teenager, the choices you make “on the daily” are influenced by the language you consume and produce. In this course, you will become more aware of those influences through the study of rhetoric. The reading we do together will push you to reevaluate your values and beliefs, and you will learn to better articulate your evolving ideals through the writing process. You will become a better reader, speaker, listener, and writer. And this class will kick your ass--in a good way.

We will read and write a variety of nonfiction genres, including essays, journalism, speeches, visual texts, and documentaries. Although we will read some poetry and a small amount of fiction, the focus and content of this course is persuasive writing. Texts will likely include works by Margaret Atwood, James Baldwin, Alison Bechdel, Junot Diaz, Frederick Douglass, Allen Ginsberg, Maxine Hong-Kingston, Lee Young-Li, Toni Morrison, George Orwell, Walter Pater, Kirsten Valdez Quade and Susan Sontag. Assignments will include speeches, graded discussion, presentations, informal written responses, timed in-class essays, and longer, more formal papers. You are expected to read and respond to several works of nonfiction over the summer and may be asked to leave the course if assignments are not completed. Dedicated students who complete all coursework will be prepared for the Advanced Placement Language and Composition Exam in May, 2015.

## History-

The Constitution Law of Civil Rights and Civil Liberties - Open to all students. \_\_\_\_\_

Do you believe in free speech? Most students would say yes. Would you support the right for an anti-war protestor to state his opposition to the war in a public forum? Again, most students would say yes. But, if you said yes, you are wrong, according to the US government's treatment of Eugene V. Debs. Debs was imprisoned for ten years for telling workers not to participate in a "capitalist war," WWI. The issue becomes even more complicated when it comes to freedom of speech for speech that you hate. Would you support the American Nazis' right to free speech in a suburb of Chicago in which one out of every six Jewish citizens was either a direct survivor or directly related to a survivor of the Holocaust? For many students, the answer is no, because they prioritize the right to live without intimidation over free speech. Ironically, the Nazis ultimately won the right to march (though they never actually marched), thanks to a Jewish ACLU attorney who defended the Nazis.

This course will serve as an introduction to American Constitutional amendments, with an emphasis on Supreme Court decisions. Specific topics of study will include freedom of expression (including hate speech), freedom of religion, the right to keep and bear arms, equality under the law, and the right to privacy. We will also consider contemporary issues including voter suppression and the rise of the prison industry. Ultimately, we'll explore how each amendment represents major cultural upheavals, and how the Constitution has become a living document which charts the major shifts in our national psyche.

\*\*This course is reading, writing and speaking intensive. Students will be expected to participate in regular seminar discussions and conduct independent research. Students will produce several pieces of work that can be converted into history exhibitions.

American Social History- Open to all students. \_\_\_\_\_

What do you know about Helen Keller? Most students know that she was blind and deaf girl, and that she, remarkably, learned to read, write and speak. But what do you know of her adult life? Did you know

that she was actually a radical socialist and a feminist? Did you know that she supported the NAACP and praised the USSR? Why is it that most Americans remember Keller primarily as a seven year old when she actually lived to be eighty-eight?

In this course, we will endeavor to see history and historical figures accurately, in all their complexity. We will “remember the things that we regard as creditable and inspiring” while also acknowledging the complexity of stories and people, including their faults and shortcomings (W. E. B. DuBois). We will borrow from Professor Schwaller’s idea of paying specific attention to the “culture, values, and everyday life of the people.” Rather than idolizing and heroizing individuals, we will “recognize that we could go and do likewise” (Charles Willie). Focusing on social history will allow us to delve deeply into the fields of urban and labor history, women’s history, ethnic history, African-American history, education history, and social justice. Specific topics of study will include Japanese internment, visions of women’s liberation, the clash of cultures, and immigration.

\*\*This course is reading, writing and speaking intensive. Students will be expected to participate in regular seminar discussions. Students will produce several pieces of work that can be converted into history exhibitions.

Democratizing Twentieth Century America -Open to all students who did not take the course this year.

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At the dawn of the Twentieth Century African Americans were regularly lynched, doctors were legally forbidden to share information about birth-control with women, striking workers were routinely accosted by hired enforcers and young men could be drafted to fight in wars, though they were not old enough to vote.

At what point did we truly become a democracy? Or, maybe it’s even fair to ask, are we there yet?

This course will explore the growing inclusiveness of American democracy during the Twentieth Century. Students will examine democratization as it relates to the following groups: women, organized labor, African Americans, Latinos and other people of color, anti-war activists, and gays and lesbians. Moreover, through reading, critical analysis and discussion, we will attempt to answer the following questions:

- 1 Why then? Why did this endeavor for reform [relating to a particular group] get underway when it did?
- 2 What gains were won? What gains were sought but not won?
- 3 If the reform was only partially achieved, what limited its attainment?

Students in this course will be required to write several independent research papers and participate in a group presentation that addresses these questions. The anchor text of the course will be *A People's History of the Twentieth Century*, by Howard Zinn. Supplemental reading will include primary source materials. By the end of the course, students will have a grasp of the critical events that shaped the United States during the twentieth century and a better understanding of the meaning of democracy and equality.

**\*\*This course is reading and writing intensive. Students should come in with a basic grasp of world history during the Twentieth Century as we will focus on the role the United States played in WWI, WWII and the Cold War. Students will produce several pieces of work that can be converted into history exhibitions.**

Political and Economic Conflicts in America

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(Politics and Government) Open to all students who did not take the course this year.

More Americans can name all five members of “The Simpsons” than can name all five liberties protected by the First Amendment to the U. S. Constitution (MSNBC, 2006). What’s that all about?

This course is designed for both the political novice and political junkie. Its goal is to prepare individuals to be conscious citizens, informed voters and critical thinkers.

We will start off exploring the forces that brought the U. S. Constitution into being and use primary and secondary sources to analyze the intentions of its framers. (We will also analyze the run up to the election and its results) Next, we will look at the role of the Supreme Court in protecting, expanding and inhibiting liberty in the United States. We will also examine the so-called culture wars that have come to define the two parties and the degree to which social values defines one’s own politics. The course will conclude with an analysis of alternative voting methods and third party movements in the United States.

Students in this course will be expected to keep up with quite a bit of readings, including newspapers and online journals. You will be assessed by your ability to participate in text-based discussions and to share your interpretations of class readings. You will also be expected to participate in a debate tournament and compose several response essays that can be converted into history exhibitions.

We will regularly view excerpts from a variety of news programs, ranging from The John Stewart Show to Meet the Press.

You should leave the class with answers and more questions to the following:

Did the Constitution's framers intend to create a revolutionary and democratic government?

How has the Supreme Court been used to expand and inhibit liberty?

Should the government be used to level the economic playing field?

The Reagan Revolution: Why did the United States make a turn toward the political and economic right during the 1980s?

## Science-

Physics I: Mechanics- Open to All Students \_\_\_\_\_

Did you ever wonder how planes fly, roller coasters thrill, catapults are built, or safety features are designed? If so, then this is the course for you! In this class we will explore these and other questions YOU have. By the end of this course you will be able to use the basic principles of physics (motion, forces, and energy) to explain how things in our daily lives are designed and function. Though students will be intellectually challenged and required to use important critical thinking skills, each topic we study will end in a design project based on a real-world application of the material covered. So come ready to build a better understanding about the world you thought you knew.

Physics II: Electricity Robotics, And Waves- Open to All Students \_\_\_\_\_

Building on the understanding created in Physics I, we will continue to study and model our world. In this course we will explore the phenomena of electricity, magnetism, sound, and light! Together we will learn how to create a lighting system for a house, examine how motors work, design musical instruments, and create small robotic systems. As with Physics I, we will continue to build our ability to solve complex

problems and analyze data, as well as engage in the engineering-design process. Students will also learn the basics of two programming skills (Python and C). So come ready to uncover more of the mysteries of the way our universe works! \*NOTE: Students who have not taken Physics I must complete a summer assignment to enroll in this course.

Food Science - Open to 11th and 12th grade students \_\_\_\_\_

Everyday of your life, you eat. So it makes sense to learn more about the food you put into your body. How does what you eat actually affect your health? Where does our food really come from? These questions and many others will be answered over the course of the year in Food Science. Food Science is a full-year life science course incorporating biology, some basic chemistry, economics, and even some psychology in order to serve as a bridge to science courses in college. Over the course of the school year, we will discuss the topics discussed above as well as what influences us to choose to eat the food that we do, the components of our food that we need for survival, and how we can make informed choices about our eating. In addition to sharpening your scientific thinking and analysis skills, we will aim to answer the age-old question, "What should I eat?"

Advanced Placement Environmental Science - Open to 11th and 12th graders who qualify \_\_\_\_\_

How are humans affecting the environment? Are humans responsible for climate change? Is there anything we can do about pollution? What could happen when the Earth's human population reaches 9 billion? In Environmental Science we will answer these questions and many more. The AP Environmental Science course is designed to be the equivalent of a one-semester, introductory college course in environmental science. This interdisciplinary course draws from biology, chemistry, and Earth science and is primarily concerned with the relationship between humans and the Earth - including its

resources, systems, and other natural inhabitants. Over the course of the school year, we will discuss the topics discussed above as well as what makes life on Earth possible, how ecosystems work, how humans use land and water, how we obtain energy from different resources, the consequences of our actions, as well as what we can do to live more sustainably. This course is designed to better prepare students for college and the AP Environmental Science exam in May 2015. Students that earn a passing score can earn college credit. First and foremost, we are looking for highly motivated students who are ready and willing to work hard rather than simply those with very good grades.

#### Computer Science- Mr. Irimina- 12th graders Only

This science course is designed to introduce students to the field of Computer Science by using engaging topics and a variety of tools. Seniors who take this course and pass it will meet their senior science requirement.

The students will be exploring topics related to computers and the Internet, models of intelligent behavior, algorithms, programming and the impact of computing on our society.

Students will be able to prototype, build and test web applications and cell phone (Android) apps using blocks based programming and text based programming languages used in the industry.

The three main themes of the course are: the creative nature of computing, technology as a tool for solving problems, and how computer science is relevant today.

Rather than focusing on learning a particular software tool or programming language, the course is designed to help you understand why certain tools or languages might be used to solve particular problems.

Math- 12th Graders Choose Only.

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## Calculus

In this course we will be looking at differential and integral calculus and the ways in which these relate to the world around us. Topics we will cover include: limits, derivatives, optimization, antiderivatives, implicit differentiation and definite integrals. In addition to traditional forms of assessment, students will write at least one paper applying skills and concepts from class to real world scenarios.

## Statistics

In this course we will be looking at the different ways that statistics can be used (and sometimes misused) to describe the world around us and to make inferences and predictions about the future. Topics we will cover include: descriptive statistics, probability, the normal curve, surveying methods, correlation, and hypothesis testing. In addition to traditional forms of assessment, students will use statistical analysis tools to write original research papers and present their findings to the class.

