Mrs. Helzer
Room 116

Reading Syllabus 2009-2010

This document will provide you with a description of the course, an outline of what we will be studying throughout the year, as well as my expectations and policies. I highly recommend that you keep this document until the end of the school year.

Course Description:
This course is designed to improve your overall reading skills which include vocabulary, reading comprehension, and writing skills. Throughout the year we will be reading a variety of texts, studying vocabulary in context of what we read, and complete a variety of writing assignments related to what we read or discuss in class.

The way we go about learning in this class may be different than what you are accustomed to. You will need to be an active participator in class; in order to emphasize this I have come up with a variety of methods we will be using frequently:

1. **Cooperative learning**: Working cooperatively with others in order to accomplish certain tasks. I would like us to be more of a team than a class, and I would like to be more of a coach than a teacher. Be prepared to work with others!
2. **The incorporation of technology**: We will frequently use the electronic whiteboard, our laptops, podcasting, and a variety of websites as learning tools.
3. **Critical thinking**: You will be asked to really think about the literature we read by applying it to your own lives. Our key question when studying literature will be: how does this relate to our society?

Course Topics:
Areas of study will be (but are not limited to):

1. **Necessary grammar in conjunction with writing**
2. **Writing skills with a focus on the 6 Traits of Writing**
    a. Journal writing
    b. The writing process (pre-writing, writing, revising, editing, peer-editing, etc)
    c. Introduction to 6 Traits
    d. Personal narrative
    e. Writing about literature
    f. Informative

3. **Writing with technology**
    a. We will experiment with podcasting as a way to publish our writing and study the transformation that occurs from the written to the spoken word.
    b. We will also use Wordles as a creative mode of expression and as a planning device.
4. **Literature**
    a. A variety of short stories, magazine articles, plays, etc.
    b. Themed units on outsiders, survival, horror literature, etc.
        i. These units will include a variety of genres including short stories, poetry, essays, novels, videos, audio tracks, etc.
    c. Poetry
        i. Students will engage in reading, writing, and performing poetry.
    d. Novels/Plays
    e. Vocabulary
        i. The vocabulary studied throughout the year will be related to the literature we read.
    f. Accelerated Reader/Free reads
        i. Students will be required to attain a blend of fiction and non-fiction AR points/free reads throughout the year (amount will be determined at a later date). We may be collaborating with Callaway High School Reading students to interact in an online book club type setting.
5. **Speaking skills**
    a. Oral presentations on literature, grammar, writing, etc.

What to Bring to Class Each Day

1. Writing utensil
2. Your laptop (charged!)
3. Notebook
4. 3-ring binder to keep notes, graded assignments and handouts (I would recommend that this be only your English binder and that you would organize it with dividers)
5. Book

Classroom Rules

1. Respect yourself, others, and the classroom.
2. Be responsible for your own learning.
3. Abide by all school handbook rules/policies.

Plagiarism

Plagiarism is considered to be academic dishonesty and occurs when a person uses someone else's work and claims it as his/her own. When using someone else's words, information, or ideas, you MUST give credit to the author using the Modern Language Association (MLA) format (unless otherwise noted).

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During the first semester of English 9 and continued in the second semester, you will be educated on plagiarism (what it is, avoiding it, paraphrasing, source citations, etc.). You will be provided with all of the necessary materials and education to avoid this act of academic dishonesty.

It is very easy for me to notice plagiarism. Scholastic dishonesty is a violation of the code of conduct and results in suspension. Please refer to our school's policy on what is considered fair use.

OHS Internet Safety & Copyright and Fair Use Policy
See pages 37-43 in the school handbook.

Computer Use
During this course, you will be expected to use computers frequently. I will provide some time for you to work in class when use of the internet is necessary. However, work on your own time is expected. If you do not have access to the internet, please plan accordingly.

If you are caught using non-curricular social networking websites (facebook, myspace, hotmail, etc) in class, you will lose computer privileges for the day. If you are caught more than once, you will be sent to the principal.

Assignments
All assignments must be turned in. However, I will not give a grade for every assignment. Only two or three assignments a week will be assigned a grade on Infinite Campus. The remaining assignments will receive a + if it is finished or a - if it is unfinished. I will keep track of these on a spreadsheet. I will be happy to share this with parents/guardians and students upon request.

Students who have earned ten consecutive plus signs will receive a "Free Pass" to use on any *daily* assignment. These may **NOT** be used on major papers, projects, essays, tests, or quizzes. When using one of these passes, the student will receive full credit for the assignment...no questions asked! These passes are only good for one quarter. If students receive a - sign they will NOT be eligible to receive any extra credit.

All assignments without names will receive a zero or a -.

Grading
I use a point system for grades. This means your grade will be determined by how many points you earn out of the total points possible.

To pass, you must receive a 70% for the semester. The semester grade is an average of the previous two quarters. Semester two will start with a clean slate. Grades will include (but will not be limited to): tests, quizzes, projects, discussions, forum posts, papers/essays, journals, daily assignments, pop

quizzes, speeches, posters, etc. I will occasionally take a participation grade. However, I expect every student to contribute to class discussions. The breadth of the individual assignment will determine the point value of each of these assignments.

Late work
If an assignment is late, I will deduct 25% for each day it is late. This means that students have one day to get a passing grade on an assignment and three days before it is counted as a zero.

Makeup Policy
If students know in advanced of an absence (games, competitions, doctors appointments, etc), all work must be completed and turned in ***PRIOR*** to the student leaving. If a student is gone without prior notice (illness, family emergency, etc), he/she will be given two school days for each day of absence to complete the work. If you have any questions regarding this policy, please contact me.

I will also fill out a make-up form for each student that is missing. It is your responsibility to pick it up from the metal basket and follow all the directions.

Extra Credit
I am not an advocate of extra credit. However, I may offer extra-credit from time to time based upon the situation. I will **NOT** offer or accept extra-credit at the end of a grading term.

Extra Help
If you need extra help for any reasons, please come and see me. There are some times where I cannot sense if you are struggling. Please take the initiative to come in for help.

If you are struggling with an assignment, please do not come to me at the beginning of the class to tell me you didn't understand the assignment, so you didn't do it. A better and more productive option would be to come in and discuss this with me ***PRIOR*** to class. Be prepared for class when the bell rings!