

Syllabus: Contemporary Literature

Course Description

This is not a traditional survey course. While each work of literature must be understood within its historical context, there is no firm chronology to which this course adheres. Instead, emphasis is placed on concepts and themes that consciously or unconsciously unite us. Looking through a contemporary lens, and using the novel as its focus, students explore issues of kindness, prejudice, identity, empathy, culture, conformity, friendship, and family. Venturing well beyond the basic elements of character, plot, and setting, this course introduces students to the deeper analysis of literature—the set of conventions and patterns, codes and rules we employ in reading and discussing a piece of fiction. This course requires a research paper.

Major Readings

- *Ella Minnow Pea* Mark Dunn
- *Slaughterhouse-Five* Kurt Vonnegut
- *The Bluest Eye* Toni Morrison

Required Purchase

Additionally, students are required to purchase their own copy of the following novel: *Ella Minnow Pea*, by Mark Dunn. Though you may use any unabridged version of the novel, the edition used in class carries the following ISBN: 978-0385722438. Please purchase your copy **within the first two weeks** of the semester, so that you are prepared.

Estimated Coursework

- 100 points Classwork
- 50 points Quizzes
- 100 points Exams
- 100 points Research

- 350 total points

- Final Exam = 1/7th of Overall Grade

Grading Scale

- 100 – 90 A
- 89 – 80 B
- 79 – 70 C
- 69 – 60 D
- 59 – 0 F

Expectations

Good students arrive on time, keep their heads up, keep their phones put away, complete their work, and advocate for themselves, so please make me aware of any necessary accommodations—academically, physically, financially, etc.

General Policies

- No phones
- Check the class website daily—**especially when absent**
- Lost or misplaced assignments should be printed from the website
- Quizzes and exams should be made up after school or during a study period
- If an assignment is due and you are at school for *any* portion of the day, you are expected to turn it in promptly
- If an assignment is due via Schoology and a tech issue occurs, let me know immediately and send a screenshot of the issue
- **Plagiarism of any sort will result in a zero** and loss of any extra credit opportunities
- It is the student's responsibility to meet all deadlines and complete missed work: **late work will earn no more than 50%**
 - Further policies for absences, tardiness, and make-up work can be found in the student handbook
- Field trips, athletic events, suspensions, and prearranged absences are *not* excuses for late work
 - Work must be turned in *immediately* upon return or *before* your absence (subject to teacher's discretion)
- Extra credit will be given *only* to those students with **no late, missing, incomplete, or plagiarized** work
- When all else fails: **use your common sense**

Tentative Schedule: *Contemporary Literature*

| Week | Unit | Classwork and Assessments |
|---------------------|--|--|
| Week 1 | Course Introduction | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Website • Syllabus • Class Policies • Entrance Exam |
| Week 2-4 | Fiction: Anatomy of a Novel <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Voice • Character • Place • Narrative • Style • Irony • Theme | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • My Mix Tape • What Is a Chapter? • Exam |
| Week 5-6 | Narrative and Style: <i>Ella Minnow Pea</i> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Classwork: Distilled Notes • Classwork: Five for Ten • Classwork: Lipogramatic Exit Tickets • Quiz: Lit Terms • Exam |
| Week 7-9 | Irony and Motif: <i>Slaughterhouse-Five</i> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Classwork: Distilled Notes • Classwork: Five for Ten • Classwork: Last Will and Testament • Quiz: Lit Terms • Exam |
| Week 10-12 | Voice, Character, and Place: <i>The Bluest Eye</i> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Classwork: Distilled Notes • Classwork: Five for Ten • Classwork: Conversational Roundtable • Quiz: Lit Terms • Exam |
| Spring Break | | |
| Week 13-14 | Book Club: <i>Deep Reading and Deeper Discussion</i> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Novel Selection • Critical Review and Abstract • Annotations • Five for Ten and Element Selection |
| Week 15 | Book Club: <i>Organization and Construction</i> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Presentation Outline |
| Week 16 | Book Club: <i>Revision, Practice, and Publication</i> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Final Paper and Presentation |
| Week 17 | Book Club: <i>Performance</i> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 30 Minute Book Club Presentation |
| Week 18 | Book Club: <i>Performance</i> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 30 Minute Book Club Presentation |
| Final Exams | | |