



2024-2025 COURSE SYLLABUS

Part 1: Course Outline

Purpose of the Course—Why are we taking this class?

Reading, writing and communicating effectively are absolutely essential to maintaining freedom, justice and dignity in our society. Further, we develop a powerful understanding of our world and ourselves by reading, engaging the text and then responding to our experience with the text. English 9 is intended to empower students with a strong foundation of skills that will increase the level to which they succeed in—and enjoy—the remainder of their English classes in high school. It is also intended to give students the tools to critique and improve their world. Students will gain confidence in themselves through improvement in their ability to read difficult text and write intelligently.

Course Description: This course will use materials from CSU’s Expository Reading and Writing Course and a selection of literary texts (novels, plays and poems) that build students’ skills to succeed in AP English classes if they choose to take them later. The goal of this social justice focused curriculum is to prepare you for the rigorous reading and writing tasks you will encounter in college and career settings.

Assumptions

- All students want to succeed in this class
- All students are able to succeed in this class
- Students want to succeed in life: they want to have the ability to live the way they want to live once they become adults

Emotional/Self-Enrichment Goals:

SELF-AWARENESS: Together, you’ll work to identify your emotions, perceptions, and strengths. Understanding yourself in relationship to others is key to comprehending texts and the perspectives in the texts that you read. You’ll also recognize and communicate what types of reading are interesting to you. Self-confidence and self-efficacy, in your ability to grow as a reader, writer, thinker, and learner are central to your literacy skill development.

SELF-MANAGEMENT: Impulse control, self-discipline, goal setting, organizational skills as well as self-motivation are all critical aspects needed to learn any content, especially in developing your academic language and literacy skills.

RELATIONSHIP SKILLS: Relationship building, communication with others, social engagement, and teamwork are all very important to learning any content especially literacy. Class participation is an essential aspect of this class. It takes a village to develop academic literacy and you will be part of that village in this class!

RESPONSIBLE DECISION-MAKING: Identifying and solving problems in your thinking, writing, and communication with others, as well as analyzing situations in texts and issues are important to your learning. Your collaboration and communication with other students are also essential to your learning. You will be evaluating the credibility of sources, evidence, and arguments, reflecting on your thinking, and engaging in ethical, social responsibility for your actions in a learning environment. You will also be making important decisions as you write, provide feedback to help others improve their writing, and revise your writing in collaboration with the teacher and your classmates.

Academic Learning Goals

Contact Information

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Students engaged in this course will grow to be dynamic writers, critical thinkers and strong readers. They will develop the language arts skills necessary to succeed in the 10th 11th 12th grades as well as college, the workplace and society. Students will exhibit mastery of the standards set by the State of California for all students in the 9th grade. By the end of the year, I hope every student will:

- Be a mentally tough scholar
- Be a reader who can enjoy and master ANY text
- Be a thinker who can sit confidently at any table
- Be confident that you can write... and what you write looks/sounds intelligent

Grades

Scholarship Grade: Each student's grade will be calculated based on the contract in "Part 2" of this document.

Citizenship Grade: Students earn their citizenship grade by being in class on time, adhering to the rules of the classroom and contributing to the shared progress and success of the classroom community.

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Part Two: Our Contract for Grades

Dear Scholars,

This week, we start semester one of your high school English class journey. You'll notice that the way you're graded in this class is going to seem unconventional—particularly the way that I score your writing and put it in the grade book. The major purpose of this course is to help you grow your abilities to read texts (and understand them-- no matter how difficult they may be to read) and to write your ideas onto paper in a way that achieves your desired purpose. The conventional approaches that I've used in the past to help you improve your skills in these areas haven't worked as well as I've liked. I'm inviting you to join me in trying something different. It's something I think will be much more effective.

For this academic year, we will work with a Grading Contract. You'll notice that it is very clear how you can achieve an A, B, C, D or F. As a student and now as a teacher, I have experienced and observed that the grading of essays (or any type of writing) can be problematic. When we submit a piece of writing, the teacher grades it (gives it a score based on "quality" or "mastery of standards" or "excellence") and puts it into the gradebook, and it has an effect on the course grade of the student. When we get it back, it has a bunch of comments on it that usually serve to justify the grade that we have received, but they don't seem to *really* help us understand our actual growth in our writing skills. We are so focused (rightfully so) at maintaining our grade point average that we get consumed with how this will affect our grade in the class. Most of the time, we neglect to go back and revisit the feedback in a way that improves our future writing. This is a problem because the whole purpose of the course is to improve our writing. Therefore, a 100% score will be given to writing assignments that are done on-time and in the spirit that I've asked you to do them.

Don't worry. *Your writing efforts will be seen.* You'll still get plenty of feedback. I will still give you plenty of indication of how well you are doing with your writing. Please take advantage of all of this feedback and "scoring" as a tool for you to calibrate your approach to writing. Always know that I will read everything you submit, but you won't always get direct comments/scores from me all of the time. Sometimes you'll get the feedback from your peers, or you'll actually evaluate yourself. My hope is that you'll begin to rely on your colleagues, yourself AND me for your needs in writing achievement. You must become strong and confident in your own ability to know whether or not what you have written is good. I also want you to know how to truly listen to the input from other people.

Together we will work to achieve goals of the course. Your job is to meet the requirements of the contract. I'll be trying my hardest to create a culture in our classroom in which you support each other as well. The group we have in this section this semester is truly unique. The combination of minds (with all of our different knowledge, experience, talent, insight, hopes, fears, loves, hates, etc. that these minds bring the room) will literally never be brought back together again. It's a once in a life time experience for us all to be together in this way, and I hope we all take advantage of this time where our paths cross in this way.

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Our Grading Contract

The default grade for you in the course is an A. You are guaranteed a A in the course for Semester 1 if you accomplish the following:

- For the Contract Writing Labor Category-- Essays, Paragraphs, Reflections, Creative Pieces, Peer Review Activities
 - End with 90 percent minimum. When you submit completely, with full effort and, you will receive a score of 100% even if the assignment isn't perfect.
 - Ignore 0 (zero) assignments
- For the Contract Reading Labor Category-- Reading a text, AsYouReads, Discussion Questions, Other Homework Associated with Reading, Group Reading Activities
 - End with 90 percent minimum. When you submit completely, with full effort, you will receive a score of 100% even if the assignment isn't perfect.
 - Ignore 0 (zero) assignments
- For the Contract Skills Labor Category-- Root Squares, Check Your Head, Language Practice
 - End with 90 percent minimum.
 - Ignore 0 (zero) assignments

To Earn a B in the course for Semester 1, you must accomplish the following:

End with an 80 percent minimum in all categories

To Earn a C in the course for Semester 1, you must accomplish the following:

End with an 70 percent minimum in all categories

To Earn a D in the course for Semester 1, you must accomplish the following:

End with an 60 percent minimum in all categories

Students who don't earn an A, B, C, or D will receive and F for the course.

Signature

Date

Signature

Date

Student Print Name:

Teacher: K.C. McCarthy

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