



English 9 Syllabus 2024-2025

Instructor:

Ms. Cary Zierenberg-Senge

“To teach in a manner that respects and cares for the souls of our students is essential if we are to provide the necessary conditions where learning can most deeply and intimately begin”. -- bell hooks

Email:

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Course Description:

This class will develop a student’s ability to read, think, evaluate, and write critically, following the California English Language Arts standards. This course will use materials from the California State University’s Expository Reading and Writing Course. 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.

Expectations and Goals: In this course, you will work to develop stronger ownership over your learning, focusing on social-emotional learning competencies as you engage in reading, writing, listening, and speaking tasks.

- **Self-Awareness:** With classroom support, 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.
- **Social Awareness:** You will be participating in perspective-taking on topics and themes from readings, demonstrating empathy for characters, people impacted by issues, and other students in class as you share ideas. Social awareness is a huge component of literacy skill development. You will collaborate and engage in respectful discussions where you will need to appreciate the diversity of backgrounds and ideas and show respect for others.
- **Relationship Skills:** Relationship building, communication with others, social engagement, and teamwork are all very important to learning any content. 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, reflect on your thinking, and take ethical/social responsibility for your actions in this 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.

**Course Materials:**

Students will be able to access most of the content of this class through an electronic device (Chromebook) connected to the internet. The district-wide learning platform for all students is **Google Classroom**. Please contact the instructor or school staff if there is ever a technical issue with your device. We will be using a writer's notebook this year, as well as creating an electronic Portfolio as evidence of the critical-thinking, learning, reading, and writing students will be doing in this course. Handwritten writing can be submitted by uploading digital pictures in Google Classroom.

Grading Policy/Late Work Policy:

Since one of the goals in this course is to develop ownership over learning, points for completed work will be uploaded into Infinite Campus in a timely manner. You will set independent learning goals throughout the year and then demonstrate evidence of your achievement. The grade book will remain updated to provide one source of data for you to draw from as you provide evidence and explain the significance of your learning. Class curriculum will be delivered each week, and you will be responsible for remaining current with assignments to reflect and explain your significant learning gains.

To determine your final grade in the course, your grades will be weighted to show our emphasis on reading, writing, and critical thinking. Grades will be weighted as follows:

Writing (All: from quick writes to formal essays)	40%
Projects	30%
Classwork	20%
Final (ePortfolio Submission with written reflection)	10%

Grading Scale:

Grades will be posted following the SCUSD grade scale:

A = 89.5% - 100%, B = 79.5% - 89.4%, C = 69.5% - 79.4%, D = 59.5% - 69.4%



Dear Parent(s)/Guardian(s) and Students,

Reading is a central focus in my classroom, and as we begin a new school year I would like to share some thoughts about reading with you. At John F. Kennedy High School, our teachers and administration strive to give our students a world-class education. In order to reach this goal, we encourage our students to develop strong reading habits in their busy lives.

In order to lead rich literate lives, students must have the fundamental skill of reading and in this class, students will be supported in becoming avid readers. The only way to get better at reading is to read→ this holds true for excellent readers as well as reluctant readers. With this in mind, my goal is for your child to read two million words this school year. For the average student, two million words a year translates to forty minutes of reading every day. I will do my best to motivate your student to read academically as well as for fun. Some of the reading will be assigned, but your student will have opportunities to select books to be read independently.

To help your child reach the two-million-word goal, I have worked hard to develop my own classroom library. This library is available to any student who wants to choose a book to be read recreationally. Research shows that availability of books is a major motivating factor in getting teens to read. Students who are surrounded by books at school and at home read more. Students who read more, read better. I have found that having my own classroom library has dramatically increased the amount of reading my students do.

As a parent myself, I want you to know I am sensitive to having appropriate reading material in my classroom library. That said, what is considered "appropriate" may vary from one parent to another. Some parents do not mind their child reading Stephen King; other parents object to the horror genre. Please be aware that the selections in my classroom library, just like any public library, range from elementary-level to university-level reading material. As a parent, I ask you to remain aware throughout the year of the books your student has chosen to read and assist in gauging appropriateness.

Rest assured the books in my classroom library are never assigned. They are checked out on a voluntary basis only. Some students use my library a lot; others find books elsewhere. Any student who borrows books from my library is asked to have a parent or guardian sign below indicating that this classroom library letter has been read and understood.

If you have any questions, comments, or concerns, please feel free to contact me at carolyn-zierenberg@scusd.edu. Let's get reading!

Sincerely,
Cary Zierenberg-Senge
English teacher, John F Kennedy High School

___ Yes, I have read this letter and course syllabus with my JFK student and understand course requirements and expectations.

Parent signature _____ Date _____

Parent of _____ Period _____