

Welcome to High Honors American Studies 3A Class

Course Content and Classroom Policies and Procedures
2014-2015

Course Content

The major goals of this course are for students to think critically and to communicate ideas and information using a variety of formats. Students can expect to develop these skills through a combination of class work, homework, independent study and group centered activities.

Core Idea: Our focus this semester will be on reading both literary and informational texts and mastering both research and analytical writing. Reading selections and writing prompts will center around literature that highlights tests of the human spirit, as well as works that advocate social change.

Content Objectives and Expectations:

The content of this course is aligned with the *Massachusetts Curriculum Framework for ELA and Literacy*. While our classroom practices reflect all areas of these frameworks, the following standards will be the focus of this semester's work.

By the end of this semester, students will be able to:

W.2 – Write informative/explanatory texts to examine and convey complex ideas, concepts, and information clearly and accurately through the effective selection, organization, and analysis of content.

W.5 – Develop and strengthen writing as needed by planning, revising, editing, rewriting or trying a new approach, focusing on what is most significant for purpose and audience.

W.7 – Conduct short as well as more sustained research projects to answer a question or solve a problem.

W.8 – Gather information from multiple authoritative print and digital sources, using advanced searches effectively; assess the strengths and limitations of each source in terms of the task, purpose, and audience; integrate information into the text selectively to maintain the flow of ideas, avoiding plagiarism and overreliance on any one source and following a standard format for citation.

W.10 – Write routinely over extended time frames and shorter time frames for a range of tasks, purposes, and audiences.

SL.1 – Initiate and participate effectively in a range of collaborative discussions with diverse partners.

SL.2 – Evaluate the credibility and accuracy of each source and note any discrepancies among the data.

RL.2 – Determine two or more themes or central ideas of a text and analyze their development over the course of the text, including how they interact and build on one another to produce a complex account.

RI.4- Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including figurative, connotative, and technical meanings.

RL.6 – Analyze a case in which grasping point of view requires distinguishing what is directly stated in a text from what is really meant (e.g. **satire**, sarcasm, irony, or understatement)

L.1, L.2 – Demonstrate command of the conventions of standard English grammar and usage when writing or speaking; and capitalization, punctuation, and spelling when writing.

L.5 – Demonstrate understanding of figurative language, word relationships, and nuances in word meanings.

Essential Questions:

- What is research?
- How can I determine if a source is appropriate for “scholarly” research?
- How should I handle and use sources once I find them?
- What sustains human beings when their spirits are tested by adversity, oppression, tragedy, or loss?
- Why is it important to write multiple drafts of my papers?
- What is satire, and why is it important to read works that take me out of my “comfort zone”?
- How can I connect what I read to what I know and experience in my life?
- What power do words possess to change views and influence beliefs and actions?

Assessments:

All students in this course will be assessed through:

1. Two summer reading tests:

- Tuesday, Sept. 2: Objective test on *Unbroken*.
- Wednesday, Sept. 3: Objective test on Summer Reading title of your choice (Weighted as Test Grades)

2. Unit 1 (Weeks 1-5)

- Paper on *Unbroken* (Weighted as a writing grade)
- Research Proposal (Weighted as a Test Grade)
- Annotated Bibliography (Weighted as a Test Grade)
- Rough Draft, Notes and Outline for Research Paper (Weighted as a Quiz Grade)
- Major Research Paper (Weighted as First-quarter Assessment)
- District Determined Measure

3. Unit 2 (Weeks 6-10)

- In-class essay on one of the following titles: *The Crucible*, *When the Emperor Was Divine*, *Narrative in the Life of a Slave*, *Maggie: Girl of the Streets* (Weighted as a writing grade)
- Various vocabulary and reading quizzes (Weighted as quiz grades)
- Commonplace Book entries: 10 reflections (two entries averaged as a writing grade); a variety of weekly summaries (weighted as a quiz grade).

4. Unit 3 (Weeks 11-15)

- Objective test and in-class essay for *Huck Finn*. (Weighted as a Test Grade)

- Paper on “Brain of Twain” Quotes, important life lessons from Twain’s writing (Weighted as a Writing Grade)
- Group presentations on reading blocks (Weighted as a Test Grade)
- Ethnography Paper (Weighted as Quarterly assessment)
- Various vocabulary and reading quizzes (Weighted as Quiz Grades)

5. Unit 4 (Weeks 16-20)

- In-class essay on one of the following novels: *Fahrenheit 451* or *The Awakening* (Weighted as a writing grade)
- Commonplace Book entries: 10 reflections (two entries averaged as a writing grade); a variety of weekly summaries (weighted as a quiz grade).
- District Determined Measure

Texts*:

Core Texts: *Unbroken*; *The Crucible*; *When the Emperor Was Divine*; *Maggie: Girl of the Streets*; *Narrative in the Life of a Slave*; *Fahrenheit 451*; *The Awakening*; *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*, Mark Twain.

Supporting Texts and Resources:

Each core test will be supplemented with **3 to 4 short literary works** (short stories, memoirs, poems), and **2 to 3 informational texts** (essays, articles, transcripts). Other forms of media will also be used in support of the course learning objectives. We also hope to attend a screening of *Unbroken* after Christmas vacation)

*Lowell High School is committed to providing students with reading material that is challenging, engaging and age appropriate. We have worked hard to establish an inventory of literary works that span from classic to contemporary. Some of these works contain mature language and content. Reading selections are addressed in the context of key ideas, craft, structure, and connection to essential questions. Parents are encouraged to read along with students. In the event that a parent objects to a specific title used in class, the students will be provided with an alternative, comparable reading selection.

Classroom Expectations

Please purchase:

- One notebook for any notes and vocabulary.
- One pocket folder for typed essays (to remain in the box labeled for your class Period, located in the Writing Center)
- One pocket folder for timed essays (to remain in the box labeled for your class Period, located in the Writing Center)
- One Composition Notebook (typically with a harder marbled cover. This notebook, which serves as your Commonplace Book, must remain in the file cabinet at the back of the classroom.

When to Arrive to Class:

Arrive to class within **five** minutes of the last bell. Attendance is taken at the start of each class. If you arrive after the start of class, you must have a pass or you will be considered late. As per the student handbook, if you arrive 10 minutes after the bell, you are considered absent from class for the day.

What to Bring to Class:

You must bring a pen or pencil and your notebook to class daily. Always bring whatever text we are reading at the moment, either the assigned paperback or photocopied handout.

How to Participate in Class:

Class participation is an important part of making the most of this class. You are expected to be prepared for class and able to participate in all class discussions and activities. Participation includes having the required class materials, taking part in teacher or peer-led group discussions on a daily basis and actively cooperating in pairs or small groups. Maintaining appropriate classroom conduct at all times is expected. All students deserve a peaceful and supportive learning environment. Any form of bullying or disrespect toward others is taken very seriously.

What to do if you're absent:

Keep in mind: NINE unexcused absences in the semester will result in no credit status.

You are responsible for all work missed due to absence. This includes class notes, class work, tests, quizzes and homework assignments. Homework due the day you are absent is due the day you return. Class work or homework assigned the day you are absent is due no later than two days after you return to school.

If you miss a test or quiz due to absence, you must make the test up within **three** days of your return to school. If you are absent the day before an announced test or quiz, you are responsible for taking the test or quiz with the class at the regularly scheduled time. It is your responsibility to arrange a time for the make-up. All make-ups are **before** school or, for something like an in-class essay, during class.

For any question regarding homework assignments or expectations, please see me.

It is a **very** good idea to have the telephone number or email of at least one classmate to be able to verify assignments and due dates.

Readiness (Homework and Participation): Homework is crucial to improving your skills in reading, writing and thinking critically. Homework takes many forms: long-term reading assignments, writing, studying or working on long-term projects. All homework will be accounted for through collection, class discussion, quizzes or peer work.

Reading Checks: A quick reading quiz is the best indicator of how you are keeping up. These reading checks/quizzes are a way to check if you're completing your homework and understanding the reading assignments. Reading checks are factored into your quiz average.

Late work: No homework will be accepted after two days from the date that it was due. **You will lose 10 points each day it is late.** If you skip class, your work will not be accepted for credit. If you are absent on a day that you are scheduled to present (either individually or in a group), you must provide a parental note or the absence must be excused, or you will receive a zero for the presentation. Please arrange any appointments (i.e., meeting with a guidance counselor, finishing a test for another class, etc.) around your presentation date. The deadlines for projects are firm; a student must have a doctor's note to submit a late project or assessment. **Do not get in the habit of emailing me your papers, expecting me to print them; printing is your responsibility.**

Writing Assignments: Typed essays must, unless otherwise specified, be typed, following the MLA guidelines. Major writing assignments often carry the weight of a designated writing grade. You will be provided with rubrics for these major assignments. **You must attach the rubric to your final draft when submitting it on the due date or risk losing 5 points.** ... Timed essays are graded using the College Board's AP rubric, which rates essays on a scale of 1 to 9, with 9 being the best. Essays that score between 6 and 9 are considered by the College Board as "Upper Level Essays." This year, score grade equivalents will be as follows: 9 = 100, 8 = 93, 7 = 86, 6 = 79, 5 = 72, 4 = 65, 3 = 58, 2 = 51, 1 = 44.

Tests and Quizzes: You will receive notice for any test you will take in class. Tests, administered at the end of a larger unit, generally are objective (50 to 100 questions)—and can include character matching, quote identification, true/false, and multiple-choice questions—but they may include a timed essay that is averaged with the objective portion. Quizzes are frequent and often unannounced.

Academic Dishonesty/Plagiarism and Cheating:

- The willful giving or receiving of an unauthorized text, unfair, dishonest, or unscrupulous advantage in academic work over other students using fraud, duress, deception, theft, trickery, talking, signs, gestures,

text messaging, **copying**, or any other methodology will not be tolerated. *Any student participating in any of the above behaviors will receive a **ZERO** for any assignment(s) pertaining to these behaviors.*

- **Plagiarism** is the submission or presentation of another person's work, language, thoughts, ideas, or expressions as your own original work. This includes all information downloaded from the internet. *Any student who submits plagiarized work will be given a **ZERO** for the assignment.* It is important to remember to correctly cite another person's work using the MLA or APA format. When in doubt, ask me.

Grading: You **EARN** your grade. Expectations will always be clearly outlined and discussed in advance of an assignment's due date. The following is a breakdown of how you will be graded:

- 30 % **Writing:** Determined through a combination of at least three AP-style in-class essays, typed essays, and Commonplace Book Reflections.
- 25% **Tests:** Always announced in advance, these reading comprehension assessments can include character matching, quote identification, true/false, and multiple-choice questions, as well as short answers. Generally these are 50 to 100 questions. A presentation may also count as a test grade. Outside Reading tests are administered every quarter; choices are drawn from the LHS summer reading list, and copies of the books are available in the library.
- 20 % **Quarterly Assessment:** This assessment can include, but is not limited to, an AP-style in-class or take home essay, a research paper, or a creative project linked to the literature. I will explain the quarterly early in a quarter.
- 15% **Quizzes:** Periodic reading checks—either announced or unannounced—on blocks of nightly reading, vocabulary checks or written reflections on literature. A presentation may also count as a quiz grade.
- 10 % **Readiness (Homework and Participation):** You will be evaluated on your overall preparedness for class (completion of any reading or written assignments), as well as your active participation and attentiveness in class. You lose **three** points off your Readiness grade if you are unprepared (missing texts or assignments), disruptive, or inattentive (doing work for another class). I will keep track of this on a grid during the quarter.

Extra-Help: Extra help is always available. I would be happy to meet with you before school. If you get stuck on an English assignment after hours, feel free to email me. I can't promise I'll see every message sent before the next school day but will do my best to check it in the evening.

Final Note:

The rules and regulations outlined in the *Lowell High School Handbook* are taken very seriously in this classroom. In particular, the following should be noted:

- Your ID badge must be visible at all times- do not enter the room without it prominently displayed. Do not take it off once the class has begun.
- Coats, Hats, Headbands, bandannas are not allowed in class and must not be visible.
- Cell phones and other electronic devices should be out of sight and turned off.

Because we have so little time together, you will not be allowed out of class to retrieve materials from your locker or to print papers in the Library.

I am looking forward to working with you this school year. It is my hope that you will learn a lot from the work that we do. I also hope to learn a great deal from you. I welcome communications from parents/guardians as well as feedback from students.