



RADNOR TOWNSHIP SCHOOL DISTRICT
Course Overview



Viewpoints on Modern America/
AP English Language and Composition
Course # 05990030

General Information:

Credits: 2.0
Weighted: Yes
Prerequisite: Teacher Recommendation or Gifted Identification

Length: Full Year
Format: Meets Daily
Grade: 11

Course Description:

This team-taught course, third in a sequence of four interdisciplinary courses, combines study of American history, politics, literature, and culture. The approach to curriculum is both chronological and thematic, and reflects on essential questions about the American character. Readings include primary and secondary documents and extend into the related arts with particular attention to the genre of film. Methods used include active discussions, examinations of current political and social issues, lecture, group work, simulations, and presentations. Along the way, a variety of expository and creative writing assignments call on students to synthesize, argue, and analyze. The involvement of both teachers in delivery and assessment enriches the curriculum and increases students' awareness of varied points of view, new ideas, and core information about their national culture. The Parallel Curriculum approach encourages students to connect history and literature as well as extend their studies into individualized areas of practice and interest. Assessments are consistent with methods used on the Advanced Placement English Language and Composition exam, which is taken in the spring.

Course Objectives:

The student will be able to...

- A. address the following essential questions:
- When do we work within the system to change it and when do we go outside the system?
 - Is change better coming from the top, the bottom, or some combination?
 - To what extent are the founding documents flexible?
 - Who is the backbone of the American economy?
 - Does government shape or reflect society?
 - Is the American Dream a world dream?
 - What justifies reaching outside our borders?
 - Is there such a thing as an American Literature – or is there only literature produced by Americans – and, if so, what are its characteristics?
 - How does literature reflect its time?
 - How do (and to what extent can) writers help change society and construct a new society?
 - Is it fair to judge people of another time by what we know and understand now, or must we judge them only in context of their time?
 - Where is the line between myth and reality?
 - What can and should an outsider do to join society?
 - Are we less innocent than previous generations were, and (if so or not) is that a good or bad thing?
 - How is fiction-writing like magic and illusion?
 - What is the relationship between the individual and the world-historical?
- B. understand some of the great work produced by writers who call and have called America their home

- C. demonstrate knowledge about a variety of significant American documents:
 - read significant American literature critically and perceptively with regard to genre, major figures, historical context, and themes
 - read significant American non-literary documents (legislation, political rhetoric, historical analysis, etc.) critically and perceptively with regard to purpose, major figures, historical context, and themes
 - “read” non-written texts (films, visual art, etc.) that have contributed to American culture, considering them critically and perceptively with regard to genre, major figures, historical context, and themes
- D. understand and be able to articulate, both from personal and academic standpoints, what makes great literature, what literature means and has meant to America, what America means and has meant in literature, and, specifically, what literature and America mean to the student
- E. develop an understanding of the principal themes in U.S. History
- F. reinforce independent efficient work and study habits and apply them to specific learning tasks
- G. apply techniques of class analysis to reading independently: historical development and authors; characters and themes; figurative language and literary devices; structural and generic components
- H. structure thought precisely with language, through thoughtful use of the writing process and application of the elements of writing, including but not limited to: topic sentences; paragraph development; transitions; introduction, developed progression of ideas, and statement of implication; thesis statement independently developed; evaluation of components of the argument
- I. develop a substantial idea with careful control of both language and composition techniques throughout an essay, through independent application of language and composition techniques, appropriate integration of quotations, and provision of ample support using best available examples
- J. apply conventions of English grammar, syntax, and sentence structure in composition, including but not limited to: control of complete sentences; use of subordinate elements logically and accurately; development of sentence variety, including management of loose and periodic sentences; and application of rhetorical techniques
- K. cultivate fluency and voice in written work in the following forms (and perhaps others): personal and reflective, persuasive/argumentative, informative, analytical, synthesis, research
- L. develop and apply vocabulary skills
- M. sharpen discussion skills of listening, speaking, and responding to the ideas of others
- N. be able to recognize, interpret, and evaluate rhetorical strategies, structural techniques, logical fallacies, and elements of propaganda
- O. gain independence in using multiple sources, evaluating and synthesizing the essential ideas in order to develop a research paper which incorporates the writing process and satisfies English Department and Social Studies Department requirements
- P. document sources correctly according to the standards of the MLA
- Q. hone an ability to analyze historical evidence
- R. interpret historical sources from multiple points of view
- S. display his or her growth in historical thinking through assessments/performances in class and those produced at home

Common Assessments:

Common Assessments (all 11th grade students in all levels)

Close Reading Common Assessment

Students will be given a cold passage to read on either the mid-term or the final to test their knowledge/comprehension of an historical speech given by Sojourner Truth.

Close Reading Common Assessment

Students will be given a cold passage from a female writer to read to test their knowledge on a typical American Literature fiction passage.

MLA Research and Skills Common Assessment

Students will be given a research topic to write and will be graded on their MLA skills in regards to parenthetical citations, Works Cited Page, and paper formatting.

PSAT Common Assessment

Students will take the Preliminary SAT/National Merit Scholarship Qualifying Test (PSAT/NMSQT) in October. It is a standardized test cosponsored by the College Board and National Merit Scholarship Corporation (NMSC) that provides firsthand practice for the SAT®.

Common Course Assessments (all students enrolled in this course)

Analytical Research Paper using MLA

6-8 pages, on a topic that synthesizes more than a dozen outside resources that are independently located by the student; includes primary and secondary sources; includes an interview that is conducted independently by the student; leverages the use of narrative to enhance reader engagement.

AP-style Essays

Timed in-class essays on each of the AP English Language and Composition formats: Synthesis, Analysis, and Argument – one or more of each format

Socratic Seminars

Student-conducted Socratic discussion – more than five over the course of the year

AP-style Multiple Choice Exams

More than one content-focused AP-style exam on history and/or literature

Group Presentations

Formal and informal presentations made in front of the whole class, in which cue notes are not (or slightly) used, coordinated across several students using multiple media

Reflective, Personal Writing

More than two reflective personal essays

In-class Close-Reading of Film

Film Analysis discussion that considers (for the several classic films used in the course) both *synthesis* between the film and the general subject matter and *analysis* of the film as an art-product that can be close-read as a text

Supplemental Texts and Resources (optional)

Discussion activities, including (if possible) guests from outside the school
Advanced Placement English Language and Composition materials
Vocabulary exercises
Independent reading

Major Units of Study:

- I. Myth of America
 - A. Summer texts: Amazing Adventures of Kavalier & Clay, The Godfather, and a memoir
 - B. The Myth of America and the American Dream
 1. “Western Star” and short fiction and non-fiction about the Dream
 2. Walt Whitman, “Song of Myself”
 - a) Critical reading of Whitman’s Preface
 - b) Transcendentalism as an American philosophy

- II. Work, Progressivism, and Voice
 - A. The “Blessed Barons” of industry
 - B. Philip Levine
 - C. Matewan
 - D. Women and Feminism
 - 1. Wollstonecraft, Seneca Falls, and the 19th Amendment
 - a) Iron Jawed Angels
 - b) Expectations and stereotypes
 - 2. “Yellow Wallpaper”
 - 3. Their Eyes Were Watching God
 - E. The Harlem Renaissance: The purpose of art for an oppressed people
 - 1. DuBois vs. Hughes, Wright vs. Hurston
 - 2. Poetry
- III. Imperialism and Expansion
 - A. Native American issues: precursor to Imperialism?
 - B. Spheres of influence
 - C. The drive to World War I
 - D. The Sun Also Rises
 - 1. The expatriates
 - 2. Existentialism
 - 3. Introduction to Modernism
 - a) T.S. Eliot
 - E. The idea of the Bildungsroman (novel of education)
 - 1. The maturation of characters and (?) of the nation
 - 2. Citizen Kane
- IV. Wealth and Crash: The Roaring Twenties and the Roaring Aughts
 - A. The Great Gatsby
 - 1. Illusion and myth
 - 2. The literal and conceptual geography of America
 - B. The stock market
 - 1. Comparative analysis of the “Crash” of 2007-2009
 - 2. Psychology of boom and bust
 - C. Wall Street
 - 1. Control and hubris
- V. The Depression and WWII
 - A. “Court-Packing”
 - 1. FDR’s presidency
 - 2. The Supreme Court
 - B. After the Crash: from indulgence to empathy?
 - 1. Empathy and voice in *The Grapes of Wrath* (Steinbeck)
 - 2. Short stories (Walker, O’Connor, Carver, Ortiz Cofer, and more)
 - C. Death of a Salesman
 - 1. Tragedy
 - 2. Challenges to the myth
 - D. The progression toward WWII
 - E. Propaganda
 - F. Poetry of wartime (focus on WWII)
 - G. The Japanese Internment

- VI. Post-War America: Civil Rights, the Cold War, and the Postmodern Era
 - A. The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn
 1. The challenges of racism – *in* the text and *to* the text
 2. Revisiting the Bildungsroman
 3. Satire
 - a) Satire project
 - B. Milestones, rhetoric, and poetry of the Civil Rights era
 - C. Peace and material prosperity
 - D. Communism and the Red Scare
 - E. Non-conformity: from Civil Rights Protest to the Beat Generation and the Sixties
 1. “Howl”
 2. “The Swimmer”
 3. Return to Transcendentalism
 - F. Research Project
 - G. Vietnam and the Post-modern Era
 1. Military advisors and international diplomacy
 2. The “emptiness of material existence”
 3. The Things They Carried
 - a) Metafiction and structural innovation
 - b) Challenges to faith in objective truth; the value of stories
 - H. Final Project: Angles on the Post-modern Era

Materials & Texts:

Common Texts (all 11th graders in all levels)

Adventures of Huckleberry Finn, by Mark Twain

Harlem Renaissance – starting with Langston Hughes: “Harlem”, “The Negro Speaks of Rivers”, “Mother to Son”, “The Weary Blues”, and “I, Too”

Common Course Texts (all students enrolled in the course)

The Amazing Adventures of Kavalier & Clay, by Michael Chabon

“When I Heard the Learn’d Astronomer” and “Song of Myself”, by Walt Whitman

“Founders Chic”, by H. W. Brands

“Blessed Barons”, by Ron Chernow

Selections from “Self-Reliance” and “Nature”, by Ralph Waldo Emerson

Selections from *Walden*, by Henry David Thoreau

Chapters selected from *The American Pageant*, by Thomas Bailey and David Kennedy

Selections from *People’s History of the United States*, by Howard Zinn

Selection from “Farewell Address”, by George Washington

“The Yellow Wallpaper”, by Charlotte Perkins Gilman

Their Eyes Were Watching God, by Zora Neale Hurston

The Sun Also Rises, by Ernest Hemingway

The Great Gatsby, by F. Scott Fitzgerald

Death of a Salesman, by Arthur Miller

“Tragedy and the Common Man”, by Arthur Miller

Selection from *Truman*, by David McCullough

“The Meaning of July Fourth to the Negro”, by Frederick Douglass

Selections from Booker T. Washington (especially from the Atlanta Exposition speech) and W.E.B. DuBois (from *Souls of Black Folk*)

Selections from Martin Luther King Jr. (from “Letter from Birmingham Jail”) and Malcolm X (from

“Letter to the Grass Roots”)

The Things They Carried, by Tim O'Brien

A minimum of fifteen of these authors – short stories and/or poetry and/or nonfiction – in addition to the texts listed above: Katherine Lee Bates, Stephen Vincent Benet, Archibald MacLeish, Peter Gammons, Flannery O'Connor, Alice Walker, Richard Wright, Anzia Yeziarska, Maya Angelou, Junot Diaz, Michael Herr, Annie Dillard, Countee Cullen, Paul Laurence Dunbar, Langston Hughes, Claude McKay, James Weldon Johnson, Zora Neale Hurston, John Steinbeck, Gwendolyn Brooks, John Updike, Yusef Komunyakaa, Randall Jarrell, Gregory Corso, Allen Ginsberg, Nikki Giovanni, Dudley Randall, Melvin B. Tolson, Robert Frost, John Wallace, Tony Norman, George Will, John Cheever, David Kamp (and more: texts used are not limited to these authors)

Films: *The Godfather* (dir. Coppola, 1972), *Matewan* (dir. Sayles, 1987), *Iron Jawed Angels* (dir. K. von Garnier, 2004), *Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid* (dir. Hill, 1969), *Without Fear or Shame* (PBS Video from the *I'll Make Me a World* series on the Harlem Renaissance), *Citizen Kane* (dir. Welles, 1941), *Wall Street* (dir. Stone, 1987), *Triumph of the Will* (dir. Riefenstahl, 1935), *Why We Fight: Prelude to War* (dir. Capra, 1942), *A Family Gathering* (dir. L. Yasui, 1988), *Born to Trouble: The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* (1999, PBS Video), *The Manchurian Candidate* (dir. Frankenheimer, 1962), *Hearts and Minds* (dir. P. Davis, 1974).

Supplemental Texts and Resources (optional)

Class website

Outside readings for 2nd Quarter (posted on the class website)

Everything else on the “A minimum of” list (above)

The Glass Castle, by Jeannette Walls

This Boy's Life, by Tobias Wolff

Carter Beats the Devil, by Glen David Gold

The Crucible, by Arthur Miller

Television and internet clips: various, including but not limited to *The Great War* series, “The Monsters Are Due on Maple Street” (*Twilight Zone*), “Red Nightmare”, “Lazy Sunday” (SNL digital short)

“White Man's Burden”, by Rudyard Kipling (although it is not American....)

Summer Assignment:

Radnor High School publishes an annual summer reading list. Students should refer to the RHS English page for Summer Reading expectations.