Overall Description of Course

This team-taught course, third in a sequence of four interdisciplinary courses, combines study of American history, politics, literature, and culture, on a high honors level. 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.

Common Core Standards

The standard “numbers” map to the online Common Core documents: grade 11 standards for English Language Arts and History/Social Studies.

Reading:
Key Ideas and Details: RL1, RL2, RL3, RI1, RI2, RI3, RH1, RH2, RH3
Craft and Structure: RL4, RL5, RL6, RI4, RI5, RI6, RH4, RH5, RH6
Integration of Knowledge and Ideas: RL7, RL9, RI7, RI8, RI9, RH7, RH8, RH9
Student Objectives:

Students will comprehend and analyze various texts from American Literature and American History, including the seminal texts that represent the backbone of what an educated person should know.

Students will critically respond to American texts in various written formats.

Students will evaluate thematic connections between texts.

Students will demonstrate research skill.

Students will write for a variety of audiences.

Students will write in a variety of modes, including analytical/expository, synthesis, argumentative/persuasive, and narrative.

Students will independently perform critical analysis and further develop text-analysis skills.

Students will select and integrate textual evidence (including quotations) to make and support arguments.

Students will demonstrate seminar-type speaking skills at the level of college students, and make presentations worthy of college college students.

Students will address the following essential questions, and be able to offer intelligent, learned interpretations about each one:

- 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?
- To what extent is non-conformity a good (realistic?, productive?) thing?
- 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 just 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?
- How do speakers and writers -- ranging from politicians to poets to propagandists -- develop influence upon their audiences?
- 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?

**Materials & Texts**

**Essential Texts:**

*Norton Anthology of American Literature*, vol. C, D, E


*American Pageant*, Bailey

Other textbooks, including *Elements of Literature* (5th Course), *American Literature: A Thematic Approach*, and *Viewpoints*

Include: packet of readings on “the myth of America”, selections from Emerson and Thoreau

*People’s History of America*, Zinn

Separate texts: *The Amazing Adventures of Kavalier & Clay, Their Eyes Were Watching God, The Sun Also Rises, Carter Beats the Devil, The Things They Carried, The Great Gatsby, This Boy’s Life*

Criticism on *Death of a Salesman and The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*


**Additional Texts and Materials:**

Outside Reading novels and non-fiction books are listed in an extensive document that is posted on the course website

Fiction: segments from a variety of poets (e.g., Philip Levine, Dudley Randall, Nikki Giovanni, Lucille Clifton) and novelists (e.g., Pete Hamill, Jeffrey Eugenides, Kevin Baker) are included in packets throughout the year

Plays: *The Crucible, A Streetcar Named Desire*

**Additional Informational Texts:**

Choice of summer-reading memoir: *The Glass Castle or Blood Done Sign My Name*

Newspapers and newsmagazines, including: *The Atlantic Monthly, The New Yorker, Newsweek*, etc.

Online sources: blogs, articles, essays (e.g., Geoffrey Nunberg’s audio essay on “taboos”)

Packets constructed from a variety of textbook sources

Criticism on *The Sun Also Rises and Leaves of Grass*, among others

Films: “Mark Twain Tonight”

Independent text(s) selected by student
Activities, Assignments, & Assessments

I. Summer and Myth
   A. Summer texts: Amazing Adventures of Kavalier & Clay, The Godfather, and a memoir (The Glass Castle or Blood Done Sign My Name)
   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) Transcendentalism as an American philosophy

II. Work
   A. The Blessed Barons of industry
   B. Philip Levine
   C. Matewan

III. Progressivism and Voice
   A. Women
      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
   B. The Harlem Renaissance: The purpose of art for an oppressed people
      1. Poetry
      2. I’ll Make Me A World: Without Fear or Shame
      3. DuBois vs. Hughes, Wright vs. Hurston
   C. Project linking themes of Women’s Rights and Harlem Renaissance

IV. Imperialism and Expansion
   A. Native American issues: precursor to Imperialism?
   B. Spheres of influence
   C. World War I
   D. The Sun Also Rises
      1. The expatriates
      2. Introduction to Modernism
         a) T.S. Eliot
      3. Criticism
      4. Exploration of autobiography informing art
   E. Carter Beats the Devil
      1. Historical fiction
   F. The idea of the Bildungsroman (novel of education)
      1. The maturation of characters and (?) of the nation

V. The Roaring Twenties
   A. The Great Gatsby
      1. Illusion and myth
      2. The literal and conceptual geography of America
   B. The stock market
   C. Wall Street
   D. Beyond the Twenties: from indulgence to empathy?
      1. Short stories (Walker, O’Connor, Carver, Ortiz Cofer, and more)

VI. The Depression, WWII, and Existentialism
   A. Death of a Salesman
B. The progression toward WWII
C. Propaganda
D. Poetry of WWII
E. The Japanese Internment
  1. Executive order 9066
  2. *A Family Gathering*

VII. Civil Rights
A. *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*
  1. Language, satire, and offense
  2. Revisiting the Bildungsroman
  3. *This Boy’s Life*: a post-modern version of the Bildungsroman
     a) The memoir
     b) Identity
B. How to change a society
  1. Booker T. Washington and W.E.B. Dubois, Martin Luther King Jr. and Malcolm X
  2. *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka*
  3. Poetry of the Civil Rights Era
C. Research Project

VIII. The Fifties Into the Sixties
A. Peace and material prosperity
B. Communism and the Red Scare
C. *The Crucible*
D. Non-conformity: The Beat Generation
  1. “Howl” and censorship
  2. Return to Transcendentalism
     a) Emerson’s “Nature”

IX. Vietnam and the Post-modern Era
A. Military advisors and international diplomacy
B. The emptiness of material existence
C. *The Things They Carried*
D. Final project: independent research and synthesis, “making sense” of the post-modern era

ASSIGNMENTS

Classwork
  including Collins Type 1 writing tasks
Socratic Seminars
  and less-formal discussion
Tests/Quizzes
  including AP-style multiple choice
Journals
Reading Logs/Reader Responses
Projects
  includes: group projects and presentations
  includes: satire project, art project
Simulations
Formal Essays and Timed Essays
  includes: multiple examples of AP-style Synthesis, Analysis, and Argument essays
  includes: analysis of structure and theme, explications, use of critical commentary, use of historical/biographical context, and citing all evidence
Independent Research Paper
and other independent research (e.g., final project)
Creative Writing (e.g., narrative poetry)

Common Assessments include:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Term 1</th>
<th>Term 2</th>
<th>Term 3</th>
<th>Term 4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>11th grade</td>
<td>Research questions developed: (a) don't yet have the answers; (b) how to ask a question; (c) persist through &quot;emotional disequilibrium&quot;; (d) notetaking as part of the writing process; (e) long-term attention to a problem</td>
<td>Persuasive/argumentative essay: (a) not simply &quot;I think&quot;; (b) includes a concession; (c) includes a counterclaim and rebuttal of that counterclaim; (d) attention to the appeal to ethos</td>
<td>(1) Memoir designed with a theme; (2) Satire project, demonstrating attention to tone; (3) Independent research essay that is analytical (not a report)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

See the English Department Website at the RTSD.org RHS web site for the full set of Common Assessments, organized for each year in the continuum of English courses

**ASSESSMENTS**

Grading scale as published in the RHS Student Handbook

**Terminology**

See the Terminology page of the English Department website at the RTSD.org RHS website for the full set of Terms, organized for each year in the continuum of English courses

**Media, Technology, Web Resources**

TBD