Course Objective
This course strives to prepare students to be thoughtful, productive citizens of the 21st century with the ability to think critically, to read, view and reflect critically upon a variety of genres and disciplines, and to write analytical, argumentative, expository and creative works in a confident and convincing manner.

Texts


Classroom activities
Students will engage in the following classroom components on a regular basis:

- Journal writing – Students will maintain a composition book to include assigned formative writing tasks such as free writing on an assigned topic, responding to brief written passages, responding to websites, videos, photos and other visual graphics, brainstorming and pre-writing exercises, reflecting on their formal writing endeavors, reflecting on feedback from peers and instructor on assignments, active reading activities connecting class literature assignments to their personal experiences, vocabulary enrichment sentences and etymology.

- Grammar/usage study – Emphasis on English grammar and conventions such as sentence structure, phrases and clauses, parallelism, redundancy and conciseness, transitions, etc. to be recognized and evaluated in professional and student models.

- Writing process – All formal written works will include the steps of the writing process with convincing evidence of inspiration and brainstorming, drafting through various stages, peer and instructor feedback, polishing and publishing and finally, reflection on each assignment required.

- Learning Groups – Students will regularly meet with assigned small groups for peer response to writing sessions, for literary discussion and sharing of ideas, critical reading and analysis activities.

- Abstract writing – Students will frequently be asked to write formal, one page abstracts of non-fiction prose articles such as historical speeches, letters, diaries, journal articles, professional and student generated arguments.

- Annotation – Students will be asked to annotate a variety of articles to demonstrate a close reading and to apply the ‘does/says’ analysis technique.

Writing
Students will write several formative essays and/or papers in preparation for the four major writing assignments below. All formal classroom writing will include evidence of all phases of the writing process as described above from inception of the idea to a final reflection on the finished product. Students will also engage in a study of rhetorical elements, fallacies of arguments, claims and warrants, use of evidence, and types and structures of arguments. Students will analyze a series of arguments in whole class teacher led discussions and in small learning groups prior to writing their own arguments. Language study of tone, diction, syntax, vocabulary, connotation and word choice will also be included in the study of writing. Vocabulary enrichment through assigned words, which students must define and apply by composing sentences of various structures, will be ongoing and will include regular quizzes.

#1 Researched Argument Requirements

Students will:

- Choose a current event/social issue from an instructor generated list (restriction of violence in video games, women in combat, English-only policies in the workplace, government funding or restriction of stem cell research, ethics of cloning, bio-genetically engineered food, NCLB, immigration policies, etc).
- Engage in primary and secondary research including skills such as evaluating sources, reading critically, annotating, summarizing and synthesizing information and citing all sources using MLA format.
- The argument will include the following parts:
  1) Introduction, containing attention grabber to engage the audience, explanation and background of the issue, thesis and preview of the message to come.
  2) Presentation of position, presenting and supporting each reason with convincing details and evidence appealing to the values or beliefs of the audience.
  3) Summary and response to the opposition viewpoint, including a refutation or concession and discussion of the weakness of the opposition.
  4) Conclusion including calling the audience to action, summing up the argument and closing with a strong statement.
- Students will utilize rhetorical strategies of ethos, logos and pathos while maintaining professional, appropriate tone and diction.

#2 Literary Analysis Essay

- After reading Mary Shelley’s *Frankenstein*, students will identify social themes in the novel and will choose one social theme from the novel of particular interest which has a presence or significant impact on contemporary society. [possible themes: isolation, nurture vs. nature debate, abandonment, responsible use of science and technology]
- Essay will include strong and convincing evidence from the text supporting the importance and the resolution of the issue in the novel.
- Students will assert either the similarity or dissimilarity of how this issue is dealt with in the contrasting settings of the novel and of contemporary society. This assertion will be supported within the essay.

#3 Imitation Essay and Editorial
• Students will select a contemporary journalist who is a columnist for a national publication or who is syndicated nationally (such as Maureen Dowd, David Broder, Thomas Sowell, Kathleen Parker, George Will, Arianna Huffington, William F. Buckley, Jr., Joe Klein, etc.) to analyze over a period of time.

• This study will include annotation of a minimum of five columns in preparation for writing the editorial and completing an analysis chart of the rhetorical style of the columnist including use of evidence, rhetorical appeals of ethos, logos and pathos, political, social and cultural focus or bias, language and vocabulary, purpose, tone and diction of the author.

• Students will select a subject from a list of contemporary social issues and write an editorial column imitating the voice, tone, style of the journalist.

• Students will also write an expository essay explaining the work of the columnist with specific examples from the five essays studied.

### #4 Formal Proposal

• Students will choose a problem for which they can provide a credible and possible solution and develop a persuasive argument in the form of a formal proposal.

• Students may or may not utilize research in preparing the proposal; any research used must be documented in MLA format.

• The proposal should include the following parts:
   1) Presentation of the problem, including statement of the problem and needed background.
   2) Proposal, including specific details, facts of the proposed solution.
   3) Summary and rebuttal of opposing views or obstacles
   4) Justification, persuading the reader that the proposal be enacted with highly developed and convincing developed reasons.
   5) Conclusion, urging the audience to action.

• Students will utilize the rhetorical strategies of ethos, logos and pathos while maintaining professional, appropriate tone and diction.

### Reading

In addition to non-fiction texts, students will read a body of British, American and world literature in all genres to enhance critical reading and thinking skills as well as reading for pleasure. Throughout the study of all literature, elements such as plot, character, theme, setting and devices such as simile, metaphor, personification, alliteration, assonance will be studied and evaluated along with the author’s purpose and audience.

Highlights of longer fictional works to be read as a class include *Oedipus Rex, The Canterbury Tales, Hamlet, Frankenstein, A Doll’s House.* Assessment of these will include multiple choice questions and in class essay writing prompts as seen on the AP exam.

Independently, students will choose from a list of works which includes titles such as *Things Fall Apart, The Color of Water, The Chosen, The Things They Carried, In Country, The*
Awakening, Their Eyes were Watching God, Death of a Salesman, In Cold Blood. Some independent reading will be completed within Learning Groups and some will be totally individualized. One independent reading will be assessed through an oral presentation emphasizing the Big Idea of the book represented with a single concrete object which does not appear in the book; a formal rubric will be used. Each of these books will be assessed using multiple choice questions and in class essay writing prompts as seen on the AP exam.

In addition, students will poems, short stories, speeches, letters, and memoirs spanning specific literary periods in an effort to understand societal changes as evidenced in literature. One unit of contemporary poetry will be assessed with a culminating activity of writing an original poem for which a formal rubric will be provided.

**Critical Viewing**

A minimum of three critical viewing activities per semester will be conducted with a combination of teacher led whole class and small learning group analysis and discussion. Analysis, in written and oral forms, will be modeled using the Center for Media Literacy Five Key Questions and Five Core Concepts as found at [www.medialit.org/](http://www.medialit.org/)

Websites such as the following will be used in this activity:

- **http://www.digitaljournalist.org/issue0309/lm_index.html**
  This website includes a collection of photographs from *100 Photos that Changed the World*, by *Life* magazine. Example activity: view the image titled *Birmingham 1963* and deconstruct the image using Five Key Questions in a teacher led whole class discussion. Students will have time to personally react to the image through discussion and journal response writing. After viewing the image critically, students will read *Ballad of Birmingham* by Dudley Randall and write a brief essay analyzing and comparing the rhetorical devices used in both examples to convey a message.

- **http://www.classictvads.com/classicindex.shtml**
  This website features an archive of early television advertising including public service announcements. Example activity: view the commercial titled *Every Little Bit Hurts*, a 1964 highly successful public service announcement for the Keep America Beautiful Program. Students will identify and analyze the emotional appeal of this ad and deconstruct the image using the Five Key Questions in a teacher led discussion. In small peer learning groups, students will speculate about how effective this announcement would be in today’s society, identify subjects that are addressed in public service announcements in today’s society and create a list of subjects for which none exist, but which students believe such an announcement is needed.

- **http://www.cagle.com/**
  This website features an extensive index of contemporary editorial cartoons on virtually any subject. Example activity: In the computer lab, students will browse this website and find
cartoons on the same subject which make differing statements. Students will print the contrasting cartoons and discuss them in peer learning groups on the next class meeting, using the Five Key Questions. Each group will choose one pair of cartoons to discuss and share with the class.

• Current music and internet videos from a variety of sources will used to illustrate literary devices and social issues and universal themes as they are being studied in class.

Examples:
--Allusion: Sunshine by Aerosmith; What You Waiting For? by Gwen Stefani
--Narrative: The Devil Went Down to Georgia by Primus
--Tone: No Shoes, No Shirt, No Problems by Kenny Chesney
--Genre: Hurt by Johnny Cash
--Parady: The City is Mine by Jay-Z
--Politics and voting: Testify by Rage Against the Machine
--War: Empty Walls by Seri Tankian
--Greed and Excess: World on Fire by Sarah McLachian
