

English 4

Ms. Schaffer

Fall 2017



“So what?”
-Ms. Schaffer, 2017

I. Course Description: This is a fourth year of English literature and language study. In addition to a strengthening of vocabulary, writing, speaking, and listening skills, this course prepares students for their transition to college by developing their rhetorical and literary analysis, argumentation, research, and presentation skills. The college essay, resume, and cover letter writing process processes are also addressed.

Literature: Together, we will be working through a variety of texts that deal with issues of social inequality and strife: meaning, you all get to bring your angsty teen vibes to class every day and channel said vibes *positively* into looking critically at the world in which we live. It is my hope that you will find these texts to be diverse, enlightening lenses through which we may closely examine and re-imagine our worlds, especially in this cultural, historic, and political moment. Some of these include:

- *March* by Congressman John Lewis & Nate Powell
- *To Pimp A Butterfly*, an album by Kendrick Lamar
- “The Danger of a Single Story,” a TED Talk by Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie
- *Selma*, a film directed by Ava DuVernay (2014)
- Excerpted speeches written and delivered by Martin Luther King Jr., and other prominent activists across history

Of course as the semester progresses, and history continues to unfold before our eyes, we will, as a class, bring in new texts that we see are demanding to be ripped apart in the context of all that is happening. That being said, please be ready to suggest texts (including films, artwork, music, plays, and so forth) that you feel are relevant and important for us to explore.

II. The Philosophy Driving This Classroom:

- A. It is my firm belief that there are twenty-something students, as well as twenty-something teachers in this room. Therefore, it is my expectation that each of you comes to class ready to learn, but also ready to inspire the rest of us to push our thinking a little further, and ultimately leave class having learned something new.
- B. Additionally, I don't believe in standing in front of you all for forty minutes and “teaching” you. Rather, I see myself more as a facilitator of aha-moments: insights that drive and inspire you all to see the content and your worlds a little differently than when you first entered our space.
- C. The classroom is a deeply transformative space; therefore, in order for its full potential to be reached, my expectations and guidelines are as follows:

III. Guidelines & Expectations, or as I prefer to call them, *Schaffer's Steps for Success*:

This class will run like a college literature or composition course. Meaning, it'll be interest-based, flexible, and operate almost like a book club. Think of this course as an opportunity to think aloud and experiment with different lenses with people who offer challenging and thoughtful insights, as well as different points of view that allow us to understand our circumstances more deeply.

- A. ***Come prepared, even if it means coming confused:*** I don't give pop reading quizzes or multiple choice assessments in which I ask what color a secondary character's scarf was, or anything silly and of that nature. However, I treat this class more like a book club: we are a small community sharing a literary experience, and discussions are crucial and central to what we do. As with real world book clubs, it is super embarrassing to come to the party without having read the material, and I will be asking questions and counting on you all to lead discussions. I would rather you read the material, feel completely lost, and come ask us questions about it, than not even crack the text open at all.
- B. ***Come open-minded:*** The work that we will be doing in here will be highly relevant to everything that has happened and is currently happening in our world. Therefore, I am not going to say that politics don't have a place in our classroom, because they do and they should. However, this is not a place to judge one another or to impose your beliefs upon otherwise-believing classmates. Rather, I invite you to share your beliefs, push us to consider them, but simultaneously hear out your classmates and consider things from their points of view as well.
- C. ***Come accountable; come responsible:*** This class is all about independence, accountability, and responsibility. You will see as we dive into the material that my goal is to push you all to become to best thinkers, problem-solvers, and ultimately, the best citizens you can be in this ever-changing, and often tumultuous world. This cannot happen if we are unprepared, unwilling to take risks, and unwilling to give 100% every single day. Next year, you will be in environments, college or workplace alike, where you will have to take matters into your own hands, solve problems, and exhibit your rights as an independent, free thinker. Ladies and gents, it starts right here, right now.

IV. What You'll Need: Materials

- A. A **binder of at least 1 inch** in width.
- B. **College-ruled looseleaf paper** in the binder, but also handy for refills.
- C. A **marble notebook** to serve as a journal that you will keep *in class*.
- D. **Pens** (black/blue), as well as colored pens for editing purposes, if you so choose.
- E. **Highlighters** for close reading and annotating purposes.
- F. **Post-its!** (You will learn very quickly that I am a post-it fanatic, and if there is one office supply I am emotionally connected to in this world, it's Post-Its.)

V. Breaking it Down: Evaluations and Assessments

- Tests, Essays/Projects - **40%**
- Quizzes & Graded Discussions/Seminars - **30%**
- Homework/Journal Assignments/Discussion Prep - **20%**
- Classroom Participation - **10%**

VI. Other Important Information:

- My website is Schaffer-Scholars.com. Here, you may find any assignments, upcoming due dates, printable class materials, unit calendars, and so forth. This will be especially important if you happen to miss class.
- I will hold extra help hours Monday and Wednesday at 2:15 PM, and Thursday morning at 7:00 AM, all in room 235. If you are unable to make any of these times, feel free to email me or come see me to schedule another time to meet and work together.

****DILIGENCE OATH*:***

I, _____, solemnly swear that when Senioritis plagues my very soul and the souls of those around me I will push through it, I will not give into it, and I will use it as motivation to do even better and even more than before. I promise I understand that the work we do in here is not for Ms. Schaffer's health or satisfaction, but to help me grow as a person and get ready for the next step, and I can't do that if I'm not trying!

Student Signature: _____ Date: _____

I look forward to an incredible, meaningful, transformative semester with you all! So, let's get started, shall we?