

American Studies

American Lit. / US History

Instructor: Michael Wilson

Office Hours: 8:00-11:45 a.m., Monday through Friday in the Middle College office.

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Credits: You will earn 5 American Literature credits for each semester of this course. This course can be applied to the UC and CSU a-g requirements/English.

Course Description: From now until June you will be fulfilling your high school American Literature requirement. In this course we will look at literature as a reflection of the ideas that have helped to shape our nation. Trish and I have developed thematic units that will be the foundation for both classes. During each unit of study you will be completing projects and taking exams that will count in both classes. We hope that this unique approach will help all students gain a deeper understanding of the subject matter. Unlike most English/History courses, which are taught chronologically, we will be studying these subjects thematically, and our course of study will be interdisciplinary. History and literature do not happen on an isolated timeline, rather they develop as continual story in which each event has repercussions that can last for many years, or re-emerge over time. We will look at some of our nation's recurring themes as they are seen historically and further illustrated through literature. As a result, it may feel like we are continually moving forward in time, then backward, then forward again. This may lead you to ask the question, "Why are we doing this?" It is our hope that by taking a thread of history and following it through to the present you will see how the decisions of the past affect us, and you will have a better understanding of how the nation you see today came to be.

Units:

I. "Expressing Dissent"

In this unit we will be looking at the similarities and differences between the American Revolution and the Vietnam War. We will also be reading the documents of dissent (Paine, Jefferson, Franklin) especially as they relate to Enlightenment and Transcendental Philosophy (Locke, Emerson, Thoreau). We will then contrast these ideas with social criticisms from the 1950's and 1960's through music, Beat Poetry, anti-war movements and *The Things They Carried* by Tim O'Brien.

II. "America Grows Up" An examination of the physical and psychological development of a country and people through a study of foreign policy and coming of age novels-*The Catcher in the Rye*.- This unit will also include a lit circle book choice. Students will choose *Huckleberry Finn*, *Always Running*, *Caucasia*, or *Looking For Alaska*, etc.

III. "Boom and Bust" Comparing the 1920's/1930s to the 1980's-Novel, *The Great Gatsby*. We will also examine important literary work from the 30s and 80s.

IV. "How do you rectify social injustice?" A look at change in the US including the women's suffrage movement and the Civil Rights movement from slavery to present day. Books- *The Autobiography of Malcolm X* and *The Color Purple*.

Grades:

Your grade for this course will be based on the following:

20% Unit Exams

40% Class Participation/quizzes/ Notebook/Homework/Creative Writing

40% Projects/Papers/Presentations

Keep this sheet in your notebook!