

**Advanced Placement English  
Literature and Composition  
Mrs. Spillane  
Room A30**

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Welcome to AP Lit and congratulations on your success so far that has landed you here. AP Lit is *the* destination for students who love language and literature, have previously enjoyed and contributed to their English classes at THS, and have performed exceptionally well in the area of Language Arts. It is a full year course jam-packed with reading, writing, thinking, discussion and discovering (yes, even in May AFTER the AP Exam!). I am very excited you're here and can't wait to get started.

Here are just a few things to give you an idea of how our class can proceed most smoothly. It is not exhaustive and it is not a contract—we'll all need to be a little flexible as the year progresses.

**STUFF TO BRING/STUFF NOT TO BRING**

You've been here for three years; you're successful students. You know what to bring and what not to bring and what works best for you to keep yourself organized and involved.

\*Class notebook

As part of getting you ready for college, I strongly recommend your keeping an AP English notebook and making it an active part of your journey through the literature we read. I rarely put "notes" on the board but each day in our discussions there will be ideas (yours, mine, others') that you'll want to record, question and/or reflect upon. During or after your reading at home you'll also want to reflect, question, expound upon in writing. Notetaking on discussion and readings is an ESSENTIAL college survival skill and no professor is ever going to say, "Take out your notebooks (or laptops) and write this down." Trust me....get in the habit now.

That being said, and although at times you will need to write things down, the notebook is not required. You are big boys and girls now—you can make your own decisions about how to approach your academics. However, there will be an opportunity for extra credit each marking period for students who do keep, and use, notebooks as an active, vital part of their interactions in the course.

**CREATING A HAPPY PLACE TO BE**

I encourage debate, dissension, and deep thought in everything we do. The best way to figure out what you think in the world is to consider and question what you see around you, compare it to your own beliefs, and constantly reevaluate, reaffirm and refine. At the same time, we all need to be good human beings and honor one another. No one grows if we don't feel like a safe community. Be good to each other. But make each other be accountable for what you say and do.

**ATTENDANCE/TARDINESS**

Be here—be here on time. In AP the biggest attendance issues usually involve you go-getters being out on field trips, conferences, college visits, etc. Be diligent about checking with me and classmates upon your return. Please make up work in a timely manner. Be familiar with the THS attendance policy.

## **GRADING**

In any given marking period I cannot determine ahead of time exactly how many assignments we are going to have. I know where we're going and what we need to accomplish for the course but I also want to honor your ideas and curiosities and allow the leeway to let them drive our journey. This is in fairness to you.

But suffice it to say, we will take quizzes and complete in-class essays; we'll write short, quick responses, longer formal essays, and (one of my favorites) "2-pagers"; we'll express thinking in other ways, too, such as through visual media, presentations, performances, etc. There will be big grades and little grades and EVERYTHING we do "counts." If you want to be successful, do your very best on everything, ask questions if you're confused and trust that you've gotten this far and know what you're doing most of the time. And don't be afraid to take risks.

Assignments and grading tend to become more "college-like" in marking periods 3 and 4 as there are usually fewer little assignments, thus the bigger assignments begin to carry more individual weight. Grades will be posted and available for viewing in IC after I've actually handed back work to you, but please don't let this control your life. Stop checking IC and just do your best that you can every day.

Grading will typically fall into four categories: Major Tasks (valued with most points), Formative Assessments (many assignments, fewer points), Reading (R)evolution (should be an easy grade for you, just do what you're supposed to), and Accountability/Participation (if we're learning from each other, you need to be a part of that!).

## **CONFERENCING & EXTRA HELP**

I am fortunate enough to be available for extra help most days during periods 3, 6 – 8; this means I can meet with you during lunches and free periods as well as after school by appointment. If you'd like to come see me to review graded work, get help revising a piece before it's handed in, or anything else, please let me know. You should plan at least a day or two in advance.

\*Although we meet in A30, I am most easily found in my office upstairs on the C House side of the media center.

## **HONESTY & INTEGRITY**

Let's be honest—sometimes the highest achieving students are the worst cheaters. High achieving students have incredible workloads, are looking at big-time colleges, and care about grades. All of that is a recipe for being enticed by the easy way out. You know what cheating is—it's using SparkNotes because you forgot (or were too busy) to read; it's lifting literary analysis ideas from other sources and calling them your own; it's not citing sources properly...don't do it and don't pretend teachers don't know about it. As you are aware, THS has adopted a rather firm policy on plagiarism and I adhere to this policy. In addition, being less than honest is one of the few ways you will lose my respect and have a hard time earning it back. Be upstanding and have integrity even when it's the harder road to take. Don't be a cheaterpant!

## **TECHNOLOGY**

Oh, technology...it's our frenemy. It brings us riotously entertaining gems like Tedtalks, McSweeney's.net, and (my favorite) "Shark Cat Riding Roomba," but it also lures us to the Dark Side of SparkNotes, College Confidential, and Insta-when-we-should-be-doing-our-homework. It allows our moms to call us at all times—isn't that the best?!—but it is the Siren song of texting under your desk when you should be considering the central metaphor of a poem in class. It auto-corrects all of our mistypings so we don't look ignorant....except when it doesn't or it corrects what doesn't need to be corrected and then we look lazy AND ignorant. It lets us google and store anything we need so we never need to memorize a phone number or write down directions or wonder what the chief export of Albania is (it's chrome, by the way)....

My point is that technology helps us enormously but can also make us lazy and distracted sometimes. Let's make sure it helps and does not hinder us. I don't want to have to take away phones or delete silly comments to our online chats. Be wise and mature.

### **So how will technology impact our class? So glad you asked...**

- We will establish and consistently utilize a google classroom for our class.
- We will use Voicethread/Padlet/Kahoot and other fun stuff that lets us collaborate and learn together. Let me know what programs help you!
- At times I may share links with you for various sites that will be helpful in your literary studies or are just plain interesting and fun.
- I will continue to update my teacher website but that will be mostly for static content. Weekly updates and assignments will be posted on the classroom. Be sure to also always check the board in class. That will be the most up to date.
- As you know, THS has a BYOD policy for use of personal devices in class. I've always embraced the use of devices to help us learn when appropriate. Know the school policy, know that it's always my call about how/when we use them, and make good choices. Use your common sense. Our rule of thumb will be: phones are AWAY unless I've specifically said that we will need them and you should take them out. If you can't control yourself, get into the habit of putting your phone on my desk when you walk in.

### **Contact info:**

If we need to talk about something, we should talk about it....live and in-person (yes, I know....awkward). That's going to be our best form of communication. Don't chicken out and email me about something important when we should be having a face to face conversation. If you're out of school and need to reach me by email you should email me at my school email address which is: [spillanj@trumbullps.org](mailto:spillanj@trumbullps.org), but know that I'm not plugged into this email all day and all night so a response probably won't be instantaneous.

### **So much more info will be forthcoming! Special AP treats to look forward to include:**

- AP Exam (in May)
- Possible field trips
- Extra credit opportunities for each marking period (ask me about these!!)

I'm looking forward to a great year with you all . . . welcome, seniors!! ☺