

# ENGLISH LITERATURE AND COMPOSITION - SYLLABUS

## COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course provides students with the chance to read some of the most widely admired literary texts—poems by writers such as John Donne, William Blake, Robert Frost, John Keats, Emily Dickinson and Ezra Pound; stories or novels by Virginia Woolf, Anton Chekhov, and Arthur Conan Doyle, drama from Shakespeare and Sophocles. We'll interpret these texts and others that help show how fiction, poetry, and drama work. Our foremost concern will be reading closely—striving to understand what these texts mean, and also to understand how writers use literary devices and tactics to help give their words and stories the meanings they hold for us. Because this course is focused on composition as well as reading, you will also write weekly critical essays, in which you will have the chance to voice and defend your own opinion about how a given literary work should be interpreted.

## TEACHING METHODS

Our sessions will involve a mix of lecture and discussion about the texts assigned, as well as group discussions of written assignments and peer review exercises of your work.

## EXPECTATIONS AND ASSIGNMENTS

I expect you to attend class, participate in discussions, bring books to class, complete readings and assignments on time, and write as efficiently and eloquently as possible. There will be one major essay each week, first brought to class for review (both by me and by your peers) and then submitted as a revised final version. There will also be shorter, in-class writing exercises throughout the course.

## TEXTBOOKS

*The Norton Introduction to Literature with 2016 MLA Update (Shorter Twelfth Edition):*  
<https://www.amazon.com/Norton-Introduction-Literature-Shorter-Twelfth/dp/0393623572>

*Cracking the AP English Literature & Composition Exam:*

[http://www.amazon.com/Cracking-English-Literature-Composition-Preparation/dp/0804125309/ref=pd\\_sim\\_b\\_1?ie=UTF8&refRID=18R5S50XMVGBFTTMY9XS](http://www.amazon.com/Cracking-English-Literature-Composition-Preparation/dp/0804125309/ref=pd_sim_b_1?ie=UTF8&refRID=18R5S50XMVGBFTTMY9XS)

I'd also **recommend** a grammar text such as this one:

[http://www.amazon.com/Style-Lessons-Clarity-Grace-Edition/dp/0321898680/ref=pd\\_cp\\_b\\_0](http://www.amazon.com/Style-Lessons-Clarity-Grace-Edition/dp/0321898680/ref=pd_cp_b_0)

## TENTATIVE OUTLINE

### Week 1: Introduction to Literature

Genre; Analysis; Close reading; Rhetorical devices; Evidence and citations. The first week will introduce students to some of basic methods of literary study. We'll begin with short lyric poems, thinking about how writers play with our expectations about how language works. We'll also consider rhetorical devices and terms and begin to study them with a mind to the AP exam. Students will also learn about the construction of the AP exam and how to use these weeks to prepare for it.

### Week 2: Poetry

Readings and writing will focus on the form and content of lyric and short narrative poems. Our discussions—and your essays—will attend to syntactic ambiguity, paradox and other ideational features and patterns, as well as verbal phenomena like rhyme, rhythm, consonance, alliteration, and more. Discussions will also consider the similarities and differences between literary and visual arts. Literary terms and devices will continue to be learned.

### Week 3: Fiction

We'll discuss short stories with special attention paid to plotting, narrative style and voice, point of view, conflict, and characterization. Additional literary terms will be discussed and learned for the examination.

### Week 4: Drama

Drama includes poetic and fictive elements, but also has its own distinct features as an art form. We will discuss the nature of theatricality; dramatic genres; and Aristotelian theories of unity, plot, tragic “flaw”, reversal and recognition. Students will read, discuss and write about a play.

Throughout the course, I will assign daily readings, we will analyze texts in class, write responses and read work by other students. We’ll also review passages and terms for the AP lit exam and take short practice exams. My hope is that you will finish the course much more aware of major texts in English literature, achieve a better understanding of both the texts and their reputations, and be more able to express your opinions about them in writing.

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