

# AMERICAN LITERATURE

## SYLLABUS

### 2020-2021



### ELIGIBLE STUDENTS

**9<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> grade students** with the ability to read critically, express thoughts through typewritten academic essays (specifically persuasive, expository and analytical), engage in discussion pertaining to the literature, and synthesize ideas discussed in class.

**Please note:** Students who complete this course will earn 1 high school credit by reading 12 major American works and writing corresponding papers.

**Class Dates:** Tuesday, September 8, 2020 through Thursday, May 27, 2021.

**Class Times:** Tuesdays & Thursdays: 12:30-1:45 PM (EST)

**Office Hours:** by request

**Instructor:** Phaedra Shaltanis

**E-mail:** [pshaltanis@scholeacademy.com](mailto:pshaltanis@scholeacademy.com)

### COURSE MAP

#### QUARTER 1

1. "Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God," Jonathan Edwards (1741)
2. *Common Sense*, Thomas Paine (1776)
3. *The Scarlet Letter*, Nathanael Hawthorne (1850)
4. "The Celebrated Jumping Frog of Calaveras County," Mark Twain (1867)
5. "The Masque of the Red Death," Edgar Allan Poe (1850)
6. Select poetry by Emily Dickinson and William Cullen Bryant
7. Persuasive essay, comparison essay and expository essay
8. Short response papers, dialectical notebook

#### QUARTER 2

1. *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass*, Frederick Douglass (1845)
2. *Autobiography of Benjamin Franklin*, Benjamin Franklin (1793)
3. *The Red Badge of Courage*, Stephen Crane (1895)
4. *Huckleberry Finn*, Mark Twain (1884)
5. "An Occurrence at Owl Creek Bridge," Ambrose Bierce (1890)
6. Select poetry and essays by Ralph Waldo Emerson
7. Narrative essay, critical essay, comparison essay
8. Short response papers, dialectical notebook

#### QUARTER 3

1. "To Build a Fire," Jack London (1908 Version)

2. *The Call of the Wild*, Jack London (1903)
3. *Billy Budd*, Herman Melville (1924)
4. "To Build a Fire," Jack London (1908 Version)
5. "A Worn Path," Eudora Welty (1941)
6. Select poetry by Robert Frost
7. Descriptive essay, literary analysis, persuasive essay
8. Short response papers, dialectical notebook

#### QUARTER 4

1. *To Kill a Mockingbird*, Harper Lee (1960)
2. *The Old Man and the Sea*, Ernest Hemingway (1951)
3. *The Great Gatsby*, F. Scott Fitzgerald (1925)
4. "The Lottery," Shirley Jackson (1948)
5. "Everything That Rises Must Converge," Flannery O'Connor (1965)
6. Select letters and poetry by Langston Hughes
7. Comparison essay, narrative essay, dialectical notebook
8. Portfolio of American writers and literature

#### REQUIRED COURSE TEXTS

*Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God*, Jonathan Edwards

*Common Sense*, Thomas Paine

*Autobiography of Benjamin Franklin*, Benjamin Franklin

*The Scarlet Letter*, Nathanael Hawthorne

*Huckleberry Finn*, Mark Twain

*Red Badge of Courage*, Stephen Crane

*The Call of the Wild*, Jack London

*Billy Budd*, Herman Melville

*The Great Gatsby*, F. Scott Fitzgerald

*The Old Man and the Sea*, Ernest Hemingway

*To Kill a Mockingbird*, Harper Lee

*Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass*, Frederick Douglass

#### OPTIONAL COURSE TEXTS

*The Elements of Style*, Strunk and White

*On Writing Well*, Zinsser

#### AMERICAN LITERATURE COURSE DESCRIPTION

Throughout this course, students will read, contemplate and discuss selections of American Literature written from 1741 to 1970. At minimum, the course goal is threefold:

1. to ponder American writing within its historical context and recognize societal influences on each author;
2. to analyze writings according to their structure, form and purpose, and practice synthesizing ideas in the written word using schemes and tropes;
3. to hone comparative, analytical/critical, and responsive thinking, writing, and questioning skills that bolster communication with others.

Of equal importance is the underlying current of the course, which is to nurture a spirit of searching through the reading of powerful stories. The quest for understanding and the pursuit of wisdom have no end but will be fed throughout this course.

The readings begin with early American political and religious works and progress through the Revolutionary Era, the Civil War Era and Reconstruction, the Industrial and Progressive Eras to Imperialism and the Postwar Era. As students investigate the historical impact of political, social and religious perspectives, they will come to recognize effects on the writers of the time. They will develop the craft of asking questions following the form of Aristotle's Five Common Topics of Invention; in so doing, they will engage with the text and their peers on a contemplative level. Students will be required to read all assigned texts (approximately **1 hour of reading per day**) and write one major essay per book (comparison, narrative, expository, etc.). Additionally, students shall expect to periodically submit short (1-page) response papers, maintain a dialectical notebook, and complete other occasional assignments. Participation in Socratic dialogue is imperative as it serves to promote vigorous contemplation and reflection

The writing portion of this course will focus on various types of academic essays including compare and contrast, critical analysis, expository, and persuasive. Students will follow a rubric for each piece of writing in order to develop strong templates for presenting thoughts in differing forms. As the communication of ideas is paramount in literature, selecting the most appropriate structure to convey such ideas is a valuable skill. Likewise, a writer's personal style can powerfully impact the reception of the work, and as such, students and teacher will together explore and practice schemes and tropes such as *anaphora*, *antithesis*, *epistrophe*, *polysyndeton* and more. Experimenting with word play will enrich our study of American writers and lead students toward growth in eloquence. Students will be expected to employ proper grammar and mechanics of writing (including spelling, grammar, and structure) as they endeavor to stretch their writing abilities.

## **STUDENT EXPECTATIONS (EXECUTIVE FUNCTION SKILLS)**

Students enrolled in American Literature should expect to progress in their reading, writing and speaking abilities as they utilize classic modes of thinking and discussing. They should aim for:

### **1. Respectful and Compassionate Discussion**

Students are mindful of their peers during dialectic periods and strive to maintain a balance between pensive listening and thoughtful responding. Compassion is evidenced through gracious conversation even as significant disagreements occur. Honoring others in a Socratic setting allows the guests (students) to restfully seek understanding in the realm of truth.

## **2. Informed Responses and Preparedness**

Students are prepared to participate in discussion concerning the assigned readings. They ruminate on themes and generate questions throughout their reading processes; they weigh comments adequately and are comfortable making annotations and responding to class questions and conversation.

## **3. Self-Motivation**

Students are able to determine appropriate pacing measures to thoroughly complete all readings. They are managers of their time, seeking quiet, unpressured opportunities to delight in the text; they allow themselves to consider the many dimensions of a literary work without simply rushing through the reading; they pursue knowledge by conducting research if necessary, looking up new vocabulary, and asking questions.

## **4. Aptitude in Writing**

Students exhibit aptitude in the grammar and mechanics of writing and display a suitable eagerness for advancing their skills. As writing devices and techniques are studied, students aim to weave them into their own writing and actively search for examples in classic and modern texts. Additionally, students are receptive to peer and teacher critiques that aim to illuminate errors or graciously provide feedback. They are willing to scrutinize their own work and revise their final papers.

## **5. Organization and Responsibility**

Students employ organizational techniques that increase success: notes are taken during class, annotations marked while reading, writing practices and activities are maintained and consolidated. Students are adept at using a keyboard and submitting assignments; they are timely and punctual; they are familiar with the required technology and take ownership in their academic pursuits by monitoring their own progress.

## **STUDENT EXPECTATIONS IN ACTION**

Students will be following the sequence of study contained in the American Literature syllabus. They will remain on pace with the reading and writing schedule and thereby will be able to contribute to class discussion; they will submit all assignments on time, requesting help from the teacher as needed. They will make connections between readings, authors and historical context to add layers to their understanding. They will come to approach each text with an eye toward the True, Good and Beautiful and respectfully interact with the writings on multiple levels.

Students will participate in class discussions through active listening, asking and answering questions, and building the conversation with informed contributions. All students are expected to be prepared with assignments completed and all should engage during class time. On the occa-

sions the teacher presents lectures or outlines, students should take notes for later review and study.

Students who have not submitted their homework to the appropriate Schoology assignment folder prior to the start of class may not be permitted to join the live class session. Those students will be invited into a separate Zoom breakout room to work privately until they have completed the day's assignment. After they have completed their homework submission, they will be permitted to rejoin the class in session. A day spent in a breakout room will constitute an absence from class.

All assignments will be due into the appropriate Schoology Assignment folder prior to the start of class each day. Late work will not receive full credit. Students will submit their work by scanning their homework pages and uploading it into the Schoology assignment window. Photographs of completed assignments will not be accepted as they are incredibly difficult to read.

## STUDENT EVALUATION (GRADING)

Scholé Academy courses aim to be restful, but we recognize the need to provide grades for students who will be using this course as part of their prepared college transcript. It's a delicate balance to achieve both restful learning and excellent academic performance. Earning a specific grade should not overshadow achievement goals for mastery of this discipline.

American Literature is a rich and vast study that incorporates multiple skills and pensive involvement. Due to the dialectic nature of the course, students will examine their thoughts and synthesize them into sturdy presentations and papers. Thus, student assessment will focus on clarity of written expression, depth of thought and effort. I can assign the following grades to your student's level of achievement: *magna cum laude* (with great praise); *cum laude* (with praise); *satis* (sufficient, satisfactory) and *non satis* (not sufficient).

Ideally, every average student working diligently should do praiseworthy work (*cum laude*). Those who excel beyond this expectation will be the *magna cum laude* students. Students who do adequate but not praiseworthy work be designated *satis*. *Non satis* means lacking sufficiency or adequacy.

Inasmuch as you might be fully on board with this grading method in theory, there will undoubtedly be the need to complete a college transcript with either a numeric or traditional letter grade. Traditional percentage grades will be provided and can be readily accessed on the *American Literature* Schoology page. Additionally, I will provide a transcript of that grade to the requesting parent at the end of the year.

## MASTERY PORTRAIT

Students who are prepared to take this class are typically freshmen and sophomores with some background in critical reading. They are beginning to think rhetorically, using comparison skills to weigh objective and subjective ideas. They are developing analytical abilities and examining contradicting philosophies for Truth to the end that they may continue on their journey of con-

templative growth. As well, they are practicing the art of conversation and dabbling in debate as they find themselves holding opinions contrary to others.

- At the completion of this course *cum laude* students will be able to recognize time periods within American literary history, including the factors that influenced thinkers and writers of the day. They will have the ability to discern between various genres of writing and adequately discourse on themes contained therein.
- Additionally, they will have attained skills, especially attentive listening and directed questioning, crucial to engaging others in meaningful dialogue. This promotes the goal of honoring others throughout the discourse that frequently materializes when individuals study powerful ideas.
- Further, students' appreciation for the English language will grow as they learn and recognize writing techniques utilized throughout classic works and in modern writing. They will have practiced "turning a phrase" to emphasize their meaning, valuing clarity and truth while endearing their listeners and readers.

## STUDENT ASSESSMENT

Mrs. Shaltanis will communicate with students regarding assignment feedback and grading through the free online grading system, Schoology. The teacher will provide students with more detailed information and access to the American Literature course page.

Student's grades will be comprised of:

Essays (40%)

Class Participation (30%)

Response and contemplation exercises, presentations, dialectic notebook (30%)

## ACADEMIC DISHONESTY

Students are on their honor to abide by [Scholé Academy's Learning Philosophy](#) which assumes the personal cultivation of Student-Virtues described in the Student-Parent Handbook.

Additionally, plagiarism is a serious and punishable offense. Proper citation of all sources is essential to the academic endeavor. Remember to cite any source if the information is not common knowledge or is an opinion obtained through any source. A plagiarized assignment will result in a failing grade. Students should consult their chosen style manual (see Student Expectations above) for specific direction on obtaining, quoting and paraphrasing sources.

## THE VIRTUAL CLASSROOM

We will be using the free online "virtual classroom" software provided by Zoom, one of the leading companies that provides such software. The virtual classroom will provide students with interactive audio, text chat and an interactive whiteboard in which texts, diagrams, video and other media can be displayed and analyzed. We will provide students with a link (via email) that will enable students to join the virtual classroom.

Specific information regarding the technology used by Scholé Academy (including required technology) can be found by visiting the [Technology in the Classroom](#) section of the Student Parent Handbook.

Students will submit documents by scanning and uploading them to their personal computer, then attaching those files as .pdfs to an email. They will submit their work to the *American Literature* Schoology assignment page (access granted after enrollment is secured).

## **ABOUT THE INSTRUCTOR**

**Phaedra Shaltanis** has taught in private and classical schools for over 20 years and is educating her four children in the classical tradition. After earning a BA in speech communication and K-12 education from Concordia University, Wisconsin, she began teaching high school Writing, Literature, Spanish and Art in Lutheran (LCMS) schools.

Her involvement with Scholé Academy includes teaching American Literature, British Literature, Western History, Rhetoric I, and *Well-Ordered Language Levels 1 and 2*. In her Dallas community, she currently directs a high school tutorial program, trains and mentors teachers, conducts seminars on classical education and provides fine art instruction at a classical high school. She believes students learn best through repetition, conversation and application, and she supports the classical model wholeheartedly.