

2007-2008
Maybeck High School
Rm. 206

Teacher: Nina LaCour
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Office Hours: Tue lunch, rm. 206

Composition Syllabus

Welcome to Composition! Please prepare yourself to work hard this year. Over the Fall and Spring semesters, you will strengthen both your expository and creative writing skills. You will experiment with freewriting, brainstorming, and outlining. You will learn to construct effective thesis statements, develop cohesive paragraphs, and complete and revise essays; you will also compose poetry, short stories, and dramas. Through our careful study of varied literary works, you will strengthen your ability to read critically and insightfully. By the end of this class, you should feel more confident about your writing and your ability to find meaning in the written word.

Texts (subject to change and rearrangement):

Fall Semester

Haroun and the Sea of Stories
by Salman Rushdie
To Kill a Mockingbird
by Harper Lee
The Lone Ranger and Tonto
Fistfight in Heaven
by Sherman Alexie
Selections from reader

Spring Semester

Romeo and Juliet
by William Shakespeare
Frankenstein
by Mary Shelley
Persepolis
by Marjane Satrapi
Twelve Angry Men
by Reginald Rose
Selections from reader

Materials to bring to class every day:

- a lined notebook/journal
- a Composition folder with handouts and graded assignments
- a binder with plenty of paper
- the book we are currently reading
- a blue or black pen

Work:

- journal entries—frequent, informal writings (credit/no credit)
- pre-writing—brainstorms, outlines, and drafts (credit/no credit)
- essays—formal, expository papers (graded)
- creative writing—poems, short stories, plays (graded)
- grammar and vocabulary quizzes (graded)
- pop-quizzes on readings (graded)
- final exams—one per semester (graded)
- bound portfolio of work (graded based upon improvement)

Participation and Attendance:

Because each day of Composition builds off the previous day's lesson, please do your best to come to class regularly. I expect you to be seated with your materials out, ready to devote your full attention to the day's lesson or exercise by the time class begins. If you establish a pattern of lateness, disruptiveness, or under-preparedness, you will see a drop in your participation grade. (Please read the attendance chapter of Maybeck's handbook for further details.) Conversely, if you participate thoughtfully and attend regularly, you will benefit from a high participation grade.

Grading:

As outlined above, your assignments will be turned in either for credit/no credit or for a grade. Credit/no credit assignments tend to be short, informal exercises intended to help you explore a new concept or develop your ideas. Graded assignments tend to be longer, more formal compositions that reflect careful thought and thorough development. In many instances credit/no credit assignments lead to graded assignments. For example, several journal responses, a freewrite, an outline, and a draft (all of which are credit/no credit) will culminate in a graded final essay.

Grading breakdown per semester:

Journal Entries & Pre-writings	20%	Quizzes	20%
Final Essays & Creative Writing	30%	Final Exam	20%
Portfolio & Participation	10%		

Late Work and Missed Quizzes:

If you turn your work in late, you are doing yourself a major disservice. Composition moves very quickly, so while I intend to assign a manageable amount of homework for each night, if you miss assignments or fall behind in the reading you will soon find yourself swamped with work. If, however, you do miss turning in an assignment, your grade will drop by a full letter for each school day it is late. Example: An assignment due Monday that would have earned an A, if turned in on Tuesday would receive a B, if turned in Wednesday would receive a C, if turned in Thursday would receive a D, and if turned in Friday or after would receive an F (50%), which is still considerably better than a zero.

If you are absent on a quiz day, you may make up the quiz as long as you submit a note from your parent or guardian excusing your absence. It is *your* responsibility to schedule a make-up time with me within a day of your return to school. If your absence is unexcused, you will not be permitted to make up the quiz and will receive a zero.

Academic Honesty:

I fully expect that the work you turn in is entirely your own. If you are using other people's words or ideas, you need to cite them properly. Cheating, copying from a classmate, or attempting to disguise other people's words or ideas as your own may lead to expulsion. If you have questions about what constitutes plagiarism, please don't hesitate to ask me.

Keys to Success:

I am confident that all of you have the potential to succeed in this class. Below is a short list of suggestions to help you reach that potential.

-Communication: Always let me know if you are having trouble meeting deadlines or following along in class. I will work with you to help you through any difficulties that you may have.

-Tenacity: No matter how difficult an assignment is, don't give up!

-Respect: Treat your classmates, yourself, and me with respect. Listen when others are speaking.

Consider ideas that may differ from your own. Allow yourself to ask for help or clarification when you need it.

Thank you! I look forward to reading and discussing great novels, essays, stories, and poems with you this year, as well as helping you grow as a writer.