

# UConn English 1011 - Writing through Literature Syllabus

## Seymour High School

This is a college-level course in which students who maintain a “C” or better average are able to earn four English credits from the University of Connecticut through the Early College Experience Program. Although this is not designated as an Advanced Placement class, successful students may consider taking the AP Literature and Composition exam in May.

This course is designed for students who have demonstrated more than rudimentary skills in reading and writing about a variety of literary genres. The concentration in this course is an analysis of artistic language of increasing complexity. The presumed audience for essay writing is a “common reader” who possesses at least as much intelligence and education as the writer and has a shared interest in the topic the writer has chosen. Essentially, what we will be about here – in discussions, conferences, readings and writings – is the exploration of the multiple levels of discourse. The following is excerpted from the University's "Letter to English 1010/1011 Students":

Although the proportion of time spent in lecture/discussion, tutorials, and conferences will not be the same in every section of English 1010 or 1011, you can expect that with most formal, full-length paper assignments, you will have one small group tutorial and often one individual conference with your instructor. Such tutorials and conferences are at the heart of the seminars. This means, of course, that your active presence, intellectual commitment, and engagement with reading and writing are absolutely essential for your seminar to be effective for your classmates, for your teacher, and for you. Your writing is the most significant part of the course, the development of which the seminar structure is designed to support. Consequently, as the case would be in a science lab course, the seminar work can be done only if you are there to do it.

In addition to the tutorials and conferences, you can expect the following things from your instructor: (1) a written statement that specifies the required texts and course requirements for such things as papers, journals, conferences, tutorials, exams, and so on; (2) policies on attendance, plagiarism, grading, due dates for written work, and so on; (3) written instructions for every full-length writing assignment; and (4) prompt and regular written and oral responses to your writing throughout the term.

Your instructor should expect, then, the following things from you: (1) attendance at all classes, tutorials, and conferences; (2) active participation in all class work; (3) completion of all assignments by the due dates, and (4) communication about all matters that may affect your performance in the course. The point behind those expectations for the instructor and for you is to ensure clear communication and productive, respectful working relationships. We hope you will find your Freshman English Seminar to be enriching on many levels.

Your grade for this course will be determined primarily by the formal essays you write, as well as by the shorter pieces of collected writing and class participation. The essays will adhere

to MLA standards. In addition, you will be expected to participate in all in-class writing assignments (many of which may be collected and graded), peer-review sessions, class discussions and student/teacher conferencing. Failure to comply in these areas will adversely affect your grade.

Revision is expected and encouraged throughout the writing process. Again, from the University's Statement of Pedagogical Principles and Practices:

The Freshman Writing Seminars stress the value of revision as a means of achieving depth of understanding in reading and coherence, clarity, and control in writing. Revision is, so to speak, where the action is in writing for it is through revision that we develop a more nuanced understanding of the texts under consideration and the shared world the texts draw us into. We might think of reading and writing as a kind of conversation between the text and the reader about a world that both text and reader are in the process of understanding. Rather than promoting an adversarial or exclusively evaluative model of writing, with such questions as "What are the weaknesses of the author's argument?" or "Do you agree or disagree with the author's position?" (although such questions could certainly be part of a series of questions), the seminars should encourage students to think of themselves as participants—as they, in fact, are—in a collaborative process of questioning and discovery, at times working with and at other times working against the views and voices in the readings and among other students in the class.

One goal of the seminars, then, is to provide a context within which students can work with academic texts, texts that constitute the work and the voices of the university. The students' task is to enter into the conversation. To do this, they must see for themselves that the meaning of a text, no matter the discipline, is not contained exclusively in the words on the page, like peaches in a hermetically sealed container, but that meaning exists only through readers' active participation. Texts live through the work of readers. In reading anthropology or physics or literary criticism, for instance, students will have to become, as reader response theory would have it, co-authors; they will have to construct a "reading" that makes the text meaningful. And in order to make their reading meaningful to others, they will need to write their own text for others to read, extending the conversation.

You may submit a rewrite for any formal essay on which you earn less than a "C," that is to say, a numerical grade lower than a "74." All original grades will be weighted twice and rewrites will be weighted once. Consequently, you will need to receive a substantially higher grade on a rewrite to bolster your quarter average. Your rewrites must accompany the original text and be submitted within seven days (including weekends) of receipt of the original corrected essay. Absences do not extend this time limit.

### **Sample Texts from Which Thematic Units are Selected**

Text: *The Compact Introduction to Literature*, seventh edition, editor Michael Meyer, 2006.

Text: *Writing Through Literature: An Anthology of Literary Texts for Academic Inquiry*, editors Mary Isbell and Emily Wojcik

Text: Selected novels, plays and films (for example *The Remains of the Day* and *Never Let Me Go*, Kazuo Ishiguro, *Frankenstein*, Mary Shelley, *The Scarlet Letter*, Nathaniel Hawthorne)  
Text: *They Say, I Say with Readings*, Gerald Graff, Cathy Birkenstein and Russel Durst  
Text: *Rewriting: How to Do Things With Text*, Joseph Harris

Most of the reading assignments that follow will lead to brief, exploratory in-class essays designed to foster discussion of rhetorical principles and thematic concepts. This writing will lead to longer, summative assessments per unit intended to encourage academic inquiry.

You should begin by reading chapter 46, “Reading and Writing” (Meyer), paying particular attention to technique in writing about literary works. Being familiar with and employing techniques will help you avoid submitting a paper you believe to be an analytical essay, but which is, in fact, a four-page summary of the work(s) studied. Three sample student essays are included in this chapter; familiarizing yourself with them will help guide you in writing the essays you will submit for class. It would be helpful to return to these essays and the editor’s explanation of how they came to be written before you write any essay here.

You should also familiarize yourself with the “Glossary of Literary Terms” (Meyer, 1615-1639). You will also receive a document for your notebook and will be expected to increase your knowledge of these terms and use them in your own writing.

## Sample Thematic Units for Discussion and Writing

### I. Home and Family

#### Fiction

- Raymond Carver, “Popular Mechanics” (264)
- William Faulkner, “Barn Burning” (400)
- Gail Godwin, “A Sorrowful Woman” (38)
- James Joyce, “Eveline” (432)
- Alice Munro, “An Ounce of Cure” (531)

#### Poetry

- Emily Dickinson, “The Bustle in a House” (827)
- Robert Frost, “Home Burial” (855)
- Sharon Olds, “Rite of Passage” (783)
- Sylvia Path, “Daddy” (photocopy)
- Theodore Roethke, “My Papa’s Waltz” (745)

#### Drama

- William Shakespeare, Hamlet, Prince of Denmark

### II. Love and Its Complications

#### Fiction

- William Faulkner, “A Rose for Emily” (80)

- Karen Van Der Zee, from “A Secret Sorrow” (30)

Poetry

- Robert Herrick, “To the Virgins, to Make Much of Time” (622)
- Andrew Marvell, “To His Coy Mistress” (624)
- William Shakespeare, “My Mistress’ Eyes ...” (755)
- Richard Wilbur, “A Late Aubade” (627)

Novel

- Charlotte Bronte, Jane Eyre

**Mid Term Exam** (written in class – equivalent to one essay)

**III. The Natural World**

Fiction

- Edgar Rice Burroughs, from Tarzan of the Apes (66)
- Kate Chopin, “The Story of an Hour” (15)

Poetry

- Elizabeth Bishop, “The Fish” (574)
- Robert Frost, “Design” (864)
- Gerard Manly Hopkins, “Pied Beauty” (973)
- Galway Kinnell, “Blackberry Eating” (711)
- William Blake, “The Tyger” (743)

Non-Fiction

- Nathaniel Philbrick, from In the Heart of the Sea

Video (DVD)

- Instinct

**IV. Work and Business**

Fiction

- Herman Melville, “Bartleby, the Scrivener” (124)
- John Updike, “A&P” (553)

Poetry

- Emily Dickinson, “Success is counted sweetest” (813)
- Kenneth Fearing, “AD” (689)
- Maxine Hong Kingston, “Restaurant” (725)
- Katharine Howd Machan, “Hazel Tells LaVerne” (620)
- Marge Piercy, “The Secretary Chant” (564)

Drama

- Arthur Miller, “Death of a Salesman” (1374)

**Final Exam** (written in class – equivalent to one essay)