Honors English 9/10 Syllabus
Classroom: 4110 Sangren
Schedule: Tuesdays 1:20-3:50
Instructor: Mrs. Liz Carr
Contact: elizabeth.carr@wmich.edu
Phone: 317-847-3661

Course Description
The purpose of this course is to prepare you for college writing and to help you think analytically, creatively, and independently. This class fosters a workshop atmosphere with feedback from your peers. This makes our class special in that your writing will be a major portion of the text. Class activities will focus not only upon reading but also on the process of writing: planning, drafting, editing, and revising. Your papers will see several stages: initial discovery draft, rough draft critiqued by peers, and a polished (publishable) draft. Each polished draft will be graded and then revised to go into your portfolio. (This is not a class where you write a piece at the computer and turn that version in with no review.) The portfolios will showcase the best of your work. The only way to become a better writer is to write and to develop critical reading skills. As I become familiar with your writing, we will also focus upon individual goals for you.

During the first half of the year, students will work on several formal essays: narration, description, process analysis, exemplification, cause and effect, comparison/contrast, definition, argumentation, and researched argumentation. Additionally, several creative writing pieces will be interspersed throughout the year. Students will study and respond to several literary essays from various authors. Students will also read short stories, poems, and plays. Special attention will be paid to the study and understanding of logical fallacies. Students will keep a journal for directed entries. Students will write about and discuss aesthetics and philosophy—specifically applicable to art/artist/process. Students will use Elearning for discussion over homework and other topics related to our class may be explored outside the classroom. Critical thinking skills, time-management, interpersonal, and metacognitive skills will be stressed throughout the course.

And for the last half of the year, students will write two short literary essays for Golding’s The Lord of the Flies and Orwell’s Animal Farm. After reading Animal Farm and The Lord of the Flies, students will develop ideas into a working thesis for their individual research paper topics. Students will learn library research and internet skills, proper MLA documentation, and how to balance in-text citation. Students will continue to pay special attention to the study and understanding of logical fallacies. Public speaking components will reflect our reading. The class will read Shakespeare’s Much Ado About Nothing while keeping character diaries. Students will discuss and explicate the text, and students may also do individually researched presentations related to our reading. Please understand that our schedule is subject to change at the discretion of the instructor.

The Required Texts and Materials for the course are:

*Patterns for College Writing, 12th ed. Laurie G. Kirszner and Stephen R. Mandell
(Instructor will provide)
*Grammar Girl Presents the Ultimate Writing Guide for Students by Mignon Fogarty (Instructor will provide)
*William Golding’s The Lord of the Flies
*George Orwell’s *Animal Farm *
*Shakespeare’s *Much Ado About Nothing
*An in-class spiral writing notebook for daily in-class writing and notes (Instructor will provide)
*A 2” or 3” 3-ring binder to keep as your portfolio (A collection of all drafts, outlines, submitted/returned papers, etc.) NB: Trapper Keeper type binders do not work for this.
*A folder to keep homework
*Dividers for the portfolio

**Policies and Requirements**
I refer you to the standard *Rules and Responsibilities* memo that was mailed to you - especially “Avoiding Digital Distractions” and “Organizing for ATYP.” To highlight the details:

**Papers and homework:** Hard copies (except for logical fallacies) are due at the beginning of class. **USE PROPER HEADING (NOT HEADER): Name, week number it is due, assignment** in the upper left corner. Interesting titles, centered one space below the heading are required. **You also have digital deadlines. ALL fallacies and quizzes are due the Friday the week they are assigned by 10 pm. Half of the rest of your work is due Saturday by 10pm. The rest is due Monday by 10pm. Early submissions are welcome and encouraged.**

**Late work policy:** Homework turned in late more than three times in a semester means that the student may not earn an “A” in the class. Homework MUST be submitted digitally AND on paper by the deadlines in order to be considered on time. Revisions must be submitted the week after the original graded copy is received in class to be considered on time. For compositions scored on a check minus, check, check plus, plus scale, late work will receive no higher than a check. Late major essays will be penalized one full letter grade. If a student has a late assignment, they will complete a “Sorry It’s Late” form which I will sign and send home. It must be signed by a parent and returned with the late work attached the following week. Exceptions will be made on a case-by-case basis for illness, family emergencies, etc. So, if life happens, it is the student’s responsibility to communicate with me what is going on. Family vacations are not an excused reason for turning in assignments late. It is the student’s responsibility to communicate with me as soon as possible about absences in order to create a plan for staying on top of work.

**Handing in work via Elearning:** In order to provide students with another place to archive work, I want each student to upload all papers to the proper Dropbox folder in Elearning each week. **Schedule:** By 10 pm each Friday, please have any logical fallacy homework uploaded and complete your quiz. To provide students with flexibility, I ask that one uploads half of the rest of the homework (usually student choice) by Saturday evening and then any remaining work by 10pm Monday night. The student will also need to upload the previous weeks’ revisions by 10pm Saturday night. This is designed to ensure that they stay on top of the homework by developing good time management skills.

**Attendance and Professionalism:** This is the student’s willingness to take part in class activities, keep notes during class, help others, arrive to class on time, have solid drafts ready for peer editing, contribute to class discussion boards by both reading and responding to topics, work with classmates outside of class (virtually or in person) for group projects, meet schedules for assignments, stow electronics, respond to email, seek help from either me or our fabulous tutor, and basically contribute to the community of the class. One does not need to always talk or always answer every question in class to be participating.
**Students with Disabilities and Special Needs:** WMU provides academic assistance for students with disabilities, including the emotional, technical and academic support necessary to achieve academic and personal success. Students are encouraged to tell the instructor if they need disability services.

Please let me know whenever you feel overwhelmed. This class is meant to be challenging, but not crushing! Along with your parents, you have a support system in the tutors, the ATYP staff, and me.

**Electronics Policy:** We live in the age of technology. Digital communication is expected throughout the week. (A week is a long time to go without talking with your teacher.) However, digital communication can also be a hindrance to community building. During our class time together, I ask that students only use electronic devices when absolutely necessary - this includes break time. We need to be physically present for one another. Electronic versions of texts are tolerated, but print copies which one can annotate are preferred. Please ask before using any devices in class. Please also ask before taking a photo or recording a video, as people value their ever-diminishing privacy.

**On the Event of a “Snow Day”:** During the regular class time, we will use the discussion space in Elearning (unless otherwise instructed) to create a dialogue about the material we had intended to cover. I will set things up under that week’s “Content” section. Just log in and start commenting on threads and even start some of your own based on your questions and observations. This worked really well last year! (And hey, it’s nicer than adding days in the spring!) Deadlines will still apply to homework and be sure to look for the new homework handout, as well.

**Student Expectations:**
* Thoughtful, thorough, and timely completion of all assignments
* Close, careful reading of all the material
* Energetic participation and respectful attentiveness during class
* Conduct in keeping with university surroundings
* Articulation of ideas, beliefs, and opinions
* Respect for the ideas, beliefs, and opinions of others
* Communication. If something is affecting your class performance, please let me know so we can work on it together. Remember that I’m here to help you—keep in touch with me about your concerns, frustrations, suggestions, struggles, ideas, and triumphs. Never hesitate to ask for help.

**Assignments**

**Journals:** Do not confuse this work with your in-class writings and notes. Each week you will receive directed journal entries that should reflect about 30-45 minutes of work. It will be single-spaced, 12 point Times font. These will receive the following marks: + (Excellent); √+ (Strong); √ (Close, but Not Quite); √- (Not Yet).

**Weekly Writing Homework:** Short 2-4 page papers and/or creative exercises will be assigned each week. Please use 1.5 spacing and 12 point Times font. These will receive the following marks: + (Excellent); √+ (Strong); √ (Close, but Not Quite); √- (Not Yet).

**Notes:** These will count toward your participation grade. You are required to keep a dedicated notebook for the class. Keep notes during class time – this allows students to make greater connections that will come in handy when composing essays later. Listen to classmates. They will have worthy insights. After each reading assignment, you will write down three questions you have about the readings or three
points of interest/insight. You can draw from a combination of your questions and insights to help you prepare for class participation. I will ask to see your notes. (Don’t worry if you doodle in the margins.) I do not want to see anything in this notebook except ATYP work. It is ok to occasionally staple something into the notebook.

**Logical Fallacies:** Students will be assigned fallacies in sets of three. Students will read over an explanation and example for each one, then provide an explanation of what the fallacy is in their own words, provide 2 examples from 2 different sources of that fallacy, and create 1 original example of your own for each that will demonstrate your understanding of how the fallacy works. Note: logical fallacy homework will earn a √ (complete) or a √- (incomplete). Upload logical fallacy assignments to eLearning by Friday night at 10 pm.

**Grammar Lessons:** You will have a grammar pre-test or a grammar quiz to take on assigned weeks. **Grammar quizzes must be taken in Elearning by Friday night at 10 pm.** If a student achieves 85% or higher on the pre-test, you will be exempt from the reading and post-test for the next week. If a student achieves less than 85%, clearly work is needed in this area of grammar - a subject for which most of seventh graders have had little direct instruction. Students will be assigned related reading in the Grammar Girl Presents The Ultimate Writing Guide for Students. Once a student has completed the reading, they may take the grammar post quiz. HINT: I don’t care if a student reads the chapter before a pre-quiz. **All quizzes must be completed by Friday of the week they are assigned by 10 pm.**

**Unit Essays:** At the conclusion of each unit, students will hand in a formal essay related to the technique or topic studied in that unit. These essays will be longer and more polished than the weekly writings and journals. Students will first receive an evaluation from among the following: weak, fair, strong, or excellent. All essays, except those earning “excellent” will be revised. Depending on the nature of the essay, **plan on 4-7 hours of work.**

**Essay Formatting:**
*It must have proper header format and an interesting title.  
*It must be typed with Times Roman 12 point font, double-spaced, with one-inch margins on all sides, using left-justification only.  
*The essay must have a clear thesis.  
*The essay must meet the minimum page length.  
*The final polished essay must be accompanied by graded drafts in the portfolio.

A warning for Google Docs users: the defaults for formatting for Google docs MUST be changed. Margins need to be 1” and the line spacing must be single or 1. (The defaults for Docs and MS Word are 1.25” margins and 1.15 spacing.) This picky change saves trees! If you don’t know how to change defaults, **ASK!**

Procrastination tends to create anxiety. To be clear, except for quizzes and fallacies, **you still need to bring physical copies to hand in to class each week for the instructor to evaluate.**

**Tentative Schedule** (The order and/or length of units may change)

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Units</th>
<th>Themes</th>
<th>Approximate Time Frame</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Unit 1</td>
<td>Summer Reading</td>
<td>~3 weeks</td>
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<tr>
<td>Unit 2</td>
<td>Narration</td>
<td>~3 weeks</td>
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<td>Unit 3</td>
<td>Description</td>
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<tr>
<td>Unit 4</td>
<td>Exemplification</td>
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Grades are viewed by the instructor as a means of motivating and challenging students as well as an indication of mastery. At any given time, a student’s grade is a snapshot of where they are at that moment. However, our class is graded based on the student’s progress from the first draft to the final draft. Students almost always have the chance to revise, often multiple times, to improve. To be clear: the grade is in flux until the final portfolio evaluation. As noted above, each essay will be given a minimal grade (Excellent, Strong, Fair, Weak) based upon the particular areas of content, style, mechanics, and organization when the student turns it in for its first evaluation, after which it will be reconsidered as part of a holistic letter grade for the entire portfolio. These minimal grades will give the student an idea of where each essay stands on its own.

I understand that most of you will not be used to having words as grades and may feel a bit anxious about where you stand grade-wise at the beginning of the course. Fear not! I will contact you if your overall course grade approaches B- level.

Our University grading system does not allow plus and minus grades. Letter grades are: A, BA, B, CB, C, DC, D, F. We request that home schools “err on the side of generosity” when calculating grade point averages. So, a “BA” should translate to your report card as a “A-“

The requirements for the Portfolio: All assignments, revisions, previously graded papers with my comments, and other class materials should be kept in the student’s portfolio, unless otherwise noted. It is a good idea to put the work directly into its proper section of the portfolio as it is handed back. Trying to organize this at the last minute will be quite a trial. I will collect portfolios at the end of each semester so I can look at all of the work as a whole before assigning a course grade. There may be spot checks during the semester, as well.

Portfolios are to have these sections: hand outs, notes, journals, weekly writings, essays, and other. Sections must be clearly labeled with dividers. Items should be organized by week - DO NOT group the journals by letter; group by week. I don’t care if sections are organized chronologically or reverse chronologically. Just be consistent. The most recent copy goes on top for each assignment (i.e. If you have two revisions of week 1 journal A, I will see the second revision, then the first graded revision, then the original graded assignment). DO NOT USE PLASTIC SLEEVES!

Notes about revisions for the Portfolio: If a journal earns a √+ or higher, then no revision is required. If the weekly writing earns a √+ or higher, then no revision is required. In the interest of teaching students a little bit about the necessity of imperfection, no revisions will be evaluated for work that previously earned a √+ or higher. All essays that haven’t earned an Excellent must be revised. If the fallacy assignment earns a mark lower than a √, then it must be revised and re-uploaded to Elearning. (The student must then email me to tell me they’ve done that.) All revisions must be accompanied by
the original paper with my marks—otherwise, how can I tell any revision have been made? All revisions must be TRACKED or HIGHLIGHTED. The copy to be evaluated is stapled to the top.

**Semester Grade Calculation after viewing the portfolio:** Unit Essays (40%), Weekly Writing (15%), Journals (20%), Grammar (10%), Logical Fallacies (5%), and Participation and Professionalism (10%) *(Please consider this rough math!)* The grading scale changes slightly second semester.

Keep in mind that the learning experience that students gain should always remain more important than any particular word or letter grade.

**Misc details for class:**

1. If you MUST be absent or leave early, please notify me via email as soon as you know. YOU should notify me, but copy your parents on the email. Missing a day of class is the equivalent to missing an entire week of class at your home school. (Just something to think about.)

2. If you must leave early, the adult picking you up needs to come in the building to our classroom or text me (317-847-3661) to let me know they are downstairs and again once you have reached the car.

3. Please arrange to be picked up immediately after class (3:50 pm). I will do my best to release you on time.

4. Please arrive by 1:15 so we can begin **promptly** at 1:20. I will be in our classroom at 1pm to address any questions or concerns you may be having.

5. As you discover cool things (i.e. helpful websites, quotes, etc.) please share them by emailing them to me. I’ll share or ask you to share with your classmates after I preview.

6. All class assignments can be found in Elearning.

7. Feel free to bring snacks and drinks to class. Our class is long. You will have one break. You may have food and water in class **AS LONG AS YOU CLEAN UP AFTER YOURSELVES.** If I have to clean up, I will suspend eating and drinking in class. All beverages **MUST** have a sealed top.

Keep in mind, I can only help you if you let me know that you need help. SMART students will attend tutoring on Sundays with our tutors (who are amazing!), email when confused, ask questions, take risks, and stay on top of homework. SMART students also text, email, or call me when they need help. Seriously, it isn’t a bother. If I didn’t want you to contact me, you wouldn’t have my cell phone number or email! I promise to respond within 24 hours, unless I’m at Lake Louise UM Camp where I have no internet or cell service. *(More on this in class, but I tend to be there five or six times each year for short stretches of time.)*

**Pep Talk**

This class, I hope, will be like nothing you’ve experienced before. It will be tough, but manageable. The discussions we have will brighten your soul - seriously, we don’t deal with some of the shenanigans that you’ve experienced with classmates who just don’t “get it.” There will be times when you leave class invigorated, and there will be times when you just want to quit. Both are okay. *(But, give it six weeks and TALK TO ME before you consider dropping.)*

The best learning happens when you are in what educators refer to as a “moderate state of challenge.” My guess is that you’ve rarely experienced that in school. The tough part is that it doesn’t always feel comfortable when you are challenged. In fact, I’d argue that the best things I’ve learned have been when I’m fairly UNcomfortable. Think about this class like learning how to walk. You’re going to fall down. Occasionally you’re going to hurt yourself. But, I promise to be your biggest cheerleader when you
succeed. And, though I won’t kiss your boo-boo’s, I will listen to you vent frustration and help scrape you back together.

I am a firm believer in the mindset work of Dr. Carol Dweck. She champions the idea of “not yet.” Here’s my take as I approach evaluating your work: if your work is flawless, you don’t need my class, and I’ll send you down the hall to Year 2. In the nine years I’ve taught this class, I have never accelerated someone down the hall. None of you are there YET. You will be by the end of the year if I do my job right and if you do what you’re supposed to do when you’re supposed to do it. I’m not doing my job if I don’t give you copious feedback and ideas to improve your work. It’s not a personal attack. I’m trying to coach you.

I am looking forward to working with each of you. Your classmates and I want your input and insight. Be sure to ask questions and contribute to class discussions and listen to your classmates, your instructor, and yourself. Think about what others are saying when they review your work so that you can consider the counsel of others along with your own. And lastly, take some risks. Try new ways of approaching assignments. Explore. You will very likely surprise yourself. Good luck!

**Words to Consider**

“I am always doing that which I cannot do, in order that I may learn how to do it.” – Pablo Picasso

“Poor is the pupil who does not surpass his master.” – Leonardo da Vinci

*Is it lack of imagination that makes us come to imagined places, not just stay at home?*

*Or could Pascal have been not entirely right about just sitting quietly in one’s room?*

*Continent, city, country, society:*

*the choice is never wide and never free. And here, or there... No. Should we have stayed at home, wherever that may be?*

—–from Elizabeth Bishop’s poem, “Questions of Travel”

“You gain strength, courage, and confidence by every experience in which you really stop to look fear in the face. You must do the thing which you think you cannot do.” -Eleanor Roosevelt

“It is better to know some of the questions than all of the answers.” -James Thurber

“Experience is what you get when you didn’t get what you wanted. And experience is often the most valuable thing you have to offer.’ -Randy Pausch

“Why waste time proving over and over how great you are, when you could be getting better? Why hide deficiencies instead of overcoming them? Why look for friends or partners who will just shore up your self-esteem instead of ones who will also challenge you to grow? And why seek out the tried and true, instead of experiences that will stretch you? The passion for stretching yourself and sticking to it, even (or especially) when it’s not going well, is the hallmark of the growth mindset. This is the mindset that allows people to thrive during some of the most challenging times in their lives.” - Carol S. Dweck

“And now...let the Wild Rumpus Start!” -Maurice Sendak