
Essay Writing Syllabus

Course Content: Major Units of Study

1. Introduction to Effective Essay Writing
 - Metacognition: Thinking about How You Think as a Writer
 - Writing From and With Passion
 - The Elements of Effective Writing
2. Personal Narrative Writing
 - The College Application Essay
 - Independent Vocabulary Study
3. Discursive Writing
 - The Classification Essay
 - Punctuation Review
4. Research Writing
 - The Persuasive Research Essay
 - Web Page or PowerPoint Project
5. Literary Analysis Writing and the Final Exam
 - Short Story and Film Study
 - The Literary Analysis Essay (*Cry, the Beloved Country*)
 - The Final Exam (essay and objective portions)

Evaluation Instruments:

1. Essays
2. Quizzes and tests (objective and essay)
3. Impromptu/journal writing
4. Grammar and Punctuation Focus
5. Individualized vocabulary study
6. Peer critiquing and self-evaluation

Course Introduction:

The course begins with the essential question, “What is an essay?” and encourages students to write passionately from their own experiences with the college application essay. The course ripples outward with self-to-world connections through the classification essay, then text-to-text and text-to-world connections through research writing. The course culminates with the literary analysis essay that prompts connections among self, texts, and the world. These essay modes equip students with the tools they need for college success. Through lessons aligned with state and national standards, students will learn effective strategies for developing essays throughout the writing process, including pre-writing, drafting, critiquing, polishing, and revising. Through the variety of essay modes students will focus on effectively conveying ideas with development, organization, voice, and conventions. Students will develop techniques to make decisions about the effectiveness of their own writing and

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evaluate the writing of others. Reading for the course includes sample essays for every assignment and a novel study of Alan Paton's classic yet contemporary *Cry, the Beloved Country*. Interspersed within the major essays are activities designed to improve the writing and critical thinking skills of students. These activities include an independent vocabulary study, grammar and conventions study, short story and film study, and the creation of a web page or PowerPoint. A pacing guide, daily lessons plans, sample annotated essays, and a variety of creative activities put student engagement and learning at the forefront of learning, stimulating all levels of students to take the next step toward college success.

Grading System:

As in everything, you as a teacher have discretion over your grading procedures (and your late work policy). Grading-wise, the procedure that has worked best for me is a point system. I give a point value to each assignment with major essays at 100 points and smaller assignments at 10-20 points possible. Other assignments, like #6 below, are a check mark (✓) for those who have the assignment completed on that day and a zero for anyone else.

Here is my late policy: one day late will result in one letter grade off the earned grade (-10%); two days late will result in two letter grades off the earned grade (-20%); three days late will result in three letter grades off the earned grade (-30%); four days late will result in four letter grades off the earned grade (-40%); five or more days will result in ½ credit (-50% off the earned grade). Assignments may be completed only in the quarter in which it was assigned. Failure to turn in an assignment will result in a zero.

What follows is a student who earned a 76.45% for the semester. While the assignments below do not exactly mirror the assignments this course guide gives, it gives you a good sense at least how I have individually weighted particular assignments. For those who are particularly math savvy, note that assignments 1-58 are worth 80% of the semester grade; assignments 59-60 (the final exam) are worth 20% of the semester grade. You'll also notice that assignments like 1, 6, and 14 are completion grades. If the student completes the assignment by the due date, then that student earns a check mark (which does not affect the grade). However, if the student were not to complete the assignment or to complete it on time, that student would earn 0/10, which would affect the grade.

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ASSIGNMENT TITLES	YOUR SCORES	POINTS POSSIBLE	%=LETTER GRADES
1. Sheet signed by student and parent [8/27]	√	(10)	N/A
2. Writing in class constantly [08/26]	20	20	100.0=A
3. College Essay Packet pp. 1-5 quiz [8/27]	8	9	88.8=B
4. My Writing is Like... [8/31]	28	30	93.3=A
5. Journal through 9/1	12	15	80.0=B
6. Complete 1st draft in class [9/8]	√	(10)	N/A
7. Punctuation Practice [9/13]	13	15	86.6=B
8. College Essay peer review	12	15	80.0=B
9. COLLEGE ESSAY FINAL DRAFT [9/10]	76	100	76.0=C
10. Levels of Rdg Art and Expl. [9/14]	9	10	90.0=A
11. Levels of Reading annotated [9/14]	7	10	70.0=C
12. Classification three categ., metaphors	3	3	100.0=A
13. Vocab. Word Profiles [9/16]	³ 20	30	66.6=D
14. Classif. essay 1st draft completed 9/22	³ √	(10)	N/A
15. Hyphen worksheet [09/23]	7	10	70.0=C
16. Active vs. Passive Voice quiz [09/24]	6	10	60.0=D
17. Punctuation quiz [09/24]	7	10	70.0=C
18. College Essay Error Corrections 9/29	9	15	60.0=D
19. "Researching & Rough Draft" notes [9/29]	5	8	62.3=D
20. "First Line to Last Draft" notes 9/30	5	8	62.3=D
21. Turnitin.com classification essay 10/1	√	(10)	N/A
22. Research Topic Proposal [10/06]	¹ 6	10	60.0=D
23. Research Essay element presentation 10/6	9	10	90.0=A
24. Classification essay peer review 9/22	11	15	73.3=C
25. CLASSIFICATION ESSAY FINAL DRAFT 9/27	76	100	76.0=C
26. Avoiding Plagiarism Practice [10/14]	6	6	100.0=A
27. Practice Paraphrasing [10/14]	⁴ 5	5	100.0=A
28. "Cry, Wolf" essay marginal prompts/?'s	7	7	100.0=A
29. Research group presentation notes	2	3	66.6=D
30. Plagiarism quiz 8 scenarios [10/15]	8	8	100.0=A
31. vocab. game	32	35	91.4=A
32. Classification error corrections [10/20]	8	15	53.3=F
33. Body Parag., Works Cited error correction	17	20	85.0=B
34. Avoiding Plagiarism quiz self-corrected	17	20	85.0=B
35. vocab. game feedback [10/20]	5	5	100.0=A
36. 5 pages of research essay complete 10/26	¹ 30	40	75.0=C
37. sample website [10/29]	15	15	100.0=A
38. research essay peer review [11/02]	³ 9	15	60.0=D
39. THE RESEARCH ESSAY [11/02]	134	160	83.7=B
40. research essay to turnitin.com 11/8	√	√	N/A
41. "Parker's Back" quiz	9	14	64.2=D
42. "Parker's Back"--"Hole in my Soul" connections	6	6	100.0=A
43. Classification essay revision 11/10	25	33	75.7=C

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44. Finding Forrester notes	10	10	100.0=A
45. Cry, Freedom guide [12/01]	18	20	90.0=A
46. Cry novel pop quiz chap. 1-4 [12/03]	48	10	80.0=B
47. chap. 1-7 quiz	14	20	70.0=C
48. chap. 8-11 quiz [12/7]	8	10	80.0=B
49. Woods' increase in knowledge=pain 1 page	7	10	70.0=C
50. chap. 14-17 quiz [12/09]	12	15	80.0=B
51. WEB PAGE 12/3	99	100	99.0=A
52. Cry chap. 18-24 quiz [01/03]	9	14	64.2=D
53. chap. 25-29 quiz [01/05]	2	15	13.3=F
54. chap. 30-32 quiz [01/06]	513	15	86.6=B
55. CRY, THE BELOVED TEST [01/06]	47	60	78.3=C
56. Cry group presentations	24	30	80.0=B
57. CRY ESSAY	115	160	71.8=C
58. Cry Essay to turnitin.com [01/20]	√	√	N/A
59. SEMESTER EXAM objective portion	14	25	56.0=F
60. SEMESTER EXAM ESSAY PORTION	51	75	68.0=D

() = DROPPED (score excused)	√ = CREDIT (with no point value)	1 = late
3 = incomplete	4 = half point rounded up	5 = half point rounded down

A Word on Plagiarism

The best way to avoid instances of plagiarism is define from day one what it is and what the penalties will be for violation. Here is what I put into my class syllabus. I recommend getting something like it in print and into the students' hands:

From day one it is expected that you conduct your work with integrity. This means that should you use an outside source, you should give credit where it is due. Plagiarism, according to NCHS's *A+ Style Manual*, is "the act of using another person's ideas or expressions in your writing without acknowledging the source. In other words, to plagiarize is to give the impression that you have written or thought something that you have in fact borrowed from someone else.... Plagiarism is essentially theft—the stealing of someone else's intellectual property" (2). Consequently, when evidence of plagiarism exists, the assignment will receive no credit and the student has no opportunity to make up that work. Plagiarism is a violation of the policies detailed under both "Responsibilities of Students" and the "Discipline Policy, Classification #1" in the Naperville Central High School Student Handbook ("The Redbook"). My advice is that if at any point you are uncertain about how to give credit, then ask your teacher.

Working with integrity also extends to working in class. When taking a quiz or test, avoid any appearance of impropriety. This means cover your work, turn it over when completed, do not talk when quizzes are out, etc. Also, at various points in this class there may be opportunities to work with someone else on a given assignment. In those cases I would ask that you (A) genuinely work collaboratively (equally share the work) and (B) that your wording of the idea you have come up with differs from your partner. I must insist on this in order to prevent students from simply copying someone else's homework assignment. Please note: If you turn in an assignment whose wording for one or more questions is the same as another person's, both you and that individual will lose up to all points for that assignment, regardless of who copied from whom.

The second paragraph above came about because there are instances where students indeed work collaboratively (rarely as collaboratively as we'd like), and I needed a mechanism in place to penalize students for essentially sharing a brain.

Our school district has also instituted the use of www.turnitin.com, a plagiarism detection website. It will flag exact wording of a student's essay if found in the database of online sources and previous essays submitted to turnitin.com. It's not foolproof, but it works well to prevent plagiarism in the first place (what we want to happen) and then to catch it if word-for-word plagiarism does happen. Even if you don't subscribe to an online plagiarism detection service, inform students that a teacher knows when a student's writing voice is his and when it might not be. When it might not be, the teacher can probe a bit (at a search engine like google.com), soon able to determine whether plagiarism exists.