

## General Principles

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1. “Reading maketh a full man, conference a ready man, and writing an exact man.”  
—“Of Studies”, Francis Bacon
2. “To read well, that is, to read true books in a true spirit, is a noble exercise, and one that will task the reader more than any exercise which the customs of the day esteem. It requires a training such as the athletes underwent, the steady intention almost of the whole life to this object. Books must be read as deliberately and reservedly as they were written.”  
—*Walden*, Henry David Thoreau
3. “The only privilege a student had that was worth his claiming, was that of talking to the professor, and the professor was bound to encourage it. His only difficulty on that side was to get them to RISK CRITICISM FROM THEIR FELLOWS.”  
—*The Education of Henry Adams*, Henry Adams
4. “I have sometimes dreamt, at least, that when the Day of Judgment dawns and the great conquerors and lawyers and statesmen come to receive their rewards—their crowns, their laurels, their names carved indelibly upon imperishable marble—the Almighty will turn to Peter and will say, not without a certain envy when He sees us coming with our books under our arms, “Look, these need no reward. We have nothing to give them here. They have loved reading.”  
—*The Second Common Reader*, Virginia Woolf
5. “To learn to read is to learn to think, possibly to discover the strength and freedom of one’s own mind.”  
—“School Bells,” Lewis Lapham

## Introduction

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More than anything else, this is a course in becoming a *critical thinking human*.

In the early twenty-first century, thinking does not come naturally nor is it rewarded in popular culture. You, as young people, have been programmed by the mass-society to believe certain ideas unquestioningly. This course will question those very (for some, core) assumptions by means of literature.

I don't expect this to be easy or painless. In fact, I expect it to be a harrowing experience of cultural vertigo, ambivalence, and uncertainty. This course will be impossible without a real, directed effort.

When you first begin on given problems they will seem difficult and maybe even impossible; however, the tasks before you are attainable and possible! **Remember, everything is difficult until you can do it.**

If you are not accustomed to original thinking, your writing may not be up to standards. Always bear in mind: confused or unclear thinking leads to confused or unclear writing. It is a simple equation. This course will offer you numerous opportunities to improve and expand your

mind and your writing ability. Resources for help abound (the entire THS English department, including myself; after school tutoring on Tuesdays and Thursdays; THS library and librarian). Take advantage of them.

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Language is the dress of thought.

— Dr. Samuel Johnson, compiler  
of the 1<sup>st</sup> English Dictionary

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If you are interested in seeking an **A** or **B** grade, read closely—I want you to understand that success of any kind comes from hard work and NOT LUCK. To have a higher level of success you must always exceed the requirements and break the norm. This is what makes the difference in this class and in life. Your success in any situation depends on your willingness to participate, be involved, and productive with your employer and employees, parents and family members, and yes, instructor and fellow students. For outstanding success you must be in attendance. You and your classmates must be persistent and tenacious in your efforts to accomplish individual and class goals. Don't forget you are not isolated from those around you. You will have my support and involvement. Remember—if you don't play you can't win!

I do not *give* grades—you earn them. Do not cling to tired notions that teachers give grades—this attitude keeps you in the state of being a victim of the educational system. Your work, effort, and participation will *earn* your grade. You are responsible for your success.

\*An extremely serious note: plagiarism of any sort will not be tolerated. Academic honesty is very important to me. Please refer to your Tiller Agenda for a complete definition of plagiarism in all of its forms.

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To each species of creature has been allotted a peculiar and instinctive gift. Galloping comes naturally for horses, flying to birds. To man only is given the desire to learn.

—Italian Humanist

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Discovery consists of seeing what everybody has seen and thinking what nobody has thought.

—Albert Szent-Gydergyi, writer

## Class materials

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### Reading (required):

*The Brief Bedford Reader, 9<sup>th</sup> ed.*, X. J. Kennedy, Dorothy M. Kennedy, Jane E. Aaron  
*Classical Rhetoric for the Modern Student, 4<sup>th</sup> ed.*, Edward P. J. Corbett  
*Rules for Writers, 5<sup>th</sup> ed.*, Diana Hacker  
*The Scarlet Letter*, Nathaniel Hawthorne  
*The Great Gatsby*, F. Scott Fitzgerald  
*Grendel*, John Gardner

Various short stories, articles, essays, speeches, & sermons

### Reading (recommended):

Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary  
The Elements of Style

### Materials:

All students are expected to arrive prepared for class with (1) a spiral bound journal, (2) 3-ring binder to keep track of handouts; (3) paper and/or pens (writing implements), (4) required texts, 5) and open mind. These are essential for a successful class experience (that definitely includes number 5).

### Online:

Class website: <http://mreldridge.net/>

Class blog: <http://brenteldridge.edbulogs.org/>

## Office Hours

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I am available Mondays, Tuesdays, & Wednesdays during 5th period, lunch, and after school by appointment.

I encourage everyone to try to meet with me at least once during the semester. You can earn extra credit by meeting with me and discussing academic reading or writing.

If you are having trouble, I really want to see you. I want everyone to succeed (yes, even you!). The more I know, the more I can help—the more I can help you pass this course or any other course.

If you have access to email, you may email me anytime with your concerns. My address is brenteldridge@hotmail.com. Please do not hesitate if you are unsure of anything, or just for the heck of it.

### \* \* \* Telephone Rule \* \* \*

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If you happen, on the off chance, to miss a class, you are required to call, email, IM, or whatever another student from your class (that means your specific period because not all periods are alike) and find out what you missed and what is due the next day. You should be prepared to make up a Quiz on the DAY YOU RETURN FROM YOUR ABSENCE. This is a college level class and I expect college level commitment to you academic success.

## Book Reviews

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A Book Review is more than just a quick chat. They involve time-management, thinking, resourcefulness, planning, just to name a few. I will pass out a book review guide. Book reviews account for ½ of your quiz grade (under the reading rubric).

## Classroom behavior

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Because minimums, more often than not, become maximums, I have extremely high minimum standards. I recommend that everyone review the “Rules for Being Human” included with this syllabus. Students will not only be respectful, polite, courteous, inquisitive, flexible, and enthusiastic; they must also actively engage in virtuous conduct. What may these be you may ask?

*Compassion*—The ability to be sympathetic to the feelings and sufferings of others. Compassion is to share their pain, and to do what you can to ease their misery. Show compassion in all your dealings, or your heart will grow hard and cold

*Honesty*—You shall not steal or lie. But more than this: seek the truth in all things. Strive to be honest in all your actions. Look deep into yourself; only by knowing yourself can you know truth.

*Honor*—When you give your word you are bound by it. Whatever may happen, your word is your bond. Those who follow through are respected and admired. You are only as good as your word.

*Valor*—More than just plain bravery. True valor is the courage to stand by your convictions and to act in defense of them. Valor is also courage to look at your failings and bravely take action to rectify them.

*Justice*—Do not be hasty in your judgments, but take time to learn the truth. Search your heart also, and find love where others can’t. Always judge with mercy.

*Sacrifice*—To love is not enough; you must be able to give of yourself. True sacrifice is giving without thought of reward or gain. Seek to aid those that are in need. Delve deep into your heart and soul and you may find true generosity.

*Humility*—The opposite of pride; without humility your path will be a rocky one. If you are filled with pride then how can you learn? Shed your pride, your ego.

*Spirituality*—The ability to be at peace with yourself and the world. Spirituality is also to seek the true nature of your inner self. It is to strive to live a principled life. Finding true spirituality is a blessing because it is the first step towards wisdom and peace.

*Temperance*—Strive to find the golden mean—not too much, not too little—in every activity and you will find consistency and security. But this is not so easy as always choosing the medium size: the golden mean is different for every person and every situation. Courage for a soldier is vastly different than courage for a child. Introspect to find the truth.

*Fortitude*—The courage to withstand life’s buffets and stick to your principles when the “going gets tough.” Fortitude builds the strength of the will so that it will never be defeated.

## Course Mechanics

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An ideal class with ideal students would work something akin to this:

Students arrive on time to class with materials and all reading covered from the previous night. I would then poll the class for questions regarding the previous night's reading. With any luck these questions would touch on the themes of the story, be open-ended, and earnest. We (meaning every member of the class) would work out an answer, myself acting as a facilitator. In other words, the students would choose what we discussed because they have come with relevant and invigorating material. Everyone would take notes on our discussion so each of us could effectively review for the essay. I would assign another section to read for discussion on the following day. When we finished the reading we would write an essay discussing issues that the text has brought up and then move on our merry way.

I realize this is an idealized version of reality, so I have instituted a few safeguards. When reading is assigned, either in class or for homework, expect a reading or vocabulary quiz of minimal length. Expect random note/notebook/material checks. Comprehension questions, writing assignments, grammar and vocabulary work will be assigned periodically to insure that everyone has been given an opportunity and the necessary tools to understand the text.

If you fail to achieve a satisfactory grade on any assignment I may send home my "Poor Grade Notification." It is required to be signed by your parent/guardian and returned to me the next school day. A copy has been included for your reference.

People sometimes ask me what is my philosophy of teaching? I must say that I never have a truly complete answer for my practice is constantly evolving. I have spent many years in athletics and the athletics mentality has made a deep impression on me. If I were to sum up the attitude needed to score an **A** it would come in two popular phrases: "Just do it" and "Shut up and play." In other words, achievement through persistent effort is the goal;.

### MLA format

Tustin High School intends to rigorously uphold MLA format. Therefore, any paper that does not conform to this standard will receive an automatic zero (0). This standard is

- ~ 8 ½ x 11 white unlined paper
- ~ 1 in. margins
- ~ 12 point, Times Roman typeface
- ~ double-spaced
- ~ one side only
- ~ first and last name in header with page number
- ~ parenthetical citations in your text

## Grades and Grading

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Reading		A FULL (wo)man (25%)
Vocabulary & Reading (Oral) Quizzes		Vocab: Open book (1 pt./quest.) Reading Quiz: Closed book (1 pt./quest.)
Outside Reading:		2 books per semester ½ of your reading grade
Conference (class participation)		A READY (wo)man (15%)
Presentations (trope & sonnet)		25 pts.
Journal		2 personal entries per week (34/sem) Daily class notes ½ of your conference grade
Writing (essays)		An EXACT (wo)man (30%)
In class essays		50 pts
Typed at home essays		50 pts. * 3
Final		Assessment/Review (30%)
1 essay		You will be given a list of topics about 1 wk. before the test
Multiple Choice		
<i>*97 Rule</i>		An overall 97% in the class excuses you from the final
Extra Credit		Max 5 pts
Essay conference		½ pct. on your final percentage
Assigned passage for memorization (must be presented to the class)		½ pct. on your final percentage
Extra outside book w/a brief review		1 pct. on your final percentage
<i>You are entitled to have your paper regarded if you feel that I made a grievous error</i>		

I reserve the right to add or modify the grading policy at any time.

The meaning of letter grades follows...

- A** Superior or Excellent. Honor grade indicating excellence earned as a result of consistently superior examination scores; consistently accurate and prompt completion of assignments; ability to deal resourcefully with abstract ideas; superior mastery of pertinent skills; and promise of success in field relating to the subject. (90% or higher)
- B** Better than average—Good. Honor grade indicating competence earned as a result of high examination scores; accurate and prompt completion of assignments; ability to deal well with abstract ideas; commendable mastery of pertinent skills; and promise of continued success in sequential courses. (79%—89%)
- C** Average—Satisfactory. Standard grade indicating successful performance as a result of satisfactory examination scores; generally accurate and prompt completion of assignments; ability to deal with abstract ideas; average mastery of pertinent skills. (69%—78%)
- D** Passing. Substandard grade indicating the meeting of minimum requirements only earned as a result of low examination scores; generally inaccurate, incomplete or late assignments; inadequate grasp of abstract ideas; barely acceptable mastery of pertinent skills. (59%—68%)
- F** Failing. Non-passing grade indicating failure to meet requirements earned as a result of non-passing examination scores; inaccurate, incomplete or late assignments; inadequate mastery of pertinent skills; or repeated absence from class. (58.9% or below)

## Rules for Being Human

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**1. YOU WILL RECEIVE A BODY.**

You may like it or hate it, but it will be yours for the entire period this time around.

**2. YOU WILL LEARN LESSONS.**

You are enrolled in a full-time informal school called LIFE. Each day in this school you will have the opportunity to learn lessons. You may like the lessons or think them irrelevant and stupid.

**3. THERE ARE NO MISTAKES, ONLY LESSONS.**

Growth is a process of trial and error, experimentation. The “failed” experiments are as much a part of the process as the experiment that ultimately “works.”

**4. A LESSON IS REPEATED UNTIL LEARNED.**

A lesson will be presented to you in various forms until you have learned it. When you have learned it, you can then go on to the next lesson.

**5. LEARNING LESSONS DOES NOT END.**

There is no part of life that does not contain its lessons. If you are alive, there are lessons to be learned.

**6. “THERE” IS NO BETTER THAN “HERE.”**

When your “there” has become a “here” you will simply obtain another “there” that will, again, look better than “here.”

**7. OTHERS ARE MERELY MIRRORS OF YOU.**

You cannot love or hate something about another person unless it reflects to you something you love or hate about yourself.

**8. WHAT YOU MAKE OF YOUR LIFE IS UP TO YOU.**

You have all the tools and resources you need. What you do with them is up to you.

**9. YOUR ANSWERS LIE INSIDE YOU.**

The answers to life’s questions lie inside you. All you need to do is look, listen, and trust.

**10. YOU WILL FORGET THIS.**

—Anonymous

