Course Overview:

**Thematic Pursuits in AP English Literature & Composition: Narrative Reality**

Is there delineation between art and reality? What is reality other than the stories we tell ourselves? What role does Time play in the stories we can (or cannot!) tell ourselves? This course explores the simultaneous effects of place and the power of word to shape a sense of the self in the present – that acute moment amassed by the past and future’s imminence. Is it the case that the master storyteller is also a master of the present reality? Explore these questions in the context of literary characters across time and place. Realize, along the way, the best literary analysis engages a strong creative stroke.

**Essential Questions:**

What arguable, recurring, and thought-provoking questions will guide inquiry and point toward the big ideas of this course?

- How does literature help us understand ourselves, others and “reality” itself?

- How does literature reflect the human condition?

- How does literature express universal themes in reality, help us to better navigate reality and to build strong relationships with others?

- How has writing become and remained a communication tool across the ages?

- How does the act of writing deepen our perceptions and understandings?
Units and Activities: What will we be learning about and doing in this course?

This course will provide you with the intellectual challenges and workload consistent with a typical undergraduate university English literature/Humanities course. While AP Lit will focus on close analysis of literature, this particular year will allow us to develop stamina for longer texts, training our brains to stay with themes and conflicts that develop over 300 pages, rather than just 3 or 30, as you might have become accustomed to in your junior year Language and Composition course. As a culmination to Narrative Reality, you will take the AP English Literature and Composition Exam offered in May. A grade of 4 or 5 on this exam is considered equivalent to a 3.3–4.0 for comparable courses at the college or university level. A student who earns a grade of 3 or above on the exam will be granted college credit at many colleges and universities that accept Advanced Placement credits in the United States, and a score of “3” is indicative of college level writing at the end of freshman year in an undergraduate program. Once again, The Collegeboard anticipates offering a full AP Literature and Composition exam in May of 2022, regardless of the remote or in-school learning circumstances, so we will be ready for that, with stamina, intensity, scrutiny, pencil, pen and paper or laptop, as the case may be!

A Sketch of the Studies and Thematic Pursuits in AP English IV: Narrative Realities

Excavation 1: [Rushdie Haroun and the Sea of Stories]

[Viramontes’ Under the Feet of Jesus]

McEwan Atonement

Ellison Invisible Man

Williams A Streetcar Named Desire

Stoker Dracula* alternates with M. Shelley Frankenstein and/or other Victorian Literature

We will use McEwan’s Atonement to jumpstart an understanding of the force by which storytelling has the power to determine reality, as well as to notice what phenomenon in society can prevent a story from discounting the actual truth. Our comparative summer study of Rushdie’s novel Haroun and the Sea of Stories and Viramontes’ Under the Feet of Jesus, along with Ellison's Invisible Man and Williams’ drama A Streetcar Named Desire will greatly assist and clarify that study, too. Our close, collective study of these texts will help us come to some determination on how an artist/author uses space/place and Time to ignite a story or to snuff a belief (in an individual’s perspective). Rushdie’s, Viramontes’ McEwan’s, Williams’ and Ellison’s texts showcase the power of word to define and/or alter reality, dispel or create a myth, and, also, the role of perception in distorting or invigorating a sense of self-worth. Expect ideas in this excavation to be supplemented with short fiction (Allende, Chopin) and poetry by Basho, Virgil, Frost, Howe, Whitman, Coleridge, E. Alexander and others to be determined.

Excavation Objectives:
Students will gain experience with:
*Close reading of fiction, drama, poetry - Genre Study
* Composition instruction (*Experience with timed writing about prose—complex characterization, figurative language, setting, point of view, etc)
* Evaluation of timed writing--working with a scoring guide
* Paragraph writing, short answers, possibly graphic organizers
* Literary terms and techniques
*Elements of literature including novel, short story, and poetry

**Texts:**

**Novel:** Atonement, Invisible Man, (Dracula:epistolary) (Haroun & the Sea of Stories, Under the Feet of Jesus)

**Drama:** A Streetcar Named Desire

**Non-fiction:** Introduction to Invisible Man (Ellison), Essays by E. Bernard, W.Stevens and others

**Short Story:** “Two Words” - Allende; “The Story of an Hour” - Chopin, “A Small Good Thing” - R.Carver

**Poetry:** “Directive,” “The Gate,” “Eclogues,” “Rime of the Ancient Mariner,” plus others to be determined.

**Excavation 2:  Personal Essay for College Admission/Scholarship Application**

- Writers often use the personal reminiscence/personal essay/essay of experience to state an opinion, explain a viewpoint, and/or to clarify the significance of a person or event.
- The personal essay may take one of three forms: personal essay, personal reminiscence, essay of experience.

**Excavation Objectives**

* Students will explore ideas about themselves to determine their topics for writing via some hybrid narrative practices

* Students will understand and work with personal writing including but not limited to anecdote, dialogue, details, language, syntax, and varied structures

* Students will perhaps explore ideas published writers such as Ta-Nehisi Coates, Annie Dillard, EB White, Emily Bernard, Terry Tempest Williams, etc have chosen as topics for personal essays.

- Direct composition instruction on introduction/openings, voice, use of first person pronouns, apostrophe, and conventions

* Students will work with conventions of standard written English.

* Students will participate in peer editing, rewriting/revising and polishing their personal narratives

* Students will complete at least one personal essay for college admission, or for personal growth, reflection.
Excavation 3: Poetry (ongoing/year long – poetry analysis will inform our literary studies in the novel in most “excavations,” enhanced by our participation in the national Poetry Out Loud competition, February, 2022)

Essential Question: While texts such as McEwan’s, Williams’, Ellison’s, among others, show that more often than not, an individual’s sense of reality hinges on her/his narrative (or the story she/he perceives and tells) of reality, is it the case that the poet gets closest of all to discerning what is true about reality? Is the poem itself a genre that can “check” just how far-fetched a tale one can tell about reality?

Excavation Objectives:

Study and analyze poems from the Renaissance to Modern times

In terms of reading poems:
• Poems, perhaps even more than other texts, can sharpen your reading skills because they tend to be so compact, so fully dependent on concise expressions of feeling. In poems, ideas and feelings are packed tightly into just a few lines.
• Responding to poetry involves remembering and reflecting

• Your knowledge and life experience informs your reading, and allows you to connect ideas within the text—events, images, words, sounds—so that meanings and feelings develop and accumulate, and you experience active close reading and meaning-making

• Poems, even when they are about matters we have no experience of, connect to ideas, understandings that we can know and, along the way, order our memories, thoughts, and feelings in new and newly challenging ways.

• Reading poetry can ultimately enrich your life by helping you become more articulate and more sensitive to both ideas and feelings: that’s the larger goal. But the more immediate goal—and the route to the larger one—is to make you a better reader of texts and a more precise and careful writer yourself.

In terms of writing about poems:

Explicating Poems: This is a more explicit form of literary analysis that directs critical thinking and writing about poetry. —Students will explore Shakespeare's poetry (and sonnets) and other poems. Students will practice explicating poems orally, via the Poetry Out Loud experience, in the “unfinished essay” form, as well as in fully developed, written explications of the poems under scrutiny. Essays will be shared in class and the literary techniques our poetry explorations will emphasize include sonnet form, paraphrase, imagery, syntax, and poetic language (diction and other techniques under “figurative language”). Direct composition instruction includes: summary/paraphrase, thesis statement, syntax/sentence structures, audience.

TEXTS: Selections from: www.poetryoutloud.com and other anthologies of poetry, AP Lit collegeboard practices

Excavation 4: Artist, Art and Audience
**Essential Questions:** Artist, Art and Audience: Are these lines as delineated as society dictates? Our exploration of two more different authors’ writing in extremely different time periods from quite different places will allow us to see that sometimes truth is best known when the lines between art, artist and audience are blurred – indeed when the narrative art takes over; oftentimes that is when the artist and audience best understand the wisdom present. Shakespeare’s *Hamlet* allows us access to this interesting phenomenon of blurring the distinction between Artist/Art/Audience. Leaping forward in time some three hundred and eighty or so years, how has the postmodern novelist, Silko, or the Latino writer Helena Maria Viramontes, capitalized on Shakespeare’s structural art in blurring the lines a reader or viewer may want to maintain between himself/herself in reality and art and artist? Does the reader necessarily become a part of the art itself in order to comprehend the artist’s objective? How separate is the reader from Tayo’s dilemmas in the early sections of the novel? How separate or different is Tayo’s experience with evil at the Los Alamos site near the end of the novel from the incidents that constituted and surrounded 9/11 in 2001? Another worthwhile consideration in exploring *Ceremony* is the artist’s work with blurring the audience’s location – where is the audience, the reader situated, relative to the audience in Shakespeare’s time? What considerable effect does Silko achieve in “streaming” old art (the native tales) with contemporary art – Tayo’s narrative?

**Excavation Expectations**

a) Study includes great chain of being, Shakespeare’s language, form and function of tragedy

b) Essay test/timed write using some #3-type question from AP English Literature and Composition Exams, or another published AP English Literature and Composition Exam.

c) Literary analysis paper—formal, persuasive essay


e) Discussion contributions are essential—Group Effort is mandatory for best comprehension of this Shakespearean tragedy, and Silko’s challenging modern novel!

f) Our study of *Ceremony* will offer personal writing/memoir writing/creative writing options, in addition to some opportunity to test your skill in writing for an AP prompt utilizing in impressive ways a challenging text.

**TEXTS:**

*William Shakespeare: The Tragedy of Hamlet, Prince of Denmark*

*Ralph Ellison: Invisible Man → last year, this novel worked into Excavation 4: Art; Artist; Audience]*

*Leslie Marmon Silko: Ceremony*

**Excavation 5: AP PRACTICE EXAM(S)**

This unit transpires in third and fourth quarters and will be completed by early May, 2022. The English Literature and Composition Exam is on **Wednesday, May 4th, 2022**. Registration for this exam transpires in **October, 2021**. The nature of this exam -- online or paper-- is yet to be
determined, but we will practice both modes of response until we know definitively that the exam is either online or on paper.

**Excavation Expectations:**

Students gain full exposure to and experience of the entire AP English Literature and Composition Exam in timed situations for both Multiple Choice section as well as Essay Sections.

Students have the chance to reflect on the experience and to define the kinds of questions that are their strengths and those that are challenging and want more review/practice.

**Excavation 6: The Past’s Presence, Now and Future, and the Quests for Truths across Time:**

**Essential Questions:**

In exploring Shakespeare’s, Ellison’s and Silko’s texts, students can see that stories are pliable; they change somewhat with the times, like breath does over the course of a life. Yet, does understanding stories from the past “appear” to give an individual artist a stronger command of her/his perception on the present? Moreover, is it the case that the storyteller as “witness” is never good enough, and that the active artist is the most successful where truth and reality are concerned? How did Silko’s *Ceremony* answer this? (AP exam review). How do Conrad’s *Heart of Darkness*, Morrison’s *Song of Solomon* and/or Viramontes’ *Under the Feet of Jesus* support or refute this idea that the individual with greatest “mastery” over reality is the one who conveys an understanding and acknowledgement of stories from the past and is willing to be more than a mere witness of the present? This relates to the question, “Is Time more a continuum of than a delineation of past, present, future? Is Truth that which transcends time and taps an individual’s less tangible soul to known presence?” Are there some elements of reality that “are” (exist), yet without rational explanation? (Magical Realism) Supplemental poetry: T.S. Eliot’s “Burnt Norton” from “The Four Quartets,” anticipating the metaphysical to modern poetry excavation

**Excavation Expectations:**

“Now he knew why he loved her so. Without ever leaving the ground, she could fly.” -- Morrison

*How essential to going forward with a life is looking backwards?*

*Is “knowing” others’ stories of the past sufficient to charting your own present and future? -- what role does physical, mental and emotional experience play in enhancing understanding, perspective and ultimately your own direction in reality?*

*How does Morrison teach “transcendence” in this novel? Is it a skill necessary to navigating reality under certain circumstances, or an essential skill to the human condition in all its forms? What tools does one need in order to “transcend” obstacles?*

* In Conrad’s *Heart of Darkness*, the protagonist “Marlow” explains that “having a voice, having something to say (an idea), is what saves a person”; who are the “saved” by that definition in Morrison’s novel, and what does her work as a whole save, collectively? \(\text{Who are the “saved” and how are they “saved” in Viramontes’ novel?}\)
In terms of the essential question of the course, “What is reality other than the stories we tell ourselves,” how does Viramontes’ work in Under the Feet of Jesus answer that question? What several elements does Estrella discover as forces that determine her experiences in reality, beyond the stories she tells? How does Viramontes’ work attest to forces besides narrative that also contribute and constitute reality as we know it?

“The sea molds character, he said, yet, in setting the conditions for shipboard drama—as to some extent it inevitably must—it reveals, like a mirror, the face of character itself.” - Conrad

Joseph Conrad's Heart of Darkness “is the most vividly realized account in literature of the experiences of a European in colonial Africa, and as such is a document of historical importance as well as a literary classic.”

Students will explore the literary techniques of: impressionistic writing, frame narrative, inference and symbolism

a) One or two short interpretation papers based on point of view and tone.
b) Comparative analytical essay on Heart of Darkness and “Hollow Man” – T.S. Eliot’s poem

c) Oral presentation and defense of this essay -- after all, “Having something to say, and the voice (idea) that saves us.” (Marlow)

TEXTS to Choose from: Morrison’s Song of Solomon
Conrad’s Heart of Darkness
(Additional alternative texts for Excavation 6: Virginia Wolf To the Lighthouse, William Faulkner, The Sound and the Fury)

Excavation 7: Post AP Exam: Beyond the Classroom Walls... Portfolio Project... or a King Farm Project...

Specifics to be determined, but this last excavation is a project to take us past traditional essays, beyond classroom walls, and move us to pursue in written and perhaps mixed media form(s) an element of the way literature informs your own life. For instance, AP Lit students have done final projects in the form of physical sites at King Farm that answered a question from Rushdie’s novel, Haroun and the Sea of Stories, “What’s the use of stories if they aren’t even true?”… and created imovies to document the site in a more long-term way. Similar work came out of Harry Potter, The Sorcerer’s Stone, or more recently personal narratives that have strived to catch a slice into the life of the writer, in reality, Virginia Woolf style, as she models in To the Lighthouse. Another year, students physically constructed The Monster in Mary Shelley’s Frankenstein, as well as his “She-Monster” in life-size physical sculptures, only to fill this pair of monsters with their own personal and powerful narratives about “the monster” they tend, nurture, loathe and perhaps even sideways love inside themselves. This is all just to say, while some amazing final projects exist, withstanding the test of time for us to try ourselves, we are also free, as a class, to determine a new project that will be worthwhile to us based on our learning and new understandings from the readings this year.

Standards: What knowledge and skills will I gain by the end of this course?
Anchor Standards:

Writing: Students will produce clear and coherent writing for a range of tasks, purposes and audiences - primarily the college board, but also college admissions officers.

Reading: Students will determine themes and central messages, cite strong and thorough evidence to support their claims on a text’s meaning, and determine a number of different strategies and devices an author engages to create that meaning in the literature.

Language: Demonstrate command of Standard English Grammar, punctuation, capitalization, usage and conventions. Apply knowledge of language to understand how language functions in different contexts, to make effective choices for meaning or style, to vary syntax for effect, and to comprehend more fully when reading or listening. Determine or clarify the meaning of unknown and multiple-meaning words and phrases based on college level reading and content, choosing flexibly from a range of strategies.

Speaking and Listening: Propel conversations by posing and responding to questions that probe reasoning and evidence; ensure a hearing for a full range of positions on a topic or issue; clarify, verify, or challenge ideas and conclusions; and promote divergent and creative perspectives. Respond thoughtfully to diverse perspectives; synthesize comments, claims, and evidence made on all sides of an issue; resolve contradictions when possible. Evaluate a speaker's point of view, reasoning, and use of evidence and rhetoric, assessing the stance, premises, links among ideas, word choice, points of emphasis, and tone the speaker/writer uses.