

CIS: Introduction to Literature  
North High School  
Instructor: Mr. Nick Krueger

### **Course Description:**

*Intro to Literature* is a University of Minnesota course traditionally taken by freshman. In this course: the literature is multi-cultural; the writing is mainly informal; the learning is active, based on discussion. Students have more of the freedom and responsibility for their own learning that they will find in college. As a college course, the books, plays, and poetry we read may contain mature themes and images. We will read and discuss words, images, and ideas that are much different than those normally encountered in high school literature. We will entertain ideas, perspectives, and experiences different from, and perhaps opposed to, our own. ***Expect to encounter things that may enlighten or offend you.***

In this course, you will read 7-8 novels, plays or books of poetry. Through a combination of in class discussion, and out of class journal writing, we will investigate these works critically. We will not only consider how these texts operate as works of art, but the commentary they may be providing to the world in which we live. You will be solely responsible for reading and understanding the text on a literal level (plot, characters, etc.) on your own time. In class, we will be examining the text much more closely and applying literary theory to the work. An emphasis will be placed on creative and independent thinking. Students will receive college credit upon completion of the course.

### **Goals/Objectives:**

By the completion of this course, students will be able to:

- Analyze literary texts to recognize subtext and layers of meaning
- Apply critical theory to textual readings
- Explore the relationship between literary texts and other representations of the world around us
- Articulate clearly the meaning they draw from literary texts in essay form
- Engage peers in productive and collaborative discussion of literature

To achieve these goals, students will:

- Read 7-8 novels, plays or books of poetry (see below)
- Respond to these texts in a reading journal (see handouts)
- Engage their classmates in discussion
- Produce a number of final, polished pieces of writing
- Reflect on their subconscious assumptions about literature and diversity

### **Teaching Philosophy**

I love what I teach. I think that reading fiction is important and can have positive impacts on one's life long after they finish the last page. One of the things I disliked most about my own high school English classes is I felt that the teacher would point out deeper meaning (symbolism and themes) which I couldn't always see, didn't necessarily buy, but was forced to memorize.

As I progressed in my studies of literature, I became more adept at finding these meanings, as well as developing my own thoughts and ideas about the text. Not only did reading become more enjoyable to me, but I began to apply these analytical thinking skills to the world around me. Life became a more colorful and interesting place as I found myself noticing so much more. Additionally, I hope to demonstrate the theory which grounds these deeper meanings and makes literature a topic of serious, intellectual study. My goal in this class is that you learn techniques, strategies and schools of literary theory to help you peer beneath the surface of a text, to the subtext of life. Reading can make your life better and I hope to show you why.

### **Class Format**

This class will meet three to four days a week. A few classes will be lectures about critical theory, but the vast majority will be small or large group discussion. As a member of this class you are expected to be above-average in terms of work ethic and preparation, and so your preparation for these discussions should be thorough. Generally, you should have completed the book and attained a fairly thorough understanding if it before the first time we discuss it in class. You will also work on a reading journal throughout the class. As a rule of thumb, **the University of Minnesota suggests that for each hour of class time, students should spend two hours in preparation.** Assignments will follow that general guideline.

### **Reading Overview**

At the college level, just “reading” a book is of little value. **The fact that you’ve “read” through its pages makes little difference to the class or lifting your grade above an “F.”** Instead, you are expected to be able to *discuss the text, allude to its passages, compare it to other things, identify issues and ideas, subject it to various critical approaches, internalize it, and more.* When you are able to do these things, then you’ve read the book.

### **Critical perspectives**

In this course, we will examine literature through many “lenses” or perspectives, including feminist, psychoanalytic, cultural materialist, post-colonial, and post-structural, among others. Each of these perspectives are based on theories about the relationship among people, our world, and the texts we use to describe them. This means that we will not just read the stories to see “what happened” or “who did what to whom,” but we will attempt to read and discuss stories as they relate to the ideas and issues that create the worlds in which we live.

### **Reading Schedule (SUBJECT TO CHANGE)**

Week 1/2– Critical Lenses, *A House on Mango Street*, Sandra Cisneros

Weeks 3/4 - *Ceremony*, Leslie Marmon Silko

Weeks 5/6/7/8 – *Heart of Darkness*, Joseph Conrad/*Things Fall Apart*, Chinua Achebe

Weeks 9/10 – *The Bluest Eye*, Toni Morrison

Weeks 11/12 – *Brave New World*, Aldous Huxley

Weeks 13/14 – *Their Eyes Were Watching God*, Zora Neal Hurston

Weeks 15/16/17 – *The Things They Carried*, Tim O’Brien, conclusion (possibly another text)

You are responsible for purchasing your own copy of *Into the Wild*. You **must** have your own copy of the text by Monday, November 20<sup>th</sup>. In addition, while not a requirement, it may be advantageous for you to purchase your own copies of the other texts. It is much easier to remember passages and quotations to utilize in your analysis if you can write in the text. However, copies of the other books will be provided.

**Your grade will be based on:**

**Reading Notebook (40%)**

Your Reading Notebook will be the cornerstone of all the work you do in this class. After we complete discussion of a text, you will have two journal entries (750-1000 words each) due. Early in the term, you will decide which I grade, but later I will make the decision. These should be word processed and submitted to *turnitin.com*. I will give you prompts to answer, although you may include one entry that is a topic of your choice (but I would suggest running it by me first). These prompts will ask you to look beyond the surface level of the text, but will be more of an exploration of ideas than a polished piece. You should cite the text (using MLA citation style) to support the assertions you make, however. If your notebook is not ready, you will lose 10% of the points. You will continue to lose 10% each day that you are unable to hand in a current notebook. More detailed instructions on the Notebook will be forthcoming

**Class Participation (30%)**

One of the ways in which this class may differ from your prior experiences with literature is that we will approach reading and meaning-making as a collaborative, social activity. Whenever we read, we are not simply receiving information from an author, but collaborating with the author to make meaning. In addition, we draw on our experience as a member of a community (or communities) to make conclusions. In class, we will make obvious the social nature of reading by sharing our ideas together. Students who earn the most participation points will not simply be the ones who talk a lot, but whose comments are thoughtful, designed to encourage their classmates' participation, and demonstrate that the sharing of ideas should be cooperative rather than competitive. You will receive a rubric for class discussion. Your Reading Notebooks will be invaluable resources during class time, so keep them handy. Furthermore, when we begin to discuss a book, your ability to participate will be influenced by your completion of the reading, and so we will begin each unit with a short quiz to check your reading. Additionally, when we complete a text, the day we begin discussion, you will have a preliminary response to the text (questions, quotations, things which you found interesting). This will be graded under this category as well as three assignments to be completed during our discussion of the text.

**Finished Writing/Group Project (30%)**

Twice during the semester you will take one of your notebook entries and turn them in to formal literary analysis essays. These essays will be approximately 750-1000 words. In addition, you may complete a project on a choice novel to conclude the class (**subject to change**). More detailed information on these assignments will be forthcoming.

## U of M Grades

The grade you receive in a CIS course is recorded on a University of Minnesota transcript and automatically becomes part of your permanent U of M academic record. The University of Minnesota uniform grading policy states that "University grade definitions establish the qualities of performance expected at different grade levels. Instructors define grade standards for their courses in conformity with their departmental policies."

<b>A</b>	Achievement <b>outstanding</b> relative to the level necessary to meet course requirements. You completed the assignments, fulfilled all requirements, added material or developed new insights, and truly distinguished yourself through the use of particularly creative or inventive approaches. (no grade of A+ should be submitted; A, 4 grade points; A-, 3.67 grade points).
<b>B</b>	Achievement <b>significantly above</b> the level necessary to meet course requirements. You completed the assignments, fulfilled all requirements and went beyond by contributing additional material or developing new insights (B+, 3.33 grade points; B, 3 grade points; B-, 2.67 grade points).
<b>C</b>	Achievement <b>meeting the basic course requirements</b> in every respect. You completed the assignments and fulfilled the requirements <i>Note: a "C" grade is the normal grade for this course. Anything above a "C" reflects significant extra effort and skill and is considered an honors grade.</i> (C+, 2.33 grade points; C, 2 grade points; C-, 1.67 grade points).
<b>D</b>	Achievement <b>worthy of credit</b> even though it does not fully meet the basic course requirements in every respect. You fulfilled some of the requirements of the assignments, but not all of them (D+, 1.33 grade points; D, 1 grade point; no grade of D- should be submitted).
<b>F</b>	Performance <b>failing to meet the basic course requirements</b> (0 grade points).

*Pluses and minuses are used:* A, A-, B+, B, B-, C+, C, C-, D+, D, and F. **Note that A+ and D- are not allowed by the University.**

## Quantity of Work per Credit

The University Senate prescribes the quantity of work needed to earn a credit as three hours per credit per week or approximately 45 hours per credit per semester. The manner in which the course is taught determines how much of the work will be in the classroom, laboratory, library,

or independent study and research. A student should expect to spend about 9 hours a week, *including class time*, on a 3-credit course.

### **Inclusivity Statement**

You are a diverse group of students, even if on the surface you may appear more or less homogeneous. Diversity is a strength in our society. In this class, you will be expected to maintain an open mind to the differences around you, and you are encouraged to place a positive value on those differences.

Racism, sexism, homophobia, classism, ageism, and other forms of bigotry are inherent in our culture. We need to learn how to recognize and address statements of these attitudes so that our classroom can be as inclusive as possible. Students are encouraged to acknowledge diversity by listening actively to one another. It is especially important that you listen to students whose opinions differ from your own, arguing with the opinions while remaining respectful of the individual.

All of us learn in different ways and with varying degrees of success. If you know of any factors in your life which hinder your abilities to learn up to your potential in this course, please notify me at once. If these factors are recognized disabilities under the ADA, please provide me with appropriate notification. If they fall outside official categories, stop by and discuss them with me so that we may arrive at a satisfactory program of study/performance for you in this course.

### **Disability Services**

It is University policy to provide, on a flexible and individualized basis, reasonable accommodations to students who have documented disability conditions (e.g., physical, learning, psychiatric, vision, hearing, or systemic) that may affect their ability to participate in course activities or to meet course requirements. Students with disabilities are encouraged to contact Disability Services and their instructors to discuss their individual needs for accommodations. Disability Services is located in Suite #180 McNamara Alumni Center, 200 Oak Street. Staff can be reached by calling 612/626-1333 voice or TTY. For further information, visit their web site: <http://ds.umn.edu/>.

### **Attendance Policy**

(From the U of M English Department): “Students should attend every class meeting, on time and prepared, and should remain in class for the duration of the period. If the student misses the equivalent of one week of class (four periods), his or her grade may be lowered. Once a student misses the equivalent of three weeks, he or she may fail the course. Students are responsible for all material and assignments missed because of absence or illness. Please avoid making school appointments or lessons during this class.”

Unlike your other classes, this course follows policies set down by the University of Minnesota. **Even if you miss class and are excused by North High School, *this will not be considered excused by the University*. Missing class to attend a school activity (e.g. an athletic competition or a choir concert), to see a doctor or dentist, or to visit a college *will count against the four absences*.** If you will be missing a number of classes and are uncomfortable with the grade loss you will want to consider dropping this class.

## **Plagiarism**

Plagiarism is the deceptive use of someone else's words or ideas as if they were your own. Plagiarism is considered to be theft, lying, and cheating all rolled up into one. In this University of Minnesota course, the consequences for plagiarism include failure and removal from the course. These consequences are real.

## **University of Minnesota Twin Cities: Academic Policies**

The following are key excerpts from U of M academic policies. Enrolled students are responsible for knowing and following the complete policies which can be found by accessing the links provided below. College in the Schools offers courses from numerous academic departments housed in several different U of M colleges; college and/or departmental policies may add variation to some of the guidelines listed below.

**Incompletes:** Incompletes (I) may be given at the discretion of the instructor. If, in the opinion of the instructor, there is a reasonable expectation that a student can successfully complete the work of the course before the end of the next high school term an incomplete may be used. The assignment of an I requires a written agreement between you and the instructor specifying the time and manner in which you will complete the course requirements. Upon successful completion of the coursework, the I is changed to a permanent grade. An I that is not completed within one calendar year automatically becomes an F.

View complete text at <http://www1.umn.edu/usenate/policies/gradingpolicy.html>

## **Student Integrity (Excerpt from the College of Liberal Arts Student Handbook)**

As a new member of the University community, it is important to be aware of what is expected of you and what you can expect of the University. This information is designed to clarify the values and actions of an academic community.

The Five Fundamental Values: Honesty, Trust, Fairness, Respect, and Responsibility.  
An academic community of integrity advances the quest for truth and knowledge by requiring intellectual and personal honesty in learning, teaching, research, and service.  
For descriptions see: <http://www.class.umn.edu/>

## **Student Conduct Code**

Subd. 1. Policy Statement. It is the policy of the University of Minnesota (University) that certain minimum standards of conduct are necessary to safeguard the rights, opportunities, and welfare of students, faculty, staff and guests of the University community and to assure protection of the interests of the University as it seeks to carry out its mission.

The University requires a community free from violence, threats, and intimidation; protective of free inquiry; respectful of the rights of others; open to change; supportive of democratic and lawful procedures; and dedicated to a rational and orderly approach to the resolution of conflict....

Students who engage in behavior that disrupts the learning environment for others may be subject to disciplinary action under the code. The College of Continuing Education reserves the right to cancel current or future registration for such students.

Students are responsible for complying with the University of Minnesota's Student Conduct Code, which is available in the college student affairs office and Student Judicial Affairs (612.624.6073) and on the Web at <http://www.sja.umn.edu/conduct.html>

### **Scholastic Dishonesty**

Students are responsible for maintaining scholastic honesty in their work at all times. Students engaged in scholastic dishonesty will be penalized and their name may be reported to University of Minnesota Student Judicial Affairs.

The University's College of Liberal Arts defines scholastic dishonesty as "any act that violates the rights of another student with respect to academic work or that involves misrepresentation of a student's own work. Scholastic dishonesty includes (but is not limited to) cheating on assignments or examinations, plagiarizing (misrepresenting as one's own anything done by another), submitting the same or substantially similar papers (or creative work) for more than one course without consent of all instructors concerned, depriving another of necessary course materials, and sabotaging another's work." Scholastic dishonesty also includes fabrication, cheating and academic misconduct.

Academic Dishonesty in any portion of the academic work for a course is grounds for course failure and may result in reporting to the Student Judicial Affairs Office. For more information, visit <http://advisingtools.class.umn.edu/Multimedia/> Open the link to the CLA Student Handbook. Scholastic dishonesty defined at: <http://advisingtools.class.umn.edu/cgep/studentconduct.html>

### **Sexual Harassment**

Definition: "Sexual Harassment means unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors and/or other verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature..." The policy strictly prohibits sexual harassment by or toward a member of the University community and requires appropriate reporting and investigation of such reports. The definition and policy can be seen in its entirety at: <http://www1.umn.edu/regents/policies/humanresources/SexHarassment.pdf>.

### **CIS Field Days**

College in the Schools Field Day events are opportunities to become acquainted with the University of Minnesota Twin Cities Campus, meet your fellow CIS classmates from the greater metropolitan area, and use the expertise and experience you have gained in the U of M, TC course.

Through intensive, close reading of a range of literary works, students will understand diverse experiences, languages, and forms, and genres. They will also find it necessary to understand knowledge in various fields (history, art, literature, music, politics, philosophy) and social practices (gender, sexuality, and class, and more) in order to understand the basic “facts” of literary works. These are discoveries which they will make through the guidance of the instructor, other students, and themselves. In the end they will gain an awareness of themselves, other cultures, other individuals; they will gain an ability to think critically and to express themselves orally and in writing; they will gain aesthetic sensitivity; they will acquire or further develop their intellectual curiosity, and perhaps be challenged by the remarkable range of knowledge available through literature.

### **Insider Information**

In addition to academic gifts and work ethic, another important skill of successful college students is trying to determine the instructor’s quirks, hidden agendas, and classroom systems. In order to save you time and energy in reading me correctly, I will tell you things about myself that could possibly influence grading and relating to one another in the classroom.

- I take my profession and my subject matter very seriously. I appreciate when students approach literary studies expecting and embracing the same type of rigor they would in any other high-level class. I am aware that some people question the academic or “real-life” value of literary studies. While this is a valid conversation to have, and we will have it, like all serious discussion in class it must be done with tact. Insulting a teacher or professor’s discipline is not a good strategy if you hope to get a good grade in the class.
- **If you strongly dislike reading (and are taking the class just for the credits), this will be a painful experience for you and I may suggest you find a different class.**
- I appreciate students who treat each other with kindness and respect. I don’t expect you all to be friends, but I do expect that by this time you have left the mean and spiteful behavior of middle school behind.
- I appreciate students who understand that actions have consequences and are willing to accept them. I don’t expect you to be perfect, but I do hope that you will accept the problems you have created. Try saying “I know the assignment is due today, but I don’t have it. What are the consequences?” It is human nature to shift blame and avoid responsibility, but as you grow older you will appreciate people who are forthright about their mistakes.
- I appreciate students who think ahead, and who can plan for problems before they arise. If an assignment is due on Friday, and you come in on Friday with some excuse, you should be prepared for consequences. If, however, you tell me on Thursday (or even better, on Monday) that you will have trouble being finished by Friday, I am much more likely to be sympathetic (of course, the best thing to do is to get things done ahead of time).
- I appreciate students who approach discussions as a chance to learn from their classmates, not “beat” them. It is far better to be tentative and thoughtful about what you think (and willing to change your mind) than it is to always be arguing a position. We’re

trying to solve problems together, not have a debate. If you insist on having a debate, I may tell you to shut up.

- That said, I appreciate students who get passionate and involved in discussion. You'll find it's more fun when you care about what is being said. The key is to discuss ideas, and not people.
- **I think the most important skill for you to learn is to use the text to support your assertions. Cite quotations and passages in all your writing and, in discussion, refer to specific passages and direct the rest of us to them. When I grade your essays, I will not be grading on whether or not I agree or disagree with your argument, but whether your argument is supported by the text. AN IDEA MAY BE LOGICAL, BUT IF YOU CANNOT SUPPORT IT WITH A QUOTATION, SCENE OR EVENT IN THE TEXT IT IS NOT A VALID IDEA FOR YOUR PAPER.** We want to talk about the book, not our memory of the book. I know this can be tedious to always be flipping through the book, but people who are in the habit of having facts to support their ideas are in short supply in our world.
- I do not enjoy reading student work that is jotted down in a last-minute, got-to-get-something-put-together-so-that-I-don't-get-a-zero kind of way. Grading takes a huge time (as I give extensive feedback), and time is something I value. Show me that you also value my time and yours by always putting thought into your assignments.
- My favorite thing about student writing is creativity and fresh insights. I expect to learn from you, and will reward those students who give me something to think about.
- I like e-mail; you can communicate with me that way whenever you like:  
nkrueger@isd622.org

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After reviewing the syllabus with your son or daughter, please sign and date below.

We have reviewed the syllabus for EngL 1001W: Introduction to Literature, being offered this fall at North High School in conjunction with the University of Minnesota. We understand the nature of the course and the expectations placed on the student and look forward to the learning opportunity.

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Parent Signature

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Student Signature

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Date