***AP Seminar*** Michael.Otero@acboe.net

CLASS INFORMATION & GENERAL SYLLABUS

Prattville High School—Mr. Michael D. Otero

COURSE DESCRIPTION & OBJECTIVES

AP Seminar is a preparatory class for college level reading and writing that deals in recognizing, analyzing, and expressing ideas. While it is an alternative, untraditional English class, it still has the goal of a traditional English class in improving student reading, writing, and thinking. However, there is an emphasis on research writing, rhetoric, argumentation, and public speaking. This class will help students become better 21st century, media literate scholars.

This course requires that the student complete the AP Seminar exam. This exam is broken into three parts: team research writing and presentation, individual research writing and presentation, and a test in May. These research papers and video-recorded presentations are submitted and partially graded by the CollegeBoard. The test fee is normally over $130, but the state department will cover it this year (2024-2025).

TEXTS & MATERIALS

* There is no designated textbook for this class. Instead, we will mostly be using materials from the CollegeBoard itself. These will be provided in paper and electronic versions on Schoology.
* Copies of selected articles, essays, speeches, poems, short stories, and excerpts from larger texts will be provided in digital formats and/or paper copies

***Required Classroom Materials***: These Should Be brought Daily.

* 1” Three-Ring Binder
* 300 Sheets of College-Ruled or Wide-Ruled Notebook Paper (Reinforced is better)
* Several Black and/or Dark Blue Pens
* Several #2 Pencils (wooden for testing and mechanical if preferred)
* Highlighters and/or Colored Pens/Pencils (Multiple Colors for annotating and revising/editing)
* Assorted Page-Markers/Flags and/or Sticky Notes (3x3” and 2x1.5”)
* 2 Presentation/Report Folders
* +100 3x5” Note/Index Cards

***Teacher Wish List:*** Help things run smoothly: Tissues, Paper Towels, Hand Sanitizer, Copy Paper, Notebook Paper, Black/Dark Blue Pens, Pencils, Gift Cards (Amazon or Office Depot) for classroom supplies, etc.

***Recommended Texts:*** These books are **not required**, but they are excellent for your personal enrichment and success in college level writing. We will be using excerpts from some of these texts, and those excerpts will be provided as photocopies and PDFs in Schoology.

* ***They Say/I Say*** by Gerald Graff and Cathy Birkenstein
* ***Thank You for Arguing, Fourth Edition (Revised and Updated)*** by Jay Heinrichs
* ***MLA Guidelines - 9th Edition: a QuickStudy Laminated Style Reference Guide***
* ***Everything's an Argument*** by Andrea Lunsford and John Ruszkiewicz
	+ Consider getting a used 7th or 8th edition of this book on eBay
* ***Reading the World*** by Michael Austin
	+ Consider getting a used 2016 MLA Update edition of this book on eBay
* ***MLA Handbook (OFFICIAL) 9th Edition***

**OVERVIEW**

CLASSROOM EXPECTATIONS

Please read, sign, and return the attached document entitled “Mr. Otero’s Classroom Expectations Contract.” Classroom policies will follow the expectations listed below, the Prattville High School’s Student Code of Conduct & Handbook, and Autauga County Schools’ policies. Anything not addressed directly by those sources will be left to the teacher’s discretion.

GRADING POLICY

Your grade will be determined by weighted averages in the following categories:

**Assessments:** Writing, Tests, and Projects  **65%**

**Assignments:** Classwork, Homework, and Quizzes **35%**

The midterm is worth 20% of the first semester grade. The final exam is worth 20% of the second semester grade. There will be no extra credit; turn in all assignments on time and put forth a sincere effort.

MAKE-UP WORK

ACBoE’s Code of Conduct: **Make-Up Work (Excused Absences)**

If a student is absent for any excused reason… the student shall be allowed to make up schoolwork and/or examinations missed during said absence or absences… For seventh through twelfth grade students, the student shall be responsible for contacting the teacher or teachers immediately upon return to school to arrange a reasonable length of time, not to exceed **two (2) weeks**, to make up work and/or examinations. Teachers shall not be required to re-teach lessons, but students shall be given reasonable opportunity to learn lessons missed due to excused absences.

Students must email the teacher a request for missing work while they are out or upon arrival back to class. If a student is removed from class due to an immediate, in-class disciplinary action, he or she will receive a zero on the current assignment(s). Students may not make up assignments missed due to ejection from class.

LATE WORK

Take-home assignments are due at the beginning of class. If you turn in a late assignment, your maximum grade will be reduced by -20%. After three school days, it will no longer be worth any credit. If a student is not prepared for a classroom discussion, such as a Socratic Seminar or Literature Circle, he or she will be excluded from the activity. As an alternative, the student may write an essay response, due the next day, at -20%.

TARDY POLICY

Students will be marked tardy if they are not in class, in their assigned seats, and silently working on the bellringer when the tardy bell rings. The ACBoE’s Code of Conduct defines tardiness as a minor offense: **Excessive tardiness – repeated failure of student to be seated in his/her desk when tardy bell rings.** At a student’s third tardy, he or she will be referred to an administrator.

ELECTRONIC DEVICES

When we are doing Writing Workshops where the students independently and collaboratively write, revise, and edit longer essays and projects, students should bring their electronic devices like iPads, tablets, and laptops. Due to their distracting and hard-to-supervise nature, smartphones, smartwatches, and headphones/earbuds will not be allowed; this is a school policy. If allowable electronic devices are misused, students will be asked to put away their devices, and a hardcopy alternative will be provided.

MATURITY AND COLLEGE NATURE

Students and parents should be aware of the challenging nature of the coursework. College preparatory courses are challenging because they prepare students to successfully do college level work. Students are expected to rise to the occasion and will be supported along the way. Students will be expected to read readings outside of class at times, take appropriate notes (annotation), answer assigned questions, write on assigned prompts/questions, and be prepared for class discussion by specific dates. Class discussion in college is extremely important. Therefore, each student is expected to keep up with all reading assignments and to contribute to class discussion as much as possible.

Some of the texts we will be reading contain **mature subject matter** and or make use of **inappropriate language** which requires careful discussion and writing. We will be engaging with historical realities and current events containing ideas from multiple political, religious, economic, and philosophical perspectives. Students and parents are asked to fill out and sign the form at the bottom of the attached letter with this being understood: **critical thinking sometimes requires dealing with challenging and offensive ideas.** Please contact the teacher if there are any questions or concerns about the class, appropriateness of coursework, and the syllabus. The texts selected come from published and locally approved high school textbooks and curriculum; the novels selected have been taught across the nation for years. However, if there are concerns about the readings, parents are encouraged to discuss them with the teacher. **Not all books are for all students.** Parents and students should discuss the assigned texts and assignments with each other. A student is allowed an alternative text if an ***assigned text*** is deemed inappropriate for that student, but a parent-teacher conference with an administrator will be required. Be proactive; research the assigned texts ahead of time.

ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE & PLAGIARISM

The students will be educated on avoiding plagiarism and inappropriate AI usage. Students who engage in plagiarism or unauthorized use of AI – whether intentionally or unintentionally – will receive a zero for the first instance of this academic dishonesty. The student may make up this assignment (possibly an alternative one) with a -40% grade penalty. Any additional instances of plagiarism will receive a zero, and those assignments will not be able to be made up for credit. We will discuss built-in AI like Grammarly because we only accept certain, specific uses of them.

**Mr. Otero’s Classroom Expectations Contract**

1. **I will *respect* others by…**
	* 1. …being mindful of my volume, attitude, words, and actions.
		2. …not mocking classmates, using profanity, or discussing inappropriate topics in class.
		3. …not talking when the teacher or a designated student is speaking.
		4. …raising my hand and waiting to be called upon before I speak.
		5. …not distracting my peers through horseplay, annoying habits, and being a nuisance.
		6. …coming to class on time.
2. **I will remain *focused* by…**
	* 1. …being both physically and mentally present.
		2. …practicing good digital citizenship and proper classroom etiquette. My cellphone and electronic devices will be in my bag or pocket at all times unless I currently have permission to use them for academic purposes.
		3. …concentrating my attention on the current assignment and using any downtime wisely.
3. **I will seek *improvement* as a reader, writer, and thinker by…**
	* 1. …doing all of the assignments I am asked to do. If I become annoyed, bored, or overwhelmed by an assignment or my teacher, I will muster up the self-discipline to put forth my best effort, not give up, not complain, and to finish everything I am asked to do.
		2. …abiding by the school system’s Code of Conduct and following the instructions and directives of its teachers and administrators.
		3. …seeking help before, during, and after school hours from my teachers, parents, and peers.
		4. …learning on my own using all the tools and opportunities at my disposal because I understand both *personal responsibility* and the value of *my education*.
		5. …being a student of integrity; I will not engage in any form of cheating or plagiarism.
		6. …avoiding procrastination.
		7. …reading, writing, and thinking every day because I know they will make me stronger.
4. **I will come to class *prepared* by having…**
	* 1. …done all of my readings and assignments.
		2. …a teachable spirit (attitude).
		3. …all of my required materials: Pencils, Pens, Highlighters, Notebooks, Binder, Textbook, Novels, Sticky Notes, Completed Assignments, etc.
5. **I will practice good *stewardship* by…**
	* 1. …considerately using all school books, materials, and technology assets as if I paid for them myself.
		2. …taking part in cleaning our classroom and avoiding making messes.
		3. …not eating or drinking in the classroom.

By my signing this, I agree to comply, or have my student comply, with these expectations. I know failure to follow any and all of the above rules can, and will, result in the following disciplinary actions: ejection from the classroom, detention, in-school-suspension, suspension, phone calls home, parent-teacher conferences, etc.

Student Signature: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Parent Signature: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_