**English Language Arts  
A Study of American Literature and The American Dream  
2014-2015  
Ms. Caler**

**Course Description:**

This course presents a historical survey of American literature from the early development of North America to the colonial period and through the twentieth century. Areas of emphasis in writing instruction include writing essays in a variety of rhetorical modes, developing style, developing research skills, using Modern Language Association (MLA) formatting, and language usage and conventions. Students must produce documented research papers based upon outside sources.   
  
Using thematic units in the classroom helps students to, “come to better personal understanding of the topic and their related experiences, gain fluency with tools that will enable them to read and produce new texts in the future, and work within a social context in which they can develop this new knowledge to the best of their potential” (Smagorinsky 112). Thematic units really help students to develop a thorough and personal understanding of a subject, especially a controversial subject. By critically examining a text for a theme, “the point is to help adolescent readers read text and worlds more carefully as they become aware of the ideologies within which both are inscribed” (Appleman 76). Because of this, we will be exploring the thematic concept of the American Dream, what is it was, how it has changed, the future of the American Dream, our own American Dream, and how various societal influences affect/change the original vision of the American Dream.

**Relevant Texts:**

*Literature and Language: American Literature  
The Scarlet Letter  
Death of a Salesman  
1984  
To Kill a Mockingbird*

**Essential Questions Explored:**

* What is the American Dream, and to what extent is it achievable for all Americans?
* In what ways does the American Dream mean different things for different Americans?
* How has the American Dream changed over time?
* What is the perspective of a given nature, culture, or region in regards to the American Dream, and what factors create those perceptions?
* What are the responsibilities and consequences of being a “world superpower”?
* Are independence and dependence separable or inseparable?

**Methods of Instruction:**

We will explore literature, writing, and speaking/listening through a variety of strategies and methods. While I am a huge proponent of student-driven learning, there are times when lecturing and note-taking are required. I will try to keep this to a minimum. We will be working in groups, both large and small, independently, and as a whole class. We will use a variety of discussion techniques to enhance our understanding of what we are reading, and to improve our writing. There will be multiple projects, essays, and presentations this year. Daily homework will simply depend upon how much you choose to work during the class period. While I am sensitive to out-of-school activities, the reality is, you will have homework. We are a community of scholars, and our goal is to gain knowledge and education about ourselves, each other, and our world around us. Homework is part of this. Please plan accordingly.  
  
The types of essays will include: narrative, expository, persuasive, argumentative, interpretation, point-of-view, memoirs, reflections, and creative writing. In addition, you will be writing research papers, and correctly using the MLA style for citation.

We will also be reading a variety of novels, short stories, and poems. In addition to in-class readings, you will be required to read a book outside of class. This can be either fiction or non-fiction. Once a week (minimum) you will be asked to write an INR (Independent Novel Response). Some days, we will simply read for the period, and you will complete this after your reading. Others, we will use the INR as an entry task. This is to insure that you are reading outside of class. The novel you read, will be of one of your choice. However, ***all reading materials must be approved by your parent/guardian.*** It is not for me to determine and monitor what each of you is reading outside of class. Please run any questionable material by your parents before you choose your book.  
  
All novels/plays/poems/short-stories/content for this class are part of the board-approved curriculum.

**Common Core State Standards:**

As we work through this year, we will work on each of the CCSS that have been adopted by Washington State legislators. You can find a copy of the CCSS here: <http://www.k12.wa.us/CoreStandards/ELAstandards/default.aspx>

If at any time, you are curious as to what standards we are covering, please do not hesitate to contact me, and we can go over the individual lesson, and the standard it is meeting.

**Plagiarism:**

Plagiarism and cheating have no place in a community of scholars. Have the confidence in yourself to give your original best. This is all that is required of you. Should you decide to plagiarize any content (this means anything that is not *yours* – ideas, writings, inferences, interpretations, etc.), you will receive a zero for the assignment, and the principal and your parents/guardians will be contacted. If you are struggling, and you need help, come to me for help. Do not plagiarize.

**Late work:**  *I do not accept it.* Please see my classroom expectations for a full explanation of my late work policy.

**EVALUATIVE CRITERIA:**

Students’ assignments are evaluated on the following grading scale:

A 100-90%

B 80-89%

C 70-79%

D 60-69%

F 59% and below

Test scores, daily work, papers, and projects are not weighted, but each assignment is given a particular value. Students’ interim and quarter grades are based on total points received. Each quarter is worth 50% of the student’s semester grade.

**Miscellaneous:** Anything not covered here is most likely in my classroom expectations/policy. Please refer to that if you have additional questions.