

AMERICAN LITERATURE

Grade: 9- 12

Course Objectives:

The objectives of this course include developing students' understanding of the history and cultural progress of our country through literature conveying the perceptions and experiences of primarily American authors.

Students will be able to:

- Analyze and contextualize the evolution of American culture through literature reflective of American literary periods from the Puritan era through modern times by exploring the customs and norms of each period as revealed through unique perspectives from a variety of authors;
- In a similar vein, be familiar with the social, historical, religious, and philosophical influence that shaped each period of American Literature
- Improve their analytical skills by understanding rhetorical strategies: that form is related to function, that meaningful writing requires authors to choose the most effective voice and genre according to their purpose and audience;
- Ascertain an author's purpose and flesh out the specific strategies and techniques the author employs to achieve accomplishment, and understand that effective writing (including fiction) conveys an argument;
- Be able to critically analyze works of literature while discerning biblically its relevance to the Christian walk.
- Express maturity in their own writing through a variety of sentence structures and syntactical methods as well as through sophisticated diction

Primary Learning Goals—By the end of the year, students will:

- Learn to appreciate literature by reading aesthetically and not just efferently (simply to glean information);
- Analyze, compare and evaluate various works of literature – read between the lines;
- Understand that effective authors of fiction, nonfiction and poetry carefully consider their stylistic choices as they pertain to purpose and audience;
- Discern and analyze the rhetorical strategies authors employ and consider applying some of these strategies to enhance their own writing when appropriate;
- Demonstrate serious engagement with the readings through close reading and analytical writing;
- Participate in active class analytical discussions/seminars;
- Express analysis and practice writing skills through academic writing assignments and in-class essays;
- Improve their vocabulary skills primarily in the context of the literature;
- Demonstrate their comprehension of the material through regularly scheduled quizzes, tests, longer pieces of writing, and other take-home assignments.

A major component of the course will be to track the spiritual development (or, degeneration) of our nation – from its Christian moorings found in the Puritans to its subsequent collapse into postmodern thought as it is illustrated in literature.

Students from all grade levels (9-12) are welcome, provided they are capable readers, listeners, note-takers, and participators. Writing instruction will be a natural byproduct of the course, so perfection (or expertise) in this area is in no way a prerequisite (learning to think deeply and then write effectively about literature is a process that unfolds gradually). We will be reading some of the best essays, poetry, short stories, plays, and novels literature has to offer. Actually, we'll do much more than discuss it. We will dig into it, engage it, and (Lord willing) emerge with a greater sense of how truly enjoyable and enlightening a good read can be!

Cost per semester: \$150 per student, per semester (1.5 hr. per week course)

Min. # of students: 8 Max. # of students: 20

This is a two semester course and is worth ten units. A grade will be issued by the instructor at the end of each semester.

Texts:

American Literature – Grade 11 Student Edition, 2nd edition; BJU Press (ISBN 978-1606821022)

The Scarlett Letter by Nathaniel Hawthorne (any version will do)

The Hidden Hand by E.D.E.N. Southworth (any version will do)

Animal Farm by George Orwell (any version will do)

To Kill a Mockingbird by Harper Lee (any version will do)

Instructor: Morgan Voorhis

Morgan Voorhis received her B.A. in English Literature, an M.A. in English, and is finishing the last semester of a second M.A. in Linguistics. She began her teaching journey in the California Community College system and has taught at: Compton College, El Camino College, LA Mission College, Fremont College, and California State University Northridge. While she has presented at a number of conferences, her favorite was “Never-Never Land: The Sacred Spaces in Children’s Literature”. Her areas of specialization are American and Children’s Literatures, as well as the works of C.S. Lewis and J.R.R. Tolkien. She and her husband, John, have two children, Declan and Isla, and another on the way. Mrs. Voorhis is an avid Los Angeles Kings fan, and she enjoys swimming and reading historical fiction in her spare time. The family recently moved to the Santa Clarita Valley and serves and worships at Grace Baptist Church.