

HONORS ENGLISH

Global Urban Literature

Course Description:

Lab Atlanta's Honors English samples literary sources from around the globe, emphasizing place-based literature and the literature of cities (featuring Atlanta), in particular. Core themes of the Global Urban Literature curriculum include: the development of human identity; how "senses of place" inform the cultures that emerge from them; and how people understand and interact with "others" across various lines of human difference.

As with all Lab Atlanta curricula, this course is designed for students to take increasing responsibility for and ownership of their learning. Using the principles and pedagogy of the Loose Canon network, learners will be responsible in the latter parts of the semester for selecting their own readings (in consultation with and pending faculty approval) from selected reading options across various genres and contexts.

Global Urban Literature will explore how cultures of origin and one's sense of place affect and inform one's identity and worldview. It will also provide learners ample opportunities to practice and improve their reading, writing, dialogue and observational skills. Given how often the Hero's Journey archetype influences narrative structures and content, this course will also examine how this common ("monomyth") archetype functions across widely diverse texts.

Course Objectives:

Students will:

- Explore how literary sources respond to and influence the places--especially cities--in which they were written
- Consider how literature can help readers build empathy by seeing through the eyes of other perspectives or cultures
- Learn how--and why--stories are so effective in moving people and inspiring action
- Investigate the multiple--even sometimes conflicting--elements of human identity
- Reflect on how their own identity influences their perspective and worldview
- Examine how their sense of "home" (or culture of origin) shapes who they are
- Explicate which aspects inform their own voice and sense of self, and how they can deploy that identity most effectively in their reading and writing

Learning Experiences (Key Themes and Units of Study):

- Acute Observation" exercise: Reflecting on both internal & external experiences
- Daily class discussion of readings, writing, and other shared experiences with their Lab Atlanta classmates
- Autobiographical/Narrative story-telling: both improvisational (oral) and recursive (written)
- Author interviews about composing a memoir and/or their writing process
- Reflection on prior Autobiography/Story of Self drafts from the perspective of "an Other"
- Close reading and explication of poetry, prose, and other texts

Writing Assignments (Each of these writing assignments will entail producing multiple drafts, with revisions, comprising a variety of writing styles: from expository to creative.):

- Autobiographical narrative (or essay)
- Responsive journal (ongoing): to foster personal reflection and enhance students' self-awareness of their own interpretive lenses

Writing Assignments (continued):

- Creative-writing assignments (e.g. “I Am/I Am From...” poem--or “Song of Myself,” short story, etc.)
- Literary interpretive essays (thesis-based expository essays using literary analysis, with textual support)
- Poetry analysis essay

Collaborative class discussions and other small-group assignments will complement these more individual reading and writing tasks, and attest to the quality and extent of each student’s active engagement with the course material, teacher, and other classmates.

Instructional Resources:

Literary Sources will include complete works and selected excerpts from texts such as:

- Poetry and Lyrics by a wide variety of artists
- Alfred Uhry’s *Driving Miss Daisy* (1988: Pulitzer Prize winner)
- Hannah Palmer’s *Flight Path*
- John Stilgoe’s *Outside Lies Magic*
- Sandra Cisneros’s *A House of My Own*
- Ryan Gravel’s *Where We Want to Live*
- Mark Beaver’s *Suburban Gospel*
- Julia Alvarez’s *In the Time of the Butterflies*
- Faiza Guene’s *Kiffe Kiffe Tomorrow*
- Teju Cole’s *Open City*
- Free Choice Selection I: a novel or memoir with an international theme or focus
- Free Choice Selection II: a collection of poetry, verse, song lyrics, etc.
- Dina Nayeri’s *Refuge*
- Jacqueline Woodson’s *Another Brooklyn*

Collateral Sources: including:

https://www.ted.com/talks/chimamanda_adichie_the_danger_of_a_single_story

https://www.ted.com/talks/taiye_selasi_don_t_ask_where_i_m_from_ask_where_i_m_a_local

Assessment:

The depth and quality of students’ engagement with course material and their progress as learners will be among the most important assessment criteria in this class. Student engagement and language arts skill development will be demonstrated by:

- Generative, productive participation in class discussions of course material;
- Empathetic listening and understanding multiple perspectives through dialogue;
- Sophisticated, close reading of a range of complex texts;
- Creative thinking in synthesizing concepts;
- Critical thinking in conceiving and articulating incisive analyses;
- Clear expression in speaking and writing;
- Progress in self-assessment and metacognitive awareness (reflecting on group and individual processes, e.g.).

Some of the assignments in Honors English will be assessed individually; others will entail collaborative assessments for coursework produced in small groups.

Grading:

There will be both objective and subjective elements to determining course grades in Global Urban Literature. Most of the objective assessment will be done according to explicit rubrics. The subjective assessments will generally entail more qualitative aspects and standards. Evidence of progress and growth in terms of knowledge- and skill-development over the semester is especially important, so grades toward the end of the semester will carry more weight than those earned at the beginning. Were these 3 primary domains to be formally quantified, they would reflect percentages consistent with their relative importance in the course:

- 20%: Active engagement with course material (demonstrated by class participation, prompt completion of homework assignments, constructive peer assessment, etc.)
- 60%: Academic performance (especially--but not limited to--expository essays and other written coursework):
- 20%: Accurate peer- and self-assessment of scholarly and personal strengths and growing edges as a student (i.e. metacognitive reflection, etc.)

Curricular Alignment:

This course corresponds to Georgia Department of Education (DOE) course numbers 23.06207 (Tenth Grade Literature and Composition) or 23.06307 (World Literature and Composition).