



Helena High School 2025-2026 English IV Syllabus

Fall Semester: World Literature

Spring Semester: True Crime & Holocaust Literature

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How does literature reflect the human experience?

Fall Semester: World Literature & Composition

This course is based on and designed around the understanding that literature is powerful and important. World literature brings us to self-knowledge and understanding of humanity. It exposes social injustices in ways that create deep understanding and compel compassionate responses in a person. In so doing, it has the power to inspire social responsibility and foster acceptance, peace and unity in the world. This semester is an exploration of world literature and themes related to social injustice, social responsibility, morality, and the development of conscience. In this course, students will read/watch and analyze a variety of thought-provoking, complex literary works from diverse cultures and historical periods to determine and evaluate universal truths, author's craft, and the importance of each work. Students will compose literary analysis and critical reflections about the literature and films studied in the course and participate in both formal and informal discussions. This course is intended to prepare students for their next level English courses and life.

Spring Semester: True Crime & Holocaust Literature

This course will explore how literature and film examine humanity's darkest acts—both individual crimes and collective atrocities. We will investigate why people commit terrible acts, asking psychological, moral, and cultural questions about violence, power, and responsibility. At the same time, we will consider why artists and audiences are compelled to return to these subjects through storytelling. We will begin with the True Crime genre, reading works such as *In Cold Blood* and viewing films like *Capote* and Hitchcock's *Rope* to analyze how fact and narrative intersect, and whether art can reveal deeper truths than pure reportage. Later, we will turn to Holocaust and genocide literature, examining memoirs and historical narratives through lenses such as Victim, Victimizer, and Bystander. Our study will address questions of complicity, resistance, and survival while considering how memory and testimony shape understanding of history. Through reading, discussion, and a research project on examples of mass violence, we will explore how literature and film preserve and challenge our understanding of these catastrophic events.

Expectations: Be on time, prepared and engaged in your learning. In this classroom the "Golden Rule" presides above all: Treat others the way you wish to be treated.

- Be **respectful** - We all benefit from hearing the perspectives and experiences of those around us. Treat your teacher, classmates, and the classroom with care. Classroom materials, including books, are not permitted to leave the classroom without express permission.
- Be **responsible** – Come prepared and ready to learn. This means you have materials ready, assignments completed, and are seated when the bell rings. When you cannot comply with the above expectations, natural consequences result.
- Be **involved** - Your ideas are vital to class discussions and you are expected to actively participate in your learning. Please, save the hoodies for braving the elements and take out the ear buds/air pods to tune in to the conversation and be engaged in your learning.
- Be a **graduate** - Plan and prepare for your future. Be proud of your accomplishments and hard work!

Assignment Policy: You will be expected to read and write in this English class. At times, this may require reading and writing outside of class time. Because much of what we do in class is difficult to make up, attendance is vital to your success; however, I understand that life doesn't always go as planned. It is **your** responsibility to check Teams and/or the Weekly Agenda on my Teacher Page on the HHS website, where you can find all **assignments and due dates**. Hard copies of assignments/resources can be found at the back of the classroom. In cases of extenuating circumstances, you are expected to check in with your teacher to make a plan for make-up; I am happy to answer questions or offer assistance, but completion of make-up work is your responsibility. If I haven't heard from you about a missing assignment, I assume you are accepting the zero. Please note that scheduled events (like working at your job) do not constitute extenuating circumstances.

English IV is graded in the following categories:

Practice: New skills, standards, and content that students are learning for the first time. The intention is to practice to gain proficiency. Examples of practice work are graphic organizers, grammar practice, introductory assignments, in-class activity, peer-reviews, etc.

- Accounts for **10%** of the overall grade.
- NO late work** will be graded for **practice** assignments. See HHS Student Handbook for details on the schoolwide policy for late work.

Formative: Evaluating the students' knowledge as they learn. This is a method of on-going assessment and it involves questions and exercises to help monitor learner progress during the course. Examples of formative work are essay rough drafts, quick write assignments, grammar application, article reviews, weekly quizzers, and mid-unit class discussions.

- Accounts for **30%** of the overall grade.
- Formative** assignments must be turned in within **ONE WEEK** of the due date posted in Power School with no penalty assessed. After **ONE WEEK**, no credit will be earned.
- Re-dos or retakes are **ONLY** offered to students who have completed the practice opportunities.

Summative: Assessments administered at the end of an instructional unit. These assessments are intended to evaluate student learning by comparing performance to a standard or benchmark. Examples of summative assessments are final drafts of essays, cumulative projects, and end-of-unit literature, grammar and vocabulary assessments.

- Accounts for **60%** of the overall grade.
- Summative** assignments will be accepted and graded up until the posted date (on board and in Weekly Agenda) at the end of the unit - this is **ONE WEEK** from the end of the unit. After the posted cut off date, no assignments will receive credit.
- Re-dos or retakes are **ONLY** offered to students who have completed the practice opportunities and formative assessment.

Incomplete and missing assignments: Zeroes will be entered into Power School until the assignment is submitted. For essay drafts, only ON TIME submissions are guaranteed to receive feedback. Only final drafts that were submitted **on time** may be eligible for re-writes. Initial drafts with feedback must be turned in with the revised draft.

***Extensions:** If you require an extension, you are expected to communicate to Ms. Clark. Write a brief (but polite) email or a handwritten note that includes the reason for the extension, your plan for completing the work, and the date you plan to complete the work. You may have ONE extension per quarter. See the Assignment Policy above for more details.

***Weekly Agendas:** Agendas are posted in the classroom, on Teams, and on my HHS teacher page every Friday. You will be able to see the upcoming expectations and assignment due dates.

Grading Policy: Qtr 1 + Qtr 2 (term weighting) 80% + Sem Final Exam (total points) 20% = Semester Grade

The Helena High English Department Policy for quarter grades is:	<u>Grading Scale for HHS</u>	
60% Summative assessments	A (100-91%)	C (76-71%)
30% Formative assessments	A- (90%)	C- (70%)
10% Practice/Homework	B+ (89-87%)	D+ (69-67%)
	B (86-81%)	D (66-61%)
	B- (80%)	D- (60%)
	C+ (79-77%)	F (60-0%)

Cell-Phone Policy: Cell phones will be put away out of sight during class time. If you have difficulty being responsible with your device, the HHS policy is followed: 1st offense = verbal reminder 2nd offense = phone confiscated until the end of the day 3rd offense = phone delivered to office as per the handbook guidelines.

Food-Drink Policy: You may bring water bottles, sports drinks and coffee to class if they are able to be closed/sealed to prevent accidental spills and leaks. If your beverage is not sealed, please place it on the bookshelf at the back until the END of class. Food is not permitted during class time; however, if you have health concerns that may require you to eat in the classroom, please communicate with me.

Supplies:

- 1” three ring binder with five pocketed dividers (notes, vocab, daily work, handouts, and assignments)
- Your favorite writing utensils, including black or blue pens, pencils, and a few colorful pens for doing editing and peer review.
- Notebook with perforated pages OR looseleaf paper.
- Additional “nice to have” items: Highlighters, Sticky Notes, Index Cards

Course Objectives: The objective of all core classes at Helena High is to provide opportunities for students to learn the skills they need in order to demonstrate mastery in the essential state standards. These standards are broken into learning objectives, which will be communicated on the Weekly Agenda for students to check their understanding of the materials. In general, students will be able to:

1. Communicate ideas effectively and clearly through speaking and writing.
2. Comprehend complex texts (fiction and non-fiction) and relay that comprehension to others.
3. Read a text to determine theme/central idea, plot structure, and character development.
4. Demonstrate an understanding of the writing process and its relationship to both purpose and audience.

Writing: There will be at least six (6) summative writing pieces through the year. The writing process for these pieces will include multiple drafts, revising, editing, etc. Final papers will be submitted via a variety of modalities including digital/ hard copy and Turnitin.com (we will create your account in class the first week of school). You will also complete less formal “quickwrites” in response to prompts throughout the year to help solidify new ideas, explore imaginatively, and connect concepts.

Academic Integrity / Plagiarism:

This class is about developing your own original voice, communicating effectively, and thinking critically.

Plagiarism, including use of AI, will earn you an automatic zero and will result in a referral to building administration per school policy.

What is Plagiarism? All work in this class is expected to be your own, completed by you for this class. It is **absolutely okay** to reference someone else’s ideas, especially if they helped you come to your own understanding of the material, or were a springboard for your ideas. Great thinkers, writers, and speakers do this **ALL THE TIME!** Any time you receive help from an article, book, website, another person, etc., you must cite your sources. If you are ever unsure about whether you have correctly given credit to a source, please ask, and I will help you. You may also consult resources such as [Purdue University’s Online Writing Lab \(OWL\)](#) or the [Modern Language Association \(MLA\) website](#).

Students suspected of violating this policy per the HHS handbook are susceptible to the administration consequences as well as the following:

1st offense: Zero in gradebook. Parents and administration are notified, academic integrity violation notation in Power School and NHS notified. If student schedules and attends a conference with teacher, they will be provided an opportunity to re-write and earn full credit by the expected revised due date provided by the instructor.

2nd offense: Zero in gradebook. Parents and administration are notified, academic integrity violation notation in Power School and NHS notified. Not eligible for credit.

Semester One

Quarter 1: (Aug 28 - Oct 31)

Unit 1: Examining Self

Key texts:

- "Crying in H Mart" Michelle Zauner (Korean)
- "Chameleon," from Trevor Noah's (South African)
- "The Monster of Kings Island" by Christopher Bollen (American)
- "This is Not Who We Are" by Naomi Shihab Nye (Arab-American)
- Excerpt from A Daughter of the Samurai: Chapter 1 by Etsuko Sugimoto (Japanese)

Summative Writing Assignments:

- Timed Write- Essential ?
- Personal Narrative Essay (Memoir Writing)

Unit 2: Societal Control

Key Texts:

- 1984 by George Orwell
- "Harrison Bergeron" by Kurt Vonnegut Jr.
- ["What Does George Orwell's '1984' Mean in 2024?" Article](#)

Film:

1984 Michael Radford Director (1984) R

Summative Writing Assignments:

- Literary Analysis Essay - Theme

Quarter 2: (Nov 3 - Jan 16)

Unit 3: Identity

Key texts:

- Hamlet by William Shakespeare

Film: Hamlet (2010) Not Rated

The Lion King (2019) G

Summative Assignments:

- One-Pager Quote Analysis
- Graded Discussion

Unit 4: Community

Key texts:

- The Alchemist by Paulo Coelho
- "What Is Community, and Why Is It Important?" by the Ikeda Center for Peace, Learning, and Dialogue (Essays)
- ["A Very old man with enormous wings"](#) by Gabriel Garcia Marquez

Summative Writing Assignments:

- Research Writing- Definition Essay

Semester Two

Quarter 3: (Jan 28 - March 28)

Unit 1: The Birth of True Crime

Key texts:

- In Cold Blood by Truman Capote
- "Why We Crave Horror Movies" by S. King
- "The true crime genre is popular, but is it ethical?" Article from Univ. of Oregon
- "Jeffrey Dahmer Victim's Family Speaks Out About Netflix Series" article
- Poetry & Excerpts: The Plague of Doves, "My Last Duchess," "Death, Be Not Proud"

Film: Capote (2005) dir. B. Miller, Rated R

Summative Writing Assignments:

- Unit 1 Quiz
- Literary Analysis Essay

Unit 2: Case Studies in True Crime Lit.

Key Texts:

- Case Studies (non-fiction primary and secondary sources): Leopold & Loeb, Burke & Hare, Indian Boarding Schools
- ["The Body Snatcher" by R. L. Stevenson](#)
- ["Indian Education" by S. Alexie](#)
- ["My Brother. The Unabomber" by D. Kaczynski](#)
- [Selected episodes of Stuff You Should Know podcast](#)
- ["38" by L. Long Soldier](#)
- [Excerpts from Criminological Theory textbook](#)

Film: Rope (1948) dir. A. Hitchcock, not rated

Summative Writing Assignments:

- Mini-Essay
- Mini Podcast

Quarter 4: (April 7 - June 6)

Unit 3: The Holocaust

Key texts:

- Night by Elie Wiesel
- Poetry & Excerpts: Rena's Promise, "The Second Coming," Man's Search for Meaning, poems by Joy Harjo, Louise Erdrich, Avram Schaufeld

Film: Schindler's List (1993) dir. S. Spielberg, Rated R

Summative Assignments:

- Synthesis Essay with Citations

Unit 4: Genocide

Key texts:

- UN Definition of Genocide
- EBSCO and Gale databases for independent research
- Podcast: The G-Word: A Podcast on Genocide

Summative Writing Assignments:

- Annotated Bibliography
- Research Presentation: Podcast

Dear English IV Families,

This semester, your student is enrolled in **English IV: True Crime & Holocaust Literature**. Attached to this letter, you will find our course syllabus, including an overview of the essential questions, core texts, and major assignments we'll cover.

While all of our materials are selected carefully for our classroom with 12th Grade students in mind, when we explore the True Crime genre and the history of the Holocaust and other genocides, there is no way to escape highly emotional themes like **violence, injustice, persecution, and death**.

Many of the texts we will read describe crimes in both fictionalized or non-fiction formats. Two of the films we will watch, *Schindler's List* and *Capote*, are **rated R** by the MPAA, and the third, Alfred Hitchcock's *Rope*--while it was made in 1948, prior to the advent of the rating system-- depicts a murder scene in order to explore its ethical and psychological ramifications.

I strongly encourage you to talk with your student throughout this semester about the materials we are working with, and please feel free to contact me at any time if you have questions and concerns, if you'd like to review specific materials, or if you'd like to discuss options for alternate texts for your student. I will also include links to the **Novel and Film Rationales for each of these texts on my teacher page** (https://staff.helenaschools.org/staff_page/jclark/). If you find that you have concerns, I can always make accommodations to ensure that you and your student feel comfortable with the work we are doing.

Looking forward to a great semester,

Jenna Clark
Classroom Phone: 406-324-2303
Email: jclark@helenaschools.org

English IV: True Crime & Holocaust Literature Acknowledgement

I have reviewed the syllabus for this course with my student and understand that topics related to crime and death will be covered. I give permission for my student to participate in this class, including viewing the rated R movies that are listed in the syllabus, and I will contact the teacher to discuss any concerns that may arise.

Printed Name: _____

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Student Name: _____