**Schweinfurt High School**

**English Language Arts 12**  **Course Syllabus 2013-14**

**Mr. Zachary Cyphers**

**A message from your teacher**

Dear students,

In the working world, no one cares about the color of your sneakers or whether or not you have “swagger”. All anyone wants to know is whether or not you are responsible, honest, and have the skills needed to do a job. If you cannot be trusted with responsibility or you lack necessary skills, you will find your life a very serious uphill battle.

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Every year, around 2.5 to 2.8 million students graduate from U.S. high schools. What does this mean to you? When you leave Schweinfurt High School for college, the military, or the working world, you are in competition with 2.5 to 2.8 million other people. If the application you place on a recruiter or college admissions officer’s desk doesn’t stand out, it gets shuffled to the bottom of the pile. In short, this means that the work we do here is important.

Sound scary? Do not fear. My job is to help you to succeed. And as your teacher this year I have the opportunity to help you develop new good habits and break bad ones. We will work together to prepare you for the world beyond high school. I will guide you, but be aware that your education is in your hands. Your job will be to make sure that your time and energy are well spent. Every minute of our time together this year will be spent preparing you for college level writing and critical thinking. I will ask you often if you are using your time wisely. I do this in order for you to become the kinds of communicators who will be able to compete with the millions of other students who will graduate next year.

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Let’s get to work!

Mr. Cyphers

**Course Overview**

**Course Description** (from dodea.edu)

“This is a class that will prepare students for the skills they will need to be successful in college and in life. When they have completed the class, students will have acquired the reading and critical thinking skills necessary for understanding challenging new material, analyzing that material to deduce meaning, and applying what they have learned to our world. They will have the composition skills needed to communicate their understanding effectively to a variety of audiences. Students will read and analyze classic works of literature because these works contain literary qualities that merit study and provoke thinking, not because of a requirement to know a particular work or author. They will also look at modern and contemporary works as they examine all genres: plays, short stories, speeches, poetry, essays, and novels.

Students will learn to apply critical literary terms as tools for learning, understanding, and communication. Learning activities include close reading, paraphrasing, discussions, essays, short answer exams, research papers, reflective journals, web quests, and others.”

**Objectives** (from dodea.edu)

You will leave this course knowing how to:

* Understand text structure to analyze and respond to literature.
* Use text processing strategies "before", "during", and "after" reading to build a foundation for a text, make sense of reading as it occurs, and to synthesize, apply, evaluate, or bridge understanding.
* Apply the Writing Process: prewriting, drafting, revision, editing, and publishing.
* Practice timed writing.
* Reflect, discuss, and evaluate writing assignments.
* Engage in both formal and informal presentations.

**Mr. Zachary Cyphers**

This is my third year teaching in DODEA. I grew up in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. Before moving to Schweinfurt I taught English 11 and Modern Drama in Pittsburgh, and Video Production in two urban high schools in Philadelphia. At SHS I teach English 11, English 12 and several sections of Video Production. I earned my Bachelors Degree in Film & Media Arts at Temple University in Philadelphia and my teaching certification in English and Communications at the University of Pittsburgh.

I spend a lot of time at school, and you can usually find me in my office on the second floor or downstairs in the art room. If you have a comment or a question about anything at all, please feel free to let me know. I make time for my students. When I’m not in the building I’m usually sipping coffee at a café downtown, out on the Main in my kayak, or Skyping home to catch up with my two young nephews.

I am excited about teaching and dedicated to my students. My aim is to set a high standard so that you will experience success in college and beyond. I love my job, am proud to work here and I hope that it shows in our time together this year.

**My Contact Information**

Office: Room 202

Email: [Zachary.Cyphers@eu.dodea.edu](mailto:Zachary.Cyphers@eu.dodea.edu)

Website: **cyphers.weebly.com**

**My schedule:**

1. Planning period

2. Video 1 – Room 117

3. Video 2 – Room 117

4. English 12 – VTC Classroom

6. English 11 – Room 215

7. Video A – Room 117

Seminar – Room 215

**Supplies**

Students are expected to be prepared by bringing supplies to every class period. You will be expected to provide the following items for yourself:

1. A blue or black pen or a pencil
2. One 3-ring binder with tab dividers, and college-ruled loose leaf paper
3. One pocket folder for handouts
4. A wire-bound college ruled notebook or composition notebook
5. A planner or calendar to keep track of assignments
6. An active email account

There will be a supply check on \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_. This is part of your class participation grade.

**Texts**

Our texts for this course are:

***Holt Elements of Literature***

***The Holt Handbook***

Good news - The Holt book is available in an online edition! Every student will be given a logon username and password for this. The online text can be found at *my.hrw.com.*

Your teacher will provide additional texts as necessary. Students must bring their textbooks with them to every class period unless otherwise instructed. As a courtesy, your teacher will let you know if you do not need to bring the textbook to class.

**Grading Scale** (from the SHS Handbook)

100-90 = A 89-80 = B 79-70 = C 69-60 = D 59 and below = F

**Grading**

Your grades in this class are **weighted**. This means that more value is placed on certain components of your work in this class. Your work is weighted as follows:

Participation 20%

Arriving to class with all required materials and prepared to *actively* contribute to class discussion.

Discussion Prep 10%

Preparing critical thinking questions ahead of time is essential to successful class discussions.

Writing Assignments 30%

Writing assignments will be assessed using the 6 Traits for Writing. The breakdown for these is as follows:

Ideas and Content 5%,

Organization 5%

Voice 5%

Word Choice 5%

Sentence Fluency 5%

Conventions 5%

Homework 30%

Your homework will be text-based and divided into three components:

Comprehension 10%, Analysis 10%, and Vocabulary development 10%

Warm-ups 10%

You will complete a daily warm-up activity that is designed as skills practice or an entry into our discussion for the day.

You will be assigned a first semester **midterm assignment** and second semester **final research project** that will make up 20% of each semester grade, respectively.

**Rules and Procedures** *“My rules are the school rules.”*

**Respect**

It is our responsibility to make sure that every member of our learning community feels safe, secure and has an equal opportunity for success. Respect yourself by coming to class on time and prepared. Respect others by sharing materials and knowledge and by making sure that everyone’s voice and perspective is heard and appreciated.

Please remember that while we do respect our right to freedom of speech, I will tolerate absolutely no offensive language, put downs, disparaging or discriminatory remarks on the basis of age, gender, race, religion, social status, origin or sexual orientation verbally or in writing.

**Classroom Discipline**

All students have a right to a safe and comfortable learning environment. Students are expected to be respectful of every member of their community, use common sense and model behavior that is appropriate for college-bound students. When students commit themselves to creating a positive learning environment, a few things happen:

* More material will be covered
* There is more time to explain concepts
* Everyone has a chance to share
* Learning is exciting and fun

When students do not use common sense or do not act respectfully toward one another, it creates a hostile learning environment. Your teacher may respond in any of the following ways:

* A warning, verbal or written
* Lunch detention
* A phone call or email home
* Referral to a school administrator

Rules outlined in the student handbook are in effect in my classroom.

**Cheating and Plagiarism**

This year we will commit ourselves to preparing you for life after high school and as such will uphold a strict standard of **academic integrity**. This means avoiding all forms of academic dishonesty (plagiarism, fabrication, cheating, and academic misconduct). Please know that I take these offenses very seriously. Any form of academic dishonesty will be grounds for a zero score for the assignment and disciplinary action.

**Your Daily Routine**

When you enter the classroom every day you should immediately do the following:

* Pick up any handouts
* Pick up your copy of the *Holt Handbook*
* Take your seat and lay any homework out on your desk
* Quietly get started on the warm-up
* Write down any new vocabulary words
* Check the board for any announcements or instructions

**Participation**

Participation is critical to your success in this class and makes up a significant portion of your grade. Building an exciting and enriching learning community in English Language Arts depends heavily on your commitment to being **present, prepared and participating**. All of these constitute your participation grade.

The members of this class form a learning community. None of us individually have all of the answers to every topic or question brought up in class. As a group, however, we possess *collective knowledge*. We all benefit from sharing information. Therefore, I will work to promote discussion in my classroom. This ensures that we all benefit from each other’s *collective knowledge* and makes the class more energetic, lively and **fun**. To promote meaningful classroom discussion, a few rules must be observed:

**Rules for class discussion:**

**1. Be prepared**

In order to participate in class discussion students must have read the material thoroughly. Simply put, if you have not read the material, you will not be prepared to offer your opinions and insights to the class. I will be looking to see you aim to contribute views and perspectives that go beyond the superficial, beyond comprehension into inference, analysis and understanding.

**2. One at a time**

This is a rule that I will enforce zealously. If this rule is not followed, the result is chaos and no one will be heard. Failure to uphold this rule will result in loss of participation points.

**3. Signal first**

To indicate that you’d like to make a contribution to the discussion, please signal that you’d like to speak by raising your hand.

**4. All are welcome**

Each of us is unique and has a unique perspective. In this class, all points of view are to be respected. We may not agree with something one of our peers offers up to the class, but we respect his or her right to express it. We must allow even the smallest voices to be heard. In order for all members of our class to feel like their contributions are welcome, we all need to be open to all perspectives, though they may differ from our own. No discriminatory, disparaging or insulting remarks will be tolerated.

**5. Proceed fearlessly**

I expect each student to be an active contributor in class discussions. Please feel comfortable offering up your views on a topic without fear that they will be unpopular. It is our varying perspectives that make us a unique and diverse community of learners. Go boldly!

**Punctuality**

Students are expected to be in their seats and prepared to work when the late bell rings. Arriving after the late bell without a pass signed by an SHS staff member will result in loss of participation points for that class period. Repeated tardiness will result in disciplinary action as described in the SHS Student Handbook.

**Hall Passes**

Every quarter you will receive **three** hall passes for **brief** access to the bathroom, water fountain, or your locker. If you must leave the room, write your name, destination, date and time on the hall pass and present it to your teacher for a signature. Then, sign out on the sign-out sheet near the door. Be prompt. Any excessive time spent outside the classroom or trips to locations not specified on your hall pass will affect your participation grade and could lead to disciplinary action as described in the SHS Student Handbook.

**Late Work**

To take full advantage of our time together this year, students will need to complete work outside of class. **Mr. Cyphers does not accept late work.** Work is considered late when it is not presented or digitally submitted by the specified deadline, i.e. *Tuesday before class* or *Wednesday by 3:30pm*.Written assignments due in class must be presented by the start of the class period. No time will be given for printing, stapling or preparation of assignments completed outside class time. Students have a dedicated seminar period for three hours every week that they should use to perform these tasks.

**Makeup Work**

I do not track down students for missing assignments. Taking charge of your own education is an important step in the process of becoming an adult. You should not need to ask me, “what did we do last class?” or “what did I miss?” When you are absent from class it is your responsibility to check the class website for assignments, download any missing assignments and turn in missing work. Makeup work may not be completed during class time. Know the location of the late work box in my office and the location of my seminar. If you have missed an assessment, you may get permission to take it during seminar. Students who miss school for a medical or other preapproved absence may have one additional day to turn in work per day absent.

**MLA Style**

We are working this year to prepare for college-level writing. As such, writing assignments will not be accepted unless they are submitted in MLA format. We will discuss these requirements with your first writing assignment, but here is a brief overview:

* Your paper must be typed in a plain, readable font, size 12.
* Your paper must be double-spaced.
* Your margins must be set to 1” on all sides.
* A header must appear in the upper left hand corner that includes your name, the name of this course, my name and the date
* Your paper must include an enticing title, centered just below the header (not just “English Paper” or “Beowulf Paper”).

**Turnitin.com**

Schweinfurt High School subscribes to a service called Turnitin.com, a service designed to alert users to potential misuse of material and incidences of plagiarism in all kinds of writing. All of my students are required to submit all writing assignments to Turnitin.com. Students must submit a written assignment to Turnitin.com by the specified deadline or risk receiving a zero score for the assignment. Writing assignments not submitted to Turnitin.com will not be graded. All of my students are registered for Turnitin.com. To access your account, follow the following instructions:

1. Go to www.turnitin.com.

2. At the top of the page, click "Create Account".

3. On the following screen, do not enter anything in the text boxes. Instead, click "Student".

4. You will create a new student account. In the field labeled "Class ID" enter 6815431. The class enrollment password is "razorbacks". Enter your first name and last name. Enter your email address- please use an email address that is active and one you check regularly.

5. Create a password. This password is case-sensitive, must be 6-12 characters long and must contain at least one number.

6. Write down your password!

7. Create a security question that only you know the answer to. This will be used to help retrieve your password if you ever forget or lose it.

8. Click "I agree" to create your account.

If you already have a Turnitin account that you created with another teacher, simply log in and click "Enroll in a class". Then, enter the Class ID and the password "razorbacks" to enroll in my class.

**A Note About Wikipedia**

Please do not use Wikipedia as a source for any of your writing this year. The following is an excerpt from an article that discusses the place of Wikipedia in academia:

“As educators, we are in the business of reducing the dissemination of misinformation," said Don Wyatt, chair of the department. ‘Even though Wikipedia may have some value, particularly from the value of leading students to citable sources, it is not itself an appropriate source for citation,’ he said.”

The full text of the article is here: http://www.insidehighered.com/news/2007/01/26/wiki

**Seating**

I do not assign seats for any of my classes unless it is necessary. However, please do sit in the same seat for the first few weeks to make it easier for me to learn your names. Sometimes I do change the desk arrangement, so get used to having things move around occasionally.

**Snacks**

Food is not permitted in the classroom. You are welcome to bring water with you if you wish. I share a classroom with another teacher. As Americans abroad we respect the customs and laws of our host nation. Similarly, it is our responsibility to respect the rules of our host teacher. Failure to leave the classroom neat and tidy will result in disciplinary action and loss of privileges.

**Bonus Points**

There are two ways to earn bonus points in Mr. Cyphers’ class:

1. **Grammar Fails**

Spot a grammar or spelling error in a magazine, book, ad, sign or other professional publication. Bring it in to be posted on the class “Grammar Fails Wall” and I will award you **one bonus participation point**.

1. Spot a grammar or spelling error in one of Mr. Cyphers’ handouts and receive **one bonus participation point**.

**CYPHERS.WEEBLY.COM**

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**Notes:**