

# NEW LONDON HIGH SCHOOL HUMANITIES COURSE



**Instructor: Mrs. Stark, M.S.Ed**

## Youth of a Nation

**Objective:** The Humanities objective is to help students perfect essential skills such as effective writing, critical reading, critical thinking, ethical reasoning, and creativity by exposing students to diverse ideas and values through an emphasis on works of art, music, and literature as well as philosophical, historical, environmental, and religious writings from a variety of diverse world cultures and time periods.

This year's theme is "Youth of a Nation". We will be exploring, through various literary and artistic sources, how the human experience has *been* impacted by and *has* impacted literature. The goal of this course is to support and enhance students' development as independent readers and writers, while at the same time fostering a community of learners who understand the impact historical events continue to hold on the modern era. A major focus throughout this course will be the human toll that youths have endured throughout the ages. By focusing on the youth movements throughout history, students in this class will be able to develop empathy and deeper understandings of those whom were once considered their peers. Students will learn to read and write for a variety of purposes and will be exposed to historical events through multiple genres, including novels, short stories, nonfiction text, poetry and artistic expression.

Possible novels to be used during the course in conjunction with various short stories and poems by authors from a variety of cultures:

- *A Long Way Gone* by: Ishmael Beah
- *Auschwitz* by: Miklos Nyiszli
- *The Book Thief* by: Markus Zusak
- *The Wave* by: Todd Strasser
- *Iliad* by: Homer
- *Oedipus Rex* by: E. A. Sophocles
- *Blood Diamonds* by: Greg Campbell
- *Devastation of the Indies* by: De Las Casas
- *House on Mango Street* by: Sandra Cisneros
- *The Other Boleyn Girl* by: Philippa Gregory

Some of these readings are of a mature nature, and will be presented in a culturally relevant manner.

**Class Expectations for Students:**

- Arrive to class on time with required materials and attend all scheduled sessions
- Students are responsible for their learning and must make a valiant effort at such
- Although not required, students are expected to redo and resubmit any and all assignments which have not earned an 85% mark. Students have the option of also redoing and resubmitting work graded higher than 85% for reconsideration as well.

**Course Evaluation:** Your final grade will be based on a combination of scores from homework, class work, projects, quizzes, unit exams and classroom participation. Each assignment will be awarded a set number of points. Students' final grades will be determined by adding together all possible points earned and dividing that number by the total possible points available for all assignments combined. NLHS letter scoring is as follows:

**For this class:**

A+: 100-97%	A: 96-93%	A-: 92-90%
B+: 89-87%	B: 86-83%	B-: 82-80%
C+: 79-77%	C: 76-73%	C-: 72-70%
D+: 69-67%	D: 66-63%	D-: 62-60%
F: 59% and below		

**Tentative Breakdown of Units:**

<b>Unit I</b>	<b>Unit II</b>	<b>Unit III</b>	<b>Unit IV</b>
History: Western Africa & Colonialism  ELA: <i>A Long Way Gone Novel</i>	History: Holocaust & European Genocide  ELA: <i>Auschwitz, The Wave, The Book Thief</i>	History: Heroism & Greek Mythology  ELA: <i>Homer's Iliad and Oedipus Rex</i>	History: The Tudor Reign of England & Religious convictions  ELA: <i>The Other Boleyn Girl</i>
<b>January</b>	<b>Unit V</b>	<b>Unit VI</b>	<b>Unit VII</b>
Winter Session CAPT Preparation	History: African History & World Market Economy  ELA: <i>Blood Diamonds, Amistad, Phyllis Wheatley writings</i>	History: Latin American History & Colonization  ELA: <i>Devastation of the Indies, House on Mango Street</i>	History: Civil Rights Movement  ELA: <i>Ain't I a Woman, Freedom Riders, Beloved</i>



**Humanities Focus:** The usually separated subjects of history, political science, geography, English grammar, composition, literature, art, and music are integrated in this Humanities core and taught systematically along a chronological timeline. Students study the best of classical art and literature, exploring how literature and the arts influenced and were influenced by the world of politics and history.

**Academic Skills:** Will include, but not be limited to - note taking, reading academic articles, completing multiple choice exams, critical research analogy, creating time lines, writing analogy responses, organizing a notebook, memorization, time management, nightly study skills, learning word roots, understanding metaphoric language, perspective, and research skills.

The goal at the secondary level of Humanities is to equip students to engage in meaningful and personally relevant activities:

- Thoughtful reflection about history and progress
- Thoughtful reflection about the trade-offs between personal desires and social obligations
- The ability to read carefully and to make intelligent, evidentiary connections between apparently diverse narratives
- And the ability to confidently answer big picture questions such as: *“how does literature present us with an image of the forces and events that shape our lives? And how does it achieve its respective ends?”*

The simple answer to this latter question is: literature is the medium through which thoughtful writers attempt to interpret and attain some measure of understanding—and hopefully, control—over our ontogenetic and phylogenetic histories.

Before written language, these efforts were the impetus behind the sympathetic magic of the cave paintings such as we see at Altamira. After written language, these same efforts were undertaken by a new class of artists: writers, who gave us the Epic of Gilgamesh, Beowulf, Hamlet and The Scarlet Letter, to name a few.

In this thematic curriculum, questions such as "what is literature concerned with" can be continuously applied to any work that might be read; and students find themselves at the center as they mull the similarities and differences between works that explore the same big ideas.

The center of this literature course is about extracting meaning; about interpretation; about using the comparative mode to read carefully; and about coming to understand the ways that all stories converge around—and reinterpret—universal themes.

An approach like this is what makes the journey through this course both meaningful and purposive for students.

Thematic/Literary Goals: To help students acquire a framework for the reading and thinking about literature;

- To enable students to identify structural elements (plot, theme, setting) and language use: symbolism, irony, connotation, denotation et al.
- To enable students to see that fundamental story patterns and themes span and link together cultures and epochs;
- To enable students to appreciate the metaphor behind all story-telling;

Reading Assessment Targets

- State both literal and inferred main ideas and provide text based support
- Use graphic organizers to analyze and compare themes and main ideas in two or more texts
- Develop questions before, during, and after reading
- Compare/contrast recurring themes; similarities and differences
- Examine how an action leads to long-lasting effects
- Judge the effectiveness of the author's use of literary devices and language
- Draw conclusions about style, tone, mood based upon language choice
- Identify the persuasive effects of vocabulary
- Compare the development of an idea or concept in two or more texts

Writing Assessment Targets

- Special emphasis on short (3-8 sentence) one paragraph in-class timed responses to specific prompts
- Formulate a precise topic that responds to the prompt and that takes a position that will be the controlling idea of the paragraph
- Provide supporting evidence from text by weaving exact quotes into expository sentences within the paragraph
- Use standard devices or paragraph hooks for making transitions between two or more paragraphs

**Most Importantly:** Above all else, the Humanities course is designed to foster an open and nurturing environment where students and parents always feel comfortable to express their thoughts and ideas as well as reflect upon the various cultures and histories of world civilizations. The instructors' are happy to discuss any class matters with students and/or parents. Please use the class website to email Mrs. Stark at [www.starkhistoryclass.com](http://www.starkhistoryclass.com) or call the main phone line of New London High School at (860) 437-6400 to schedule a conference day and time.

Go Whalers!