WELCOME TO 9th GRADE ENGLISH! The PURPOSE of this course is to develop and strengthen students’ abilities in active, critical reading, thinking, writing and oral communication through understanding and responding primarily to works of literature, but also to a variety of text and other media. Students will study elements of literature, such as theme, narrative technique, structure, and language, through a variety of literary genres. The course also aims to develop students’ grammar and vocabulary skills and places heavy emphasis upon writing and the writing process. The course’s broader GOALS are to provide not only the necessary foundation to Sturgis’s IB Programme but also challenge students to see themselves as generators of ideas, and, as the IB expects, help them realize their potential as active, engaged world citizens.

Because Sturgis is an inclusive (“For All”) International Baccalaureate (IB) school, we seek to fulfill the aim of the Programme which is “to develop internationally minded people who, recognizing their common humanity and shared guardianship of the planet, help to create a better and more peaceful world.”

To these ends, as IB learners we strive to be models of the IB Learner Profile: we are inquirers, knowledgeable, thinkers, communicators, principled, open-minded, caring, risk-takers, balanced, and reflective.

TO THESE ENDS, the course (and your teacher!) assumes the following BELIEFS:

- Literature has value to our understanding of humanity and the human condition.
- The study of literary works provokes self-reflection and global awareness.
- Communicating clearly and well is a vital life skill.
- Ideas—both big and small—matter; the world is changed, moved, and shaped by them. The source of ideas resides within each of us.
- Words—written or spoken—are powerful things; we must take care in how we use them.
- Seeking answers to questions, being a good listener, remaining motivated to learn, and having a strong, consistent work ethic are all necessary for success in the classroom as well as in life.
- Effort is paramount over achievement (this is not to say that achievement is not important!); everyone has the ability to meet or exceed high expectations through sharing ideas, having an open mind, and showing a strong work ethic.
- All people deserve to be treated—as well as have a duty to treat others—with kindness, compassion, and respect.

AS WE LEARN TOGETHER, a large part of our work will consider the following ESSENTIAL or “BIG” QUESTIONS in some form:

- What does it mean to be human and how am I a part of the human family and this planet?
- Who am I? What is important to me? What are my values and beliefs? How do those values and beliefs shape how I know and understand others and the world? Likewise, how do others’ values and beliefs shape how they understand the world? What tensions might this create?
- What is truth? What does it mean to speak truth? Does literature speak truth? Is there such a thing as “Truth” (with a capital “T”)? How can I learn to speak and write truth?
SOME AREAS OF KNOWING QUESTIONS (QUESTIONS THAT CONNECT LITERATURE WITH THEORY OF KNOWLEDGE) that we will consider throughout the course are:

- What is text? What makes a text literature?
- How do we interpret text and literature? What is the difference between a “good” (or “correct”) and a “bad” (or “incorrect”) interpretation?
- How does understanding the author or the author’s background help us to understand the text?
- What knowledge can be gained by focusing on the historical, social, or cultural context of a text?

TEACHING STRATEGIES in this course aim to be text focused, student driven, and teacher guided. This means that our work will revolve around text (written—which includes our own texts) and sometimes oral; that your responsibility as a student is great because it is YOU who will largely be the drivers of questions and thought-provoking discussions; that my role, as your teacher, is to guide, coach, model, correct when necessary, and support you in your learning. The class is largely discussion-based. You are therefore required to contribute to our discussions.

REQUIRED MATERIALS: Please be certain you have all of the following materials FOR EVERY CLASS:

- All texts we are currently working with; this includes any handouts
- All homework or other assignments due that day
- 3-ring, 2” binder with 5 binder tabs to organize handouts and homework
- A notebook (dedicated to English only) OR college ruled loose leaf paper to keep in your binder for note-taking and in-class assignments
- A composition book used SOLELY FOR THE PURPOSE of maintaining a regular reading/writing journal throughout the year
- A working pen in blue or black ink (no other colors, please!)
- Any additional materials as necessary for work that day

EXPECTATIONS: You are expected to come prepared for class every day in order to learn and participate productively. THIS MEANS...

Politeness and mutual respect among your peers and with your teacher are essential. At all times you can expect nothing less than professionalism, honesty, courtesy, and respect from your teacher. As a student you should expect to be challenged in your thinking, to stretch yourself, and to do your best. You will be supported, encouraged, and duly praised for your efforts! There are high but reasonable expectations in this class. Successful students meet them by listening actively and taking notes from class discussions, completing all homework assignments, studying assigned vocabulary, preparing for quizzes and tests, participating actively and productively in class discussions and group work, writing and turning in written work on time, taking initiative to ask questions, seeking extra help when needed, and communicating any hardship regarding deadlines well BEFORE due dates. You are expected to be honest at all times.

Absences, unplanned: You are responsible for making up all work due to an absence. It is YOUR RESPONSIBILITY to make arrangements with me to make up missed quizzes or to see me about the material you missed while you were away. Being absent on the day that an assignment is due, particularly a major one for which you have been given ample time to work on, should not prevent you from submitting the assignment either via email or sharing via GoogleDocs (preferred method). If you submit via GoogleDocs, it is your responsibility to inform me via Gmail that you are sharing a document with me.

Absences, planned: If you know ahead of time that you are going to miss class (doctor’s appointment, sports dismissal, etc.) you are responsible for informing me as early as possible so
arrangements can be made to get missed work made up. In the case of a dismissal, you are responsible for turning in any assignments due that day BEFORE you are dismissed otherwise they will be considered missing and late.

**Homework** is assigned and checked regularly. Completed homework is essential to being successful in this class.

**Missing or incomplete assignments the day they are due (and if our class meets before lunch),** whether homework or a larger assignment, means that you will be required to go to sign the “Missing Work” clipboard and go to MULT (Make up Learning Time) to complete the assignment THAT DAY. Your name will remain on the MULT list (which means you are expected to attend MULT) until the assignment is turned in. If the assignment is a longer one, which cannot be completed in one MULT session, you will be required to attend MULT until the assignment is made up and turned in. **Failure to attend MULT without a reasonable excuse (“I need to go get lunch” is NOT an excuse—ask someone to get lunch for you, please) and that has not been communicated to me AHEAD OF TIME** means you will receive no higher than 60% for the missed assignment but still need to complete it to avoid a zero. Failure to attend MULT also means that I must inform Ms. Kirk.

**All assignments,** large or small, must be completed to assignment expectations and be turned in on time. Internet/flash drive/network problems cannot be used as an excuse for work you are asked to submit electronically. If you encounter any problems, please email me and TURN IN A PRINTED COPY the day it is due so that I know you were responsible.

**Google Classroom:** You will be given a Sturgis GMail address and then invited in to Google Classroom with a specially assigned code. **It is important that you copy this code accurately so that you can gain immediate access to my Google Classroom.** All assignments, upcoming due dates, quiz and test announcements, handouts, etc. will be posted daily on the whiteboard in class as well as in Google Classroom. You are responsible for keeping track of assignments and for checking Google Classroom as well as your email on a DAILY BASIS. Checking Google Classroom is particularly important if you were absent. Failure to make use of Google Classroom or to check your email is NOT an excuse for missing work.

**Google Folder for this class:** All handouts will also be posted in my Google Classroom folder which will be shared with you. This means you have access to all work at all times. No excuses.

**Phones** are not allowed in class and should be kept off or in silent mode and in your bag for the duration of class. Any phone, visible or heard, will be put on my desk until the end of class. Repeat offenders can retrieve their phones from Ms. Kirk. Unless you have a documented reason for their use, all other electronic devices including laptops, Chromebooks, tablets, and Ipads are not allowed in class.

**TEXTS WE WILL BE STUDYING THIS YEAR:**

Summer reading: *Keeping Corner* by Kashmira Sheth
Selected short stories by various authors (handouts)
*Of Mice and Men,* by John Steinbeck
Selected poetry
*A Raisin in the Sun,* by Lorraine Hansberry
*When the Emperor Was Divine,* by Julie Otsuka
*Romeo and Juliet,* by William Shakespeare
Other selected works as time permits
ASSESSMENTS:
You will be assessed through a variety of assignments:
- Oral presentations
- Written responses (such as short answer questions, reflections, journal writing, and essays)
- Quizzes on material we learn in class and reading checks
- Individual and group projects
- Vocabulary work/quizzes via Membean
- Homework
- Class participation including graded discussions, Socratic seminars, etc.

GRADES will be based on a points’ system: For example, a vocabulary quiz may be worth fifteen points while an out-of-class essay may be forty or more. All homework assignments are worth 10 points, unless you are told otherwise. Assignments are weighted according to their worth in terms of scope and effort (see weighting categories below).

WEIGHTING CATEGORIES: Your grade throughout the year will be based on the following percentages:

1. **Class participation** (whole class discussions, group and pair work): 20%

   **Note:** Your active participation is essential to a productive, meaningful class. Please come prepared to engage in discussions, ask and answer questions, and share your ideas. **BEING SHY OR UNENGAGED IS NOT AN OPTION** (the IB puts a lot of emphasis on being a risk-taker, and this is one way you can take risks)!

2. **Formative Assessment** (quizzes, rough drafts, short essays, short projects/presentations, Membean vocab., etc.: 40%; homework: 10%)

   **Note:** Most homework (unless you are told otherwise) is an effort and completion grade checked in class and graded on a √+, √, √-, 0 system:

   - √+ means that you completed the assignment thoughtfully and thoroughly, followed the assignment instructions, and exceeded the expectations of the assignment. √+ =10 points.
   - √ means that you completed the assignment, demonstrating thought and effort, followed the assignment instructions, and met the expectations of the assignment. √ =8 points.
   - √- means that you may have not have completed the assignment, did follow the instructions, or it does not meet expectations. √- = 6 points until it is completed (late homework without a reasonable excuse receives a mark of no higher than 8 points.) You will be expected to attend to MULT.
   - 0 means you did not complete the assignment. You will be expected to attend MULT until the assignment is completed and I can erase the zero in my grade book.

3. **Summative Assessment** (major essays, tests, major projects and presentations, etc.) 30%

   **Note:** The bulk of grades in the summative assessment category will be essays. You are allowed to revise any essay AFTER CONFERENCING WITH ME FIRST (no conference=I do not accept a revised essay). You must also submit the original essay along with the revised essay for comparison (no original with revision=I do not accept the revision). If the revision is an improvement in grade, I drop the original grade and replace it completely with the new grade. ☺
Note: There are no retake quizzes for reading, vocabulary, or other short assessments so please study the first time!

Each semester counts towards 20% of the student’s final average for a total of 80%, while the mid-year and final exams will each count for 10% for a total of 100%.

MARKING AND FEEDBACK PLEDGE: I take feedback seriously and try to make my feedback on your assignments, particularly essays, useful and worth your attention. However, this takes time. I will make every effort to return all longer assignments (such as major essays or projects) within two cycles of submission IF THE ASSIGNMENT HAS BEEN SUBMITTED ON TIME. For shorter assignments (such as quizzes), I aim to give these back within a week or less.

AND FINALLY... Please keep your parents informed about your performance in this class and school in general. I am proactive practitioner of keeping parents informed and value a strong home-school connection. 😊

To this end, please share this syllabus with your parents so they are aware of expectations and know how to contact me if they wish.

Here’s to a great year!