

**English II – Sophomore Reading and Writing**  
**Mr. Kyle Connors**  
**connorsk @mdusd.org**



“A wise reader reads the book of genius not with his heart, not so much with his brain, but with his spine. It is there that occurs the telltale tingle...” – V. Nabokov

**English II Course Description**

In this course, sophomores will study literature, writing and language in a hands-on approach that continues the momentum of the freshman year and brings students to the halfway point of their high school language arts experience. We will study literature, improve reading and writing techniques, conduct research with citation use, and develop vocabulary and language use. Students will plan and prepare presentations, as well as deliver a researched 6-8 minute argumentative speech on a controversial topic. Students will be guided in a variety of writing processes for both short and longer assignments. Students will also take tests to assess learning, and to prepare for the high school exit exam as well as college entrance exams. At the same time, students will continue building on the language arts skills they have already acquired in preparation for the rest of high school, future academic endeavors, and life beyond Northgate high school. Our studies will follow California’s Common Core Standards for English Language Art instruction for grades 9-10. In meeting these course goals, students will also experience Northgate’s School Wide Goals which include demonstrating higher-order thinking skills of application, analysis, synthesis, evaluation, creativity and imagination; becoming a self-directed learner and a collaborative worker; and becoming an effective communicator.

**Major Texts Include:**

- Catcher in the Rye* by J.D. Salinger
- Animal Farm* by George Orwell
- Night* by Elie Wiesel
- The Stranger* by Albert Camus
- The Taming of the Shrew* by William Shakespeare

**Optional Texts Include:** (Literary circles project or a replacement for one of the above):

- The Kite Runner* by Khaled Hosseini
- The Bean Trees* by Barbara Kingsolver
- Lord of the Flies* by William Golding
- Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* by Robert Louis Stevenson

**Major Units of Study / Projects Include:**

- Persuasive research paper (2<sup>nd</sup> Quarter)
- Persuasive speech (2<sup>nd</sup> Quarter)
- Personal narrative writing (1<sup>st</sup> Quarter)
- Informational research group presentation (3<sup>rd</sup> Quarter)
- 2 or 3 five-paragraph literary analysis essays (throughout)

Students will explore literature in a manner that **coincides**, occasionally conflicts, and often enriches the major events studied in their World History class. The Russian Revolution will be further explored by our reading of George Orwell's satirical novella *Animal Farm*. Student knowledge of the events of World War II will be greatly enriched by a reading of Elie Wiesel's memoir *Night*. A newer historical episode will be illuminated in our reading of Khaled Hosseini's tale of Taliban controlled Afghanistan in *The Kite Runner*. It is this **confluence** of cross-disciplinary learning that will ideally allow students to gain a deeper understanding of the author's treatment of universal themes that **resonate** across the spaces (chronological and physical) that divide the author from us, their reader.

*\*A multitude of expository articles, critical essays, philosophical theories, short stories, poems, films, songs, and rhetorical images will also be employed to supplement topics addressed in each of the major texts above.*

## **Class Requirements**

**Class Notebook:** Please purchase a 3-ring binder and dedicate a section therein to this class. You should have enough pocket dividers to neatly organize and store the multitude of handouts, readings, and resources that will be given to you throughout the year. You should also have a flashdrive to store all of your work. I recommend creating an ENG IV folder w/ subfolders according to the academic quarter (1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup>, 4<sup>th</sup>) and bringing this every day.

**Composition Journal:** Students will maintain a composition journal throughout the year. This journal will include weekly reflective (often intrapersonal and/or informal) in-class writings as well as student responses to prompts given as homework. This will be expected when materials are checked, and will be graded quarterly – so please keep it clean and nicely organized.

**Homework:** Students should keep an assignment book or planner for this class. Please refrain from using Aeries or our Google class calendar (displayed on class web page) as your first resource to obtain assignments but rather use it as a back-up, instead noting the assignments displayed at the beginning and end of each class period. Homework is due at the beginning of class and should be completed in dark (blue or black) ink.

**Collaboration:** As the English classroom often extends into the realms of subjective (rather than objective) truth it is important that we create a space where opinions can be shared without fear. As such it will be important that students are always mindful of *how* (not merely *what*) you are contributing positively to our classroom community.

## **Grading Policy**

Grades are figured as points. Assignments will be given a specific weighted value (see below) based on the type of assignment. For example, homework may be between 5 and 50 points, depending on the amount of work involved; minor assignments might also be worth 30 points, however because they are weighted differently (as a percentage of your total points for each category) the grade is liable to **fluctuate** upon the completion of a Minor Assignment or an Essay or Project. It would be wise to check the ABI/Homelink system for the most accurate read on grades. All assignments should be completed in a timely fashion and will be weighed according to the following scale:

**Major Assignments (Essay/Projects) – 40%** (i.e. – Essays, speeches, individual and group projects, socratic seminars, etc.)

**Minor Assignments – 25%** (i.e. – Essay drafts, creative writing assignments, vocabulary and grammar quizzes, notebook checks, etc.)

**Participation – 20%** (i.e. - attendance, positive contributions during class and group discussions, etc)

**Homework/Classwork – 15%** (double-entry journals, writing prompts, study questions, vocabulary and grammar worksheets, exit tickets, etc.)

**Make-up Work** – Students with excused absences may make up the work they missed. Students have the same number of days they missed to complete and turn in work. It is the student’s responsibility to initiate the process for making up work by checking with the teacher, preferably before class. Group projects and presentations may not be made up with the group, so the student must communicate with the teacher to arrange an alternate assignment to makeup partial credit. Failure to makeup missing work will result in a zero.

**Late Work** – Late work is accepted for full credit only if the student has a legal absence (see above) however as in the outside world, where “rain checks” merely apply to outdoor events and a quick glance at the darkness of the clouds overhead, *any unexcused late work will not be accepted*. If you are absent on the day a major assignment is due, it is your responsibility to e-mail your work to me on the morning of the assignment due date. In order to **assuage** the fears of those who have missed too many assignments, I will also provide the entire class with occasional opportunities to complete extra-credit assignments. Those whose grades have been effected by a number of missing assignments must speak to me about devising and implementing a plan at least two weeks BEFORE the end of the quarter. No bargains will be struck after this point.

**Late Passes** – Each student will receive two late passes *per semester* which may be used on minor assignments or homework – but NOT major assignments or any multi-draft essay components. These can be redeemed for 10 pts. extra credit at the end of each semester.

**Participation** – Students will receive a participation grade each quarter. As participation is vital to a complex understanding of the subjects covered it will be factored as 20% of your quarterly grade. Your participation will be out of 50 points but will start at 30 points. This initial point allowance can be raised or lowered depending on the following: verbal participation (contributing ideas, asking thoughtful questions, clarifying or expanding upon contributions of others, taking initiative in group/partner discussions, etc.), staying focused on classwork/groupwork, appropriate conduct, being prepared for class, being on time, avoiding excessive hall pass/bathroom usage, **abstaining** from cell phone/tech usage (unless directed otherwise), etc. Students are free to inquire about their participation grade at any point during the quarter.

### Academic Honesty Policy

Students are expected to respect and **adhere** to the academic honesty policy every day, for every assignment. What is the honesty policy? It is the promise that all the work you submit, at any time, will be all your own, and not borrowed or stolen from other sources, such as the internet, books, magazines, or willing classmates. In addition to observing English Department policies on plagiarism, I will enforce academic honesty with the following penalties: First offense – Student will receive a **zero** for the assignment, Saturday School, and parent contact in addition to an administrative referral, which in turn becomes a part of your permanent academic record; Second offense – Student will receive negative points (an assignment worth a total of 50 possible points will instead receive a reduction of 50 points) in addition to penalties listed above for a first offense. Third offense – An F will be given for your **overall** semester mark. Please error on the side of caution.

### Teacher Conferences

Whenever a student would like to talk with me about any difficulties they are experiencing in the English classroom they can arrange a time to meet by contacting me at [connorsk@mdusd.org](mailto:connorsk@mdusd.org).

### Grading Scale (These nuances hold meaning, even if they don’t factor into your G.P.A.)

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

### **Keeping track:**

The electronic gradebook is accessible online. Parents are given access information at the student registration period, and are instructed in how to set up an account for their students. Please note that the online gradebook is updated every week to 10 days. Students should bring any grade discrepancies b/w homelink and the grade given to a particular assignment to the teacher immediately for discussion and, if valid, reconciliation will take place immediately.

### **Classroom Rules**

- ❖ Be positive and respectful! No put-downs, whining, or back talk.
- ❖ Be on time and prepared – in your seat, quiet, with materials ready when the bell rings.
- ❖ Be present! Physically and mentally. Concentrate on English when you're here – no books or assignments from other classes.
- ❖ Absolutely no racist, sexist, or homophobic speech or acts – It is hate speech, and I have zero tolerance for it! That said, no topics of *academic* discussion are off-limits, just callous expression.
- ❖ Participate, participate, participate - and not for a grade but for your own learning!
- ❖ Food, drink (other than water), and electronics are not permitted! Keep them in your pocket or backpack. If I see them I will take them.
- ❖ Use your time in the classroom strategically! Read during SSR and use Study Session for productive school-related work.

Consequences: Violation of classroom policy or any Northgate High School policies will be dealt with consistently and fairly to promote a safe, positive and enjoyable learning environment. Students who refuse to **abide** by these rules can expect the following disciplinary actions:

First offense: Verbal Reminder (during class).

Second offense: Student conference, parent email and/or after-school detention.

Third offense: Disciplinary Referral and/or Saturday school.

## Contract and Contact Information

Northgate High School – English II

English Teacher: Kyle Connors

School Phone: 938-0900 Voice Mail: Ext. 2191

Email: [connorsk@mdusd.org](mailto:connorsk@mdusd.org)

*Note - email preferred & checked MUCH more frequently*

Gradebook information:

<https://net.mdusd.org/Aeries.net/>

Class Calendar and Resources:

<https://sites.google.com/site/mrcenglish2/>

Dear Parent/Guardian,

Please review the English policies and expectations with your student. You and your student should sign and date below to acknowledge that you understand and agree to the above guidelines. Your student should return this signed syllabus by Friday, August 25<sup>th</sup>.

Student Name \_\_\_\_\_ Signature \_\_\_\_\_

Parent Name \_\_\_\_\_ Signature \_\_\_\_\_

Please provide contact information so that I may reach you if necessary:

Best time/method to reach you: \_\_\_\_\_

Home Phone # (    ) \_\_\_\_\_ Alternate # (    ) \_\_\_\_\_

Parent E-mail \_\_\_\_\_

Student E-mail \_\_\_\_\_

What should I know about your child's academic strengths and/or weaknesses related to their language arts skills? Please do not hesitate to use the space below for any comments that may prove helpful as we begin the new year. Thanks.