**Sophomore English Spring 2020**

**Mr. Ian Wilkins iwilkins@gdrsd.org**

**Course Description:**

English 10 builds on the elements focused on in English 9, as they share the same set of standards. However, the thematic focus is shifted to an exploration of Fate versus Free Will, one of the most fundamental questions of life, which literature has been grappling with since *Gilgamesh*--the oldest written story known to exist--was set into clay tablets over 4,000 years ago.

Each unit of study will have essential questions to help guide our exploration. Is identity determined by the individual or by society? Is suffering dictated by external circumstances, or do we have some internal control of it? What is justice, both for the individual and for society? Is it better to conform or to break free of conformity? These questions and more, along with a selection of classic and contemporary literature, will guide us toward deeper understandings and more refined skills and content knowledge. We will have a dynamic classroom, in which multiple modes of comprehending and creating text will be utilized, including various media types, activities associated with movement and performance, and more formal reading and writing.

**Course Goals:**

* We will create an open and positive learning environment, in which we will encourage and support each other in participating fully in class activities and discussions, taking intellectual risks, and growing as students and people.
* We will read, examine, and analyze a wide range of texts, looking at both the big picture elements and the small details, in order to become more active and perceptive readers and thinkers.
* We will give and take feedback on our work in thoughtful, engaged ways, applying what we learn from it to improve and move toward mastery of our English Language Arts skills. We will focus on the processes involved in our learning, rather than any perceived end points.
* We will become self-directed learners and expert self-assessors by using a collaborative system of setting goals, monitoring progress, and determining grades.
* Every day we will work with joy.

**Supplies needed:**

* Students will need a notebook for notes and in-class work, as well as a 2 pocket folder or small 3-ring binder for handouts.
* You are expected to come to every class prepared, with your class materials and a pen or pencil.

**Potential Works Studied or Excerpted:**

*\* The Immortal Life of Henrietta Lacks* by Rebecca Skloot \**Persepolis* by Marjane Satrapi

*\* Macbeth* by William Shakespeare \**Outliers* by Malcolm Gladwell

*\* The Hate U Give* by Angie Thomas \**Gilgamesh* (ancient epic)

\* Various short fiction, nonfiction, and poetic texts \**Night* by Elie Wiesel

**Grading:**

* Early in the semester, we will collaboratively write a course rubric, focused on academic behaviors, work habits, and prioritized MA ELA standards.
* As the course progresses, School Brains will be used to keep track of work completion. Each assignment will be worth 10 points; 10 out of 10 means fully complete, and anything less indicates a degree of incompleteness.
* Grading Conferences/School Brains:
  + At progress report and report card times (4 total: Term 1 progress report, Term 1 report card, Term 2 progress report, Term 2 report card) we will hold grading conferences. In these conferences, we will reference the class rubric, and the student will determine their own grade based on evidence they provide to show progress toward the indicators on the rubric. (The teacher reserves the right to make the final decision on the grade, but will defer to the student unless he feels the grade is inaccurate.)
  + An “Adjustment Grade” will be entered into School Brains at grading conference times, in order to set the overall course grade accurately. **This means that, until these grading conference times, School Brains will show work completion, and not the overall grade for the course.**
  + Students will also be prompted to identify goals for growth at each grading conference; progress toward those goals will be factored into future grading conferences.
  + Parents and guardians are encouraged to discuss with their students their progress in the course, and to reach out to the teacher with any questions.
* Late work is only acceptable as outlined in the student handbook, otherwise, ten points off per day late. You must always communicate with me regarding any work that will not be submitted on time.
* Academic honesty is extremely important. Please do not plagiarize or cheat in any way. The consequences are serious and swift, both in class and from administration. If you have a question as to whether something might count as plagiarism, talk to me about it.

**Final Thoughts:** Never hesitate to come to me for help; I will always do my part to keep you on track, but you also should understand that you are your own best advocate. I am available for help outside of class frequently, including before/during/after school by appointment. Most of all, I’m excited to learn *together*, which means I firmly believe that I have just as much to learn from all of you as you have to learn from me. I look forward to a fantastic and engaging class with you, me, and this fascinating thing we call English.