



The David A. Stein Riverdale/Kingsbridge Academy MS/HS 141

Department of
Education
City of New York

Principal
Lori O'Mara

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Sheilagh Lustig
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COMEDY IN LITERATURE 2015-2016

"Life is a tragedy when seen in close-up, but a comedy in long-shot" - Charlie Chaplin

WELCOME

From ancient Greek plays to late-night satirical TV, comedy has often provided the contextual lens from which to explore our political and societal challenges. The written and performed comedic expression is a framework to process our cultural experience. This course will examine comedy through a variety of written and multi-media genres including: short stories, novels, memoir, poetry, live performance and film. We will be focusing on classic works by authors such as Shakespeare and Jonathan Swift, as well as more contemporary writers like Neil Simon and David Sedaris. We will be examining the work of cultural observers from different historical eras, ranging from Mark Twain to Dorothy Parker; George Carlin to Jon Stewart. Students will also gain a deeper understanding of subgenres in comedy such as Satire, Parody and Farce as well as the elements of Irony and Wit. Understanding the different forms of comedy will help students be more analytical of the comedic material they encounter in various types of medium throughout the year. This will be an interactive course with emphasis on group discussion, presentations as well as critical analysis essays.

GOALS:

- Students will explore the function and uses of humor, and how it is a vehicle for cultural commentary and analysis.
- Students will evaluate a speaker's point of view, reasoning, and use of evidence and rhetoric, assessing the stance, premises, links among ideas, word choice, points of emphasis, and tone used.
- Students will be able to write argumentative, informative, and imaginative texts to support claims in an analysis of substantive topics or texts, using valid reasoning and sufficient textual evidence.
- Students will read and analyze complex fiction and non-fiction texts and multimedia.
- Students will initiate and participate effectively in a range of collaborative discussions with diverse partners on a range of topics, texts, issues, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively.
- Students will present information, findings, and supporting evidence, conveying a clear and distinct perspective through a range of formal and informal tasks.
- Students will laugh and learn!



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Texts and authors used to develop critical analysis skills are:

- Animal Farm by George Orwell
 - Cat's Cradle by Kurt Vonnegut
 - Mark Twain
 - Jonathan Swift
 - Samuel Beckett
 - Dorothy Parker
 - David Sedaris
 - Neil Simon

Other Media:

- Stand-up Comedy clips
- Cartoons such as the Simpsons, South Park, The Boondocks, etc.
- NPR podcasts
- The Daily Show with Jon Stewart
- Saturday Night Live clips

Additional areas of study are:

- The science of laughter
- How to analyze themes in literature
- The basis of a good analysis
- Understanding literary elements and techniques
- Writing a standard thesis paper that includes the MLA format for citing and documentation

Essential Questions that will be addressed throughout the term are:

- How does comedy impact society?
- Why do we laugh?
- Funny or not – who gets to decide?
- How has comedy changed from throughout history?
- How many types of comedy exist?

EXPECTATIONS:

- Be on time, and prepared with your binder and pen every day.
- Demonstrate respectful behavior in class. This means paying attention, allowing others to learn and speaking to others respectfully.
- Do your best! (*Your level of effort is the single biggest secret to your success in this class!*)
- Follow all school rules outlined in RKA's Student Handbook. **(NYC Dept. of Education prohibits the use of cell phones and other electronic devices in school at all times!)**



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GRADING POLICY:

*All grades will be updated on weekly basis via our online grading system
www.jupitergrades.net

Participation	15%
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Class discussion • Listening • Group work • Following instructions • Sharing work aloud 	
Classwork / Homework	30%
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Homework assignments and readings are completed • Independent work during class time is completed • Journals and "Do Nows" are up to date • Group work – process and product • Reflections • Student is prepared to work every class • Student's work is organized 	
Assessment	50%
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Essays • Quizzes • Tests • Projects 	
Folder/Portfolio	5%
Mid-term/Final Exam will be given	

EXTRA HELP:

- 5th period lunch and after school by appointment
- Feel free to email me any questions or concerns at khenry20@schools.nyc.gov

I have read Ms. Henry and Ms. Vaccaro's syllabus and course expectations: please cut along the dotted line, sign and return.

Student's name (printed)

Student's signature

Parent / guardian's name (Printed)

Parent / guardian's signature

Parent / Guardian phone number

Parent / Guardian email



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