

Middle School Reading Syllabus

Course Description:

Middle School Reading provides a bridge from the Primary School to High School. Students are expected to master the basics of reading fiction and non-fiction work, learn deeper writing and grammar skills, grow in their oral presentations, collaborations and deepen the complexity of their reading choices.

Instructor:

Mr. Elliot Guerra

Mr. Guerra graduated with a dual degree in Catholic Studies and English Literature from Seton Hall University where he was a two-time Lily Endowment recipient for Spirituality and the Arts. He is the current Director of Confirmation at the Parish and the Director of Mission Development for both the Parish and Academy. He is also the founding creative director of OLMC's Odyssey Theatre.

Grading:

Participation / Homework – 20%

Quiz –30%

Test / Project –50

Textbooks and Workbooks: (Provided by the Academy)

Close Reading of Complex Texts. New York: Sadlier, 2014.

Holt McDougal. Literature. Orlando: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2012.

Shostak, Jerome. Vocabulary Workshop. New York: Sadlier, 2013.

The New American Bible. World Bible Publishing, 1987.

The Norton Reader: An Anthology of Nonfiction 14th ed. W.W. Norton: London, 2017.

Schulten, Katherine. Ed. Student Voice: 100 Argument Essays by Teens on Issues that Matter to Them. W.W. Norton: London, 2020.

You will be required to purchase texts; students and parents will be given ample opportunity to purchase the needed text from online or independent booksellers.

Learning Objectives:

Middle School readers will apply reading strategies to improve comprehension. Demonstrate understanding of textual features, determine meaning of vocabulary in context and apply reading comprehension skills to a variety of genres. will cultivate an appreciation for and experience different cultures and traditions from around the literary world and strive to understand the mysteries of the shared human journey of self-discovery. We, as a class, will make prayer a central part of our academic life in the classroom.

Independent Reading and Drop Everything And Read (DEAR):

In order to foster a deeper appreciation of reading and to help build effective reading habits, students are required to have with them a book or graphic novel of their choosing in their desks at all times. The only activity approved for downtime in class is reading. If students need a new book, they are welcome to borrow any from the teacher and are encouraged to ask for recommendations. Additionally, throughout the week, the teacher may announce “drop everything and read” which means all will be given time for independent reading.

Learning Goals (In this course you will learn how to...)

1. Accept personal responsibility

You will learn how to take greater personal responsibility, and gain more control over the outcomes and experiences that you create both in class and in the halls.

2. Increase self-motivation

You will learn to create greater inner motivation by, among other things, discovering your own personal meaningful goals for the class.

3. Improve personal self-management

You will learn numerous strategies for taking control of your time and energy in class that will allow you to move more effectively and efficiently toward the accomplishment of your academic goals.

4. Develop interdependence

You will learn how to develop mutually supportive relationships with your classmates who will help you achieve your goals and dreams as you assist them to achieve theirs.

5. Increase self-awareness

You will learn how to respect other people’s beliefs and opinions and be more aware of your possible unconscious limiting beliefs.

6. Maximize your learning

You will learn key research techniques and how to properly source material. You will apply this knowledge to develop your writing and reading skills more effectively. You will learn how to improve your writing and reading skills through the extensive writing and reading practices.

7. Improve creative and critical thinking skills

You will learn how to enhance the thinking skills essential for analyzing and solving problems in your academic life. You will also develop reasoning skills that will help you construct persuasive arguments.

8. Master effective study skills

You will learn how to improve essential skills such as reading, taking notes, studying,

memorizing, and conquering academic anxiety!

9. Appreciate diversity and raise cultural awareness

We will create a classroom community with people who have ideas, beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors that are different from our own and learn to appreciate and better understand the differences. We will learn that “what hurts our brothers or sisters hurts all of us.”

Rules for Success (Student Responsibilities)

This course has three important rules. If you choose to follow these rules, your odds of learning the material and becoming a stronger reader and writer will increase exponentially. (These rules will also help you succeed in your other classes.)

1. Show up!

To succeed in this course, you must choose to attend ready and prepared to work. Be attentive, interested and interesting. As soon as you enter the classroom, regardless of what we are doing, you should have your reading material, a notebook, and a writing tool out. Most classes will begin with a brief introduction and always with prayer.

2. Do the work!

Everything I assign I expect to be completed in a timely fashion, including readings and viewing of materials. If you are assigned to read (or watch) something, do not treat the assigned reading as an inferior exercise. Actively read, by which I mean read in a way that you are able to retain the information given. You will be expected to be able to speak on the material.

If the work is rushed or it is clear that you did not do your work with intention and care, I will draw a line through the paper with the letters R.N.F. which stands for: **Read No Further**. You will not waste my time with inadequate work; I ask you not to waste yours either. You will be asked to do the assignment again. Your work is the most precious thing you can give someone other than your love. I care less if your work is done correctly as I care it is done well. Be intentional.

3. Respect Yourself!

Students are expected to act with integrity in all they do and say. I find discipline to be not a matter of punishment but a matter of self-respect. Calling out, criticizing others, not listening, etc. shows a lack of respect for yourself and the dignity in which you were raised. Respect yourself and remember you are representing your parents and families in the way you carry yourself at all times.

I have always treated my middle school students as the talented, aspiring young adults they are, not as little children. If students behave like little children, they will be treated as little children, revoking trips, participation and classroom independence.

Instructor Responsibilities (You can expect me to...)

1. Come to class with a good attitude.

2. Be respectful of your ideas and value the diversity of thought you bring to the classroom.
3. Be open to dialogue and ideas that challenge me, or that I may disagree with.
4. Answer any appropriate questions you may have. Admit when I do not know something and get back to you in a timely manner.
5. Use a variety of teaching techniques and modalities to accommodate different learning styles.
6. Return written assignments in class and online in a timely fashion and provide helpful feedback.
7. Offer you engaging and stimulating lectures and activities to the best of my ability.
8. Respect, Defend, Encourage and Discipline you, so you can reach your highest potential.
9. Treat you fairly.
10. Communicate often with your parents, especially when you're doing positive and interesting things.
11. Pray for you and encourage you.