

**Course Title:** Voices of Modern Cultures (12<sup>th</sup> Grade)

**Teachers:** Bobby Pelz & Charity Purse

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## A. COURSE DESCRIPTION

Through extensive reading, writing and discussion, we will pursue the essential questions for this year:

**“What are the true conditions that influence our life?”**

**“How do you use your voice to take control of these conditions?”**

These are difficult questions that we cannot even begin to unpack without first building towards them through a series of smaller questions:

- What is voice?
- How does “voice” affect truth?
- Who is the “other?”
- What is culture and does it determine voice?
- Is all language spoken?
- How does the way you tell a story affect the way the story is told?
- What do you stand for?

## B. ORGANIZATION

- The class is broken into three different ways that we use language to express our voice:
  - The written word
  - The spoken word
  - The digital word

We’ll study each of these ways of using language and how they can be effective ways of expressing our individual voices.

- Every Friday we will write. Every fourth or fifth Friday will be an in-class essay. Writing is a skill that will benefit you in life like no other. We are a literary society. As such, we’ll continue with a writing assignment every Friday. You’ll get a chance to do some free-writing, but you’ll also be required to work on writing skills.
- There will be several projects that require you to stand in front of the class and deliver. Some projects are formal and others are more creative. Public speaking is the hardest skill to master, but it is also the quickest way to success.
- We’ll end with a study of pop culture and the media. You are bombarded by hidden messages all day long and we’re going to analyze how those messages affect you.
- Mr. Pelz is also a bit of a current events fanatic and so we’ll be studying and doing some projects around what is currently happening in the world right now. He calls it “Dropping Knowledge.”

## C. COURSE GOALS/OBJECTIVES

1. To gain an awareness of world cultures and current events by analyzing and discussing media. We will develop a practice of community service and social responsibility.
2. To understand the concept of voice, develop it and determine how to use it effectively. We will use our essential questions as a guide when learning these concepts.
3. To build upon previous English language skills, particularly with writing. We will engage in critical thought as we explore multiple forms of text (oral, written, visual, etc.). We will learn to analyze, question and react to multiple points of view. We will strengthen our communication skills through a variety of mediums including cooperative learning. We will learn skills appropriate for quality writing.
4. To develop competence in appropriate state standards including written and oral conventions, grammar, vocabulary, listening and reading comprehension, literary response, literary analysis and creative writing.

## D. INSTRUCTIONAL MATERIALS

### **You Will Need:**

A composition book. No spiral bound notebooks. You can buy this from us for two bucks.

Plenty of “Post-It” notes. Any size is ok. You can buy this from us as well.

Plenty of loose leaf, lined paper and pens to handle all the writing you need to do. We will provide paper for a dollar a sheet and pens for five bucks apiece. Please don't forget either.

A binder to keep any handouts or notes in

Your reading material – **EVERY DAY.**

### **Texts We Will Use:**

1. *The Things They Carried* – Tim O'Brien
2. *SLAM Poetry* – Various Authors
3. *The Kite Runner* – Khaled Hosseini
4. *Famous speeches, letters and writings* – Various Authors
5. *Media Selections* – Merchants of Cool, Growing Up Online, Beyond Beats & Rhymes, Outfoxed

### **E. GRADING PLAN**

The grading system for this class is somewhat unique. We believe that we are your teachers first, your advocates second and your assessors last. This means that when you turn in an assignment that demonstrates your knowledge of the subject matter, we will examine it as your advocates first. If we believe that it is not ready to be assessed yet, we will return it to you without a grade.

If you receive an assignment back without a grade, it means that you must continue working on it to get it ready for assessment. You must make an appointment to meet with either of us to find out what needs to be done in order to have your assignment ready for assessment. This is our way of ensuring that you get the highest possible grade you are capable of. We reserve the right to return any assignment to you any number of times until it's ready to be graded.

#### **\*General Note**

Your recorded grades will be available for your review at any convenient time on [www.schoolloop.com](http://www.schoolloop.com). Do remember to *keep all assignments and tests returned to you* so that any discrepancies can be easily and fairly straightened out.

#### **\*\*Unwritten Grade - Participation:**

Participation is another one of those “first impression” concepts. If you participate in class and are respectful, you're likely to do well. If you don't, you take a risk. The reason for this is that English is not entirely objective. A lot of our subjective opinion will emerge in grading your assignments. If you work hard and you add to the class, we're more likely to grade in your favor – if you subtract from the class, we're more likely to go the other way. Unfair perhaps, but it is how the world works. Learn how to make a good impression on people and you'll always be successful in life.

### **F. CLASSROOM RULES STUFF**

1. SAWUBONA. We See. In one being seeing another, we owe each other something.
2. TIME IS MONEY. Any time wasted is time owed x2.
3. ONE MIC. Only one person talks at a time. A good listener is not only popular, but after awhile he gets to know something.
4. EACH1TEACH1. Teachers can only do so much. Help each other out.
5. YOUTHSPEAKS. A closed mouth don't get fed – and, if you don't talk, no one will hear you.

### **G. YOUR IDEAS, EVALUATIONS, ETC.**

In general, your ideas, comments, suggestions, questions, etc. are welcome. Come talk to us about whatever you want. We could also use your opinions, advice, suggestions, or even, your complements!

### **H. SUGGESTIONS FOR YOUR SUCCESS**

1. Use us to your advantage. We're always here to help you and we insist on it. Come see us if you need help – but make sure you make an appointment so we can give you all of our attention.
2. Do whatever we say and never question our authority. Joke! (But it never hurts...)

\*\*Assignments and handouts are always available at [www.mrpelz.com](http://www.mrpelz.com).\*\*