



September 2016

Dear MYP Parents and Students,

It is my privilege to welcome you and your student to English II at Pittsburgh Obama Academy of International Studies. This class fulfills the tenth grade Language and Literature requirement for the International Baccalaureate Middle Years Programme (IBMYP). Included in this document is important information regarding the course and its content as well as expectations and policies to ensure that learning is achieved at the highest level.

### **Course Description:**

This course will cultivate reading and writing skills as students investigate self-identity against the backdrop of a changing society and world. The primary objective of the IBMYP in Language and Literature is the development of critical thinking skills reflected in both written and oral communication. We will meet this objective throughout the course by writing and analyzing various genres. Some course materials we will explore but will not be limited to include:

- *In the Time of the Butterflies* by Julia Alvarez (summer reading)
- *Copper Sun* by Sharon Draper
- *A Lesson Before Dying* by Ernest J. Gaines
- *In Fact: The Best of Creative Nonfiction* edited by Lee Gutkind
- *Night* by Elie Wiesel
- *Catcher in the Rye* by J.D. Salinger
- *Things Fall Apart* by Chinua Achebe
- *Death of a Salesman* by Arthur Miller
- *The Secret Life of Bees* by Sue Monk Kidd
- *Julius Caesar* by William Shakespeare

### **Course Materials (The daily grade is contingent on students bringing these items):**

- ❖ two writing utensils
- ❖ a single subject spiral notebook (to remain in class)
- ❖ a 1 inch three ring binder
- ❖ the unit novel(s) as we'll be reading at home and in class

### **Homework and Late Work:**

Research shows that reading and writing best improve through independent practice, so daily homework is the expectation. Late homework is accepted for ½ credit. Class work is due on the day it is assigned or it receives ½ credit. The end of unit culminating project loses one letter grade if it is one day late and an additional letter grade if turned in within five school days. After five days, late culminating projects receive ½ credit.



### **Make-Up Work:**

If an assignment is missed due to an absence from school, the student gets a one day extension for every day he or she misses. Students missing class due to school activities are expected to get all assignments for that day before leaving for the activity and to turn them in when they are due. No matter the reason for the absence, **it is the responsibility of the student to get the work that was missed and turn it in the next day.** As we prepare for IB college-level courses, students will own their progress and will not expect teachers to remind them of missing assignments. Please make an appointment with me for the morning or after school, otherwise the missed assessment results in a zero.

### **Extra Credit:**

There will be no opportunities for extra credit. Students should strive to complete all the work and achieve the highest grade possible during the grading period. This is a school-wide, non-negotiable policy that prepares us for the real world of post-secondary school where extra credit is not an option.

### **Grading Criteria:**

- Homework -10%
- Assessments - 25%
- Writing - 20%
- Classwork - 25%
- Participation - 20%

The culminating projects will be graded using the MYP Language and Literature Criterion (Analyzing, Organizing, Producing Text and Using Language). For every assignment, the Pittsburgh Public grading scale will be followed: **90-100% = A 80-89% = B 70-79% = C 60-69% = D 59% & below =E**

### **Behavioral Expectations:**

In this class, there is a culture of high expectations that is shared by the teacher and students. You should have high expectations of me, and I certainly do for you. We will have incredible discussions and powerful learning moments, but these are only possible when we are respectful of each other. Respect manifests itself in a few key ways: 1) **Be present.** You cannot learn if you are not in class. If you miss class for valid reasons, do everything within your power to see me before you miss the class. If you are out due to illness or other health concerns, you are welcome to e-mail me for assignments that you missed. 2) **Be prompt.** You must be in your seat as the bell rings. You will be tardy after that, and 4 tardies result in Saturday detention. 3) **Be prepared.** You will come to class with your materials, homework, class book, and an open-mind. 4) **Be polite.** In this class, that means we take care of our work space, so there's no food, drink (beside water), or gum permitted. Most importantly, being polite means encouraging all ideas even those different from your own. Any cruel comments or inappropriate language will be dealt with swiftly.



## Barack Obama Academy of International Studies

515 N. Highland Avenue | Pittsburgh, PA 15206  
Phone: 412-529-5980 | Fax: 412-622-5983

E.E. Cummings said, “It takes courage to grow up and become who you really are.” Taking ownership of your success is an integral part of that maturation process, so I am trusting you to voice any questions or concerns. **You can reach me by email at [zsmith1@pghboe.net](mailto:zsmith1@pghboe.net) or by phone at (412) 529-5297.** The teaching profession exists to support and equip students. I look forward to working together (student, parent, teacher) as we make this year a valuable learning experience for us all.

Sincerely,

Mr. Zach Smith, M. Ed.  
English Teacher  
Barack Obama Academy of International Studies

Approved: Ms. Aisha Robinson, Director

Please sign to indicate that you have read this letter.

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

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

