

SYLLABUS FOR CAMBRIDGE GENERAL PAPER

THE B.R.A.G. BATTALION

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THE "BRAG" APPROACH

Our approach to this course is to amalgamate the skills needed to succeed on the Cambridge General Paper exam, the FCAT in reading and writing, the SAT and ACT, and to thrive at the university level and beyond. Since the aforementioned exams are crucial to graduation and college-readiness, we provide opportunities for growth in all of them concomitantly. Moreover, the lessons we create, and the knowledge and skills you glean from them, will be applicable to and will transcend these exams to the themes and activities that will emerge in your college coursework, as well as the challenges life presents. Therefore, our focus is on the following objectives:

- ✪ **RELEVANT & RIGOROUS READINGS** – Students will read works from various genres, time periods, and authors that are relevant to the world, other readings, and their own experiences and observations. Our readings will require a critical approach and will include non-fiction, fiction, news articles, short stories, poetry, novels, dramas, speeches, essays, song lyrics, film, and even non-print text.
- ✪ **WIDE-RANGING WRITING** – Students will write several types of papers: expository, descriptive, persuasive, comparison/contrast, narrative, creative and, most importantly, argumentative and discursive. Not all writing assignments will be academic in nature; some writing activities will require students to share their fears, successes, and beliefs.
- ✪ **INVESTIGATIVE INQUIRY** – Students will be involved in their learning by asking and presenting questions, engaging in discourse, and seeking answers and resolutions to their queries. Through inquiry, research, and collaboration, students will construct new knowledge. In searching for knowledge, students will learn to seek resources and data on current events and past incidents that shape our history and world, their thoughts and ideas. This inquiry-based learning will encourage students to think outside the box and give them the confidence to attack complex ideas and issues that arise in the curriculum, college, community, and our global society.
- ✪ **ENGAGING ELOCUTION** – Students will learn to use rhetoric effectively (logos, ethos, and pathos) in delivering persuasive, informative, formal and informal speeches/presentations. They will also be trained to recognize when a speaker uses rhetoric and how they and audiences are being manipulated by it.
- ✪ **GAINFUL GRAMMAR** – Students will study and develop a mastery of grammar, punctuation, and spelling (GPS). Your writing gets lost when your GPS is not calibrated! A fine-tuned GPS will help you succeed in a myriad of areas, including your writing, your AICE General Paper exam, the FCAT Writes, the SAT, ACT and PERT, as well as future employment applications.
- ✪ **VALUABLE VOCABULARY** – Students will increase their "word power" by learning Greek and Latin roots/prefixes, as well as other descriptive words. An extensive vocabulary will aid students' writing and speeches by making them come "alive" and will open doors down the road. Our words will be extracted from both SAT prep books as well as our various readings.

CAMBRIDGE PRINCIPLES

Here at Hialeah Gardens High School, we offer Cambridge International courses. Cambridge qualifications develop successful students. They not only build understanding and knowledge required for progression, but also learning and thinking skills that help students become independent learners and equip them for life. This course - Cambridge General Paper (AICE GP) - is accepted by universities and employers as proof of understanding and ability to communicate in English. The course is multi-disciplinary, with subject matter drawn from across the curriculum. In broad terms, this class:

- ✪ promotes the skills of rational thought, persuasion, analysis, interpretation and evaluation;
- ✪ encourages the broad exploration and appraisal of social, cultural, economic, environmental, political, philosophical, scientific and technological issues;
- ✪ promotes maturity of thought and clarity of expression;
- ✪ promotes understanding and appreciation of individual, societal and cultural diversity;
- ✪ encourages independent, critical reading.

Although an awareness of the wider implications of particular issues will improve the quality of students' learning, AICE GP is not a test of general knowledge. It evaluates students' abilities to communicate through written expression, the organization of their argument, the relevant details they use to support their argument, their level of GPS, their freshness of expression, and their use of vibrant and vivid vocabulary, to name a few.

Cambridge AICE involves the selection of subjects from three curriculum groups – Mathematics and Science; Languages; Arts and Humanities. AICE GP falls under Arts and Humanities. There are AICE tests offered during the year, and when students earn a passing score, they can earn AICE credits. AICE credits can be used in college and are applied to the Cambridge Diploma (in which they need a total of six, but they must be from different curriculum groups). This diploma entitles students to more opportunities for Bright Futures, scholarships, and more enriching experiences in high school, in college, and in the workforce.

Being in this class, YOU ARE REQUIRED to take the AICE GP exam in June! If not, you will have a financial obligation of \$120. There are no make-ups for this exam, so once the dates are solidified, plan on being there!

SUMMER WORK

Summer work is not only a requirement for Cambridge students, it is a requirement for EVERY SINGLE Gladiator. Therefore, our sophomores are responsible for reading two books from the summer reading list, and you must complete the two literary assignments. The due date is 8/29/13 and 8/30/13 (depending on the day you have our class). Furthermore, if you intend on taking Cambridge your junior year, rest assured, there will be summer reading and weekly assignments. Remember, by being in Cambridge, you receive three FREE college credits if you pass the exam (that the school pays for...unless you don't show up for the exam), you receive TWO bonus points for your GPA, and you have the potential to receive an AICE diploma which also affords you more scholarship opportunities. "With great power, comes great responsibility"...and, oftentimes, more labor! You need to understand this, and you need to explain this to your parents, as opposed to whining about it.

THE IMPORTANCE OF PSAT, FCAT WRITING, AND FCAT READING

In addition to the AICE GP exam in June, our class will take the PSAT in October, the FCAT Writes in March, and the FCAT Reading in April. However, before all of these dates, we have a baseline exam, as well as fall, winter and spring interim assessments. We will use data from these various measures to drive instruction, which is why it is IMPERATIVE that you take these tests seriously. For one, you will receive a grade for each assessment, even if you think it doesn't count. And, besides, we don't know where to go if we don't know where we've been, and we can't fix what's broken if we don't know what's wrong.

The PSAT will gauge your readiness for the SAT, as well as your readiness for advanced classes your junior year. Though it is not required for graduation, it is pertinent that you achieve high marks. Since your scores are linked to your course selection for the 2014-2015 school year, you should do your best!

The FCAT Writes has morphed since you last took it. It's assessed much more stringently now, especially in the area of GPS. Therefore, our focus on conventions will be robust! In addition, it is recommended that you have access to a computer at home (or at least at lunch time or after school in the media center), as our students will use Write Score, an online essay-grading program. This is a resource that assesses your paper real-time and generates a score using the FCAT Writes rubric. It's fairly accurate, and it allows for more practice and immediate feedback! There may even be instances when we use this resource for AICE GP writing.

The FCAT Reading for sophomores is a computer-based reading test, and it is also a requirement for graduation. Our students will use the Reading Plus and FCAT Explorer online programs to build their skills and endurance in reading. These resources not only help with fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension, they also help you get accustomed to reading on a computer screen. You will be required to complete two Reading Plus sessions per week, and you will receive one grade for the number of sessions you complete and the other will be for your comprehension.

EXTRA READING, FIELD TRIPS, and CURRENT EVENTS

Most of our reading is done from novels, articles, and other prose and poetry passages. We rarely give "packets," as we believe the best way to improve your comprehension skills is to read in real-world situations. Therefore, we recommend you do some reading on your own time, whether it's reading articles from your favorite magazine, the latest best seller, or the newspaper. We strongly recommend you get an "app" for a newsfeed from Huffington Post, USA Today, or the like. If you see a news story in the ticker that interests you, please read it. Your awareness of current events is key for GP.

There will be times when we assign a novel that is not in our school's book inventory, and you will have to retain your own copy. Typically, these novels are \$5-\$12. You can buy your own copy, bring in the money and we'll order it for you, or you can always borrow one from a friend or a library; it is up to you. We will also have fieldtrips during the course of the year, which might also have a slight cost. We do our best to write grants, request funds from administration, and keep costs down. However, if there is a fieldtrip, and you do not have the funds to pay for it, please let us know! We have some funds set aside for students who are struggling.

MAKING THE GRADE

All grading is done on a point scale. Within a nine-week period, you will have 30-45 grades that make their way into the gradebook. Some exercises are worth more than others. For example, tests and projects range from 30-100 points, while a homework assignment's point value will range from 5-30. However, regardless of an assignment's point value, the value of the assignment does not change. Every assignment is vital for you in our classroom (or we wouldn't assign it).

You will receive credit for everything you do in our class, and there will also be opportunities to earn a few extra points here and there. Remember that you receive extra credit if you do NOT use your emergency pass for the quarter and/or if you have perfect attendance! As always, 100-90% is an A; 89-80% is a B; 79-70% earns you a C; 69-60% is a D; and 59-0% is, sadly, an F. Please keep in mind - *if you end up with a grade that is at the high end of the scale, do not even think of asking us to up your grade.* With all the assignments, extra credit opportunities, and the support we provide, if you don't earn a certain grade, you won't get it. We are not helping you at all if we bump-up your grade when you didn't truly earn it. Sometimes, the greatest lesson you will learn comes from making a B or C!

MATERIALS and RESOURCES NEEDED FOR CLASS, and CLASS FEES

For our English class, you will only need ONE two-inch binder and ONE composition notebook for both our class vocab and the Gladiator Word of the Day. For your binder, you will need five dividers titled: Literary Lessons, Writing Activities, GPS Lessons, Valuable Vocab, and Data. The first page of your binder will be ASSIGNMENT TRACKING SHEET, second will be THIS SYLLABUS, and third will be the CLASS RULES. We will do UNANNOUNCED periodic binder checks! Your binder should be free of clutter, and all pages should be bound! In addition to this BIG binder, EVERY student in an English class will need a vocabulary journal (a composition book is perfect). There will be two sections: "Class Vocab" and "Words of the Day". You should also have plenty of paper, a few pens (preferably blue or black) and pencils, a set of highlighters, a small stapler, and white-out. These items should be brought to class DAILY...and it wouldn't hurt to have a supply of index cards and post-it notes at home.

Our class website is the best way to stay informed of our goings-on. It is your RESPONSIBILITY to check it every day (or at least every other day...and that includes weekends)! Be advised that our site is an extension of our classroom. The rules that apply in class also apply online. Furthermore, our class site is for all of our AICE English classes, but we have tabs for each level - English Lit, English Language, and General Paper. The tab for GP is "The BRAG Battalion." Anything that pertains to GP alone will be found there. Anything that is for the good of ALL our AICE English courses will be on the homepage. You can follow us on Twitter as well (bragarmyofone), so when we update our class site, you will get a tweet from us. Don't be offended that we don't follow you back; this is for school purposes only. For the various programs we will use this year, it is your RESPONSIBILITY to know your IDs and PWs! If you request your sign-in information for any of our online programs, we will deduct 25% from that assignment.

There will be a \$10 fee for students registered in AICE classes. Even if you have six AICE classes this year, it's still only \$10. ☺