

## KIDS ON FILM



“I never had any friends later on like the ones I had when I was 12. Jesus, does anyone?”  
—*Stand by Me*

“Adolescence is the only period in which we learn anything.”  
—Marcel Proust

### Contact Information

Semester/Year: Fall 2019  
Time/Location: W, 8:00-9:40 in TLC 1200  
Professor: Dr. Insenga (“*In-sing-ah*”)  
Office Location: TLC 2248  
Office Hours: M, 10-10:50 and 12:30-1:00; W, 12:30-2:30, and by scheduled appointment  
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### Course description

In a letter to Eleven during season three of Netflix’s young adult series *Stranger Things*, Hopper writes, “Make mistakes, learn from them, and when life hurts you—because it will—remember the hurt. The hurt is good. It means you’re out of that cave.” Hopper writes specifically to El, but he could be writing about adolescence, here, a time when a kid’s very body revolts against her, when hormones and school, parents and friends, become—even for the “well-adjusted” teen—harder to handle, even alien. Some kids find themselves “hiding out” in their “caves” during this time or try endlessly to blend in, to become invisible. Many teens forge their deepest friendships during their adolescence, and some enjoy popularity and use it, sadly, as a cudgel to hurt the most vulnerable among their peers. But no matter the adolescent, no matter their “status”

within their peer groups or at home, there is great struggle and even hurting. Why? Because growing up hurts. Coming of age requires making mistakes. Adolescence, then, is an intense time of learning through trial and error, of learning to embody adulthood.

Our class will grapple with the ideas Hopper shares with *Eleven* by examining the complex representation of adolescence on film. We will discuss the stories each film offers, analyze how directors deploy those stories via cinematic techniques, and even ponder how the films themselves, in their own time and ours, have had deep cultural impact on young viewers. In sum, we begin with the premise that, as cultural critic Henry Giroux states, films “[do] not simply reflect culture but actually [construct] it.”

### Course Learning Outcomes

- Identify, define, and apply knowledge gained from readings related to the period of life called “adolescence.”
- Build a “film interpretation toolbox” via reading, discussion, and application of cinematic techniques, literary meaning(s), and dramatic detail.
- Identify, compare, and contrast cinematic features and literary conventions common in a group of representative films and clips in which adolescents and the period known as adolescence are represented for viewer consumption
- Identify major production companies and common practices in the film industry via reading and apply learned ideas in the reading to discussion and in written work
- Deploy close reading strategies which lead to successful analysis and reflection about course content in sustained discussion and in *academic writing*.
- Develop and demonstrate focused analytical, reflective, and *creative response* in deep study of characters and groups made up of adolescents and represented on film
- Hone verbal presentation or critical writing skills in major assignments.

### Required Course Films (in the order we will study them)

- Pilot episode of *My So-Called Life*, directed by Scott Winant
- *Higher Learning*, directed by John Singleton
- *Stand by Me*, directed by Rob Reiner
- *River’s Edge*, directed by Tim Hunter
- *Moonlight*, directed by Barry Jenkins
- *Boys Don’t Cry*, directed by Kimberly Peirce
- *Pretty in Pink*, directed by John Hughes
- *The Virgin Suicides*, directed by Sofia Coppola
- *Winter’s Bone*, directed by Debra Granik
- *La Misma Luna—Under the Same Moon*, directed by Patricia Riggen
- *Grave of the Fireflies*, directed by Isao Takahata
- *Chronicle*, directed by Josh Trank
- Various supplemental readings, each **provided on Course Den** (nothing to buy)

\* Note: while I **strongly** recommend purchasing a copy of each of these required films (digital or conventional), I will put a copy of each of these films on reserve in the library. There, you may use your student ID to check out and view each using either a personal CD player or one you borrow from the Circulation Desk. **Since you will need easy access to reviewing scenes, purchasing a copy, not renting it for a single viewing, is your best bet.** You can get these required films cheaply via Amazon—some for less than five dollars!

You can purchase the pilot episode of *My So-Called Life* for .99 on Amazon. And *River's Edge* and *Winter's Bone* are on Netflix, while *The Virgin Suicides* is on Prime Video.

### Required Supplies

- Notetaking supplies for in-class quizzes and working on in-class independent and collaborative activities
- An annotation notebook or section in a larger binder you may use
- Looseleaf paper for quizzes (so I can easily store them)
- A 9x12, spiralbound, blank page, Sketchbook. [Here](#) is a good one. [Here](#) is another one. [Here](#) is one more. Note: I can accept no substitutions for this required supply; its size and number of pages ensures equity among us. *Order one as soon as you can.*

### Major Course Assignments, Percentage Value, and Connection to Learning Outcomes

- Reading/Viewing Quizzes, 30%
- Sketchbook Assignment—24 entries in all, 12 written and 12 creative, 30%
- Final Exam: Critical Review Vlog *or* Podcast on a class film or approved outside film (30%)
- Class and Community, 10%

### Major Assignment Guidelines and Criteria for Evaluation

- *Reading/Viewing Quizzes (30% of your grade)*



At the beginning of virtually all class periods, you will take a reading/viewing quiz. Quizzes ask you to recall and identify basic plot or content detail (names, events, objects, titles, etc.) of the short reading or viewing assigned for that class period. All quizzes are based on a 100-point scale and comprise 5 questions; sometimes, I include a bonus for the

careful readers viewers out there. Quizzes begin on August 26<sup>th</sup> this semester, which provides you with time to purchase films.

- *Sketchbook Assignment (30% of your grade)*

In our class, you will use an unlined 9x12 Sketchbook to create a multimodal reading/viewing log that reflects your advanced thinking about our course materials. In this

assignment, your close thinking about our class texts and the representation of adolescents on film will act as the focus of the entries in your Sketchbook. I ask that you follow the 50/50 rule for this assignment; your Sketchbook will contain 50% written responses related to film texts and 50% creative responses related to our film texts. In all, you will create 12 full written pages and 12 full-page creative entries. Create content representative of all our films, **beginning** with *Stand by Me*.

Think of the written entries as opportunities to focus upon a character's motivation or the logic of the central conflict, a single theme, a dominant or recurrent character conflict, or even a narrative/artistic strategy used in a film. You could examine a relationship and its importance to the growth of a young person (or their destruction). You could focus on an industrial aspect of the film—costuming, set design, camera work, lighting, etc. Music is also important as is acting style and ability, so you could well write an entry on one of these aspects. You could focus on diversity or lack thereof in a film, discussing why and how audience members may be affected. While this long list of suggestions is not exhaustive, it does, I hope, provide you with potential emphases for these one-page entries.

As I grade the written entries, I evaluate your ability to *focus, detail, support, and interpret*. The best written responses will possess a clearly stated central idea (a mini-thesis). The writer of a successful entry will then reference *specific* details and/or quotations from the text(s) in question along with their own commentary about that evidence. You may write directly in the sketchbook or can type out your entry and paste it in the book. In the past, successful writers have typed, pasted in their entries, and even drawn/decorated around the entries. Remember, each entry must take up the whole page.

The other 50% of the Sketchbook's entries should be artistic in nature and must reflect serious effort to craft interesting, detailed, artful entries. You could paste in images you find that are connected to the text(s) or films; write down important quotations in an artistic way; paste in articles connected to our films or course theme and decorate them in some way; paste in small objects or tactile materials that connect to the text(s); include your own original artwork; or collage several images that reflect your ruminations about what a character or group of them might or do look like. You could include original paintings; graffiti art; tagging; or collages connected to setting or even audience response to the film at hand. Creative entries must fill the page on which you are working and, again, should demonstrate serious efforts to represent your thinking on paper in a colorful, artful, and careful way. In sum, whether in the 12 written or 12 artistic entries, Sketchbook content must reflect an *active mind* at work, a mind stretching to reflect our course's materials.

I base my evaluation of creative entries on whether the work is careful, colorful, detailed, and complete. I also think about how an entry connects to the text(s) in a recognizable fashion. I look for well-conceived and neat work that takes up the whole page. Sloppiness is not rewarded, so take care to present your best work in this major assignment.

Whether evaluating a written or creative entry, I always ask myself “How much time was spent thinking about this entry, planning it, and then either writing/typing or



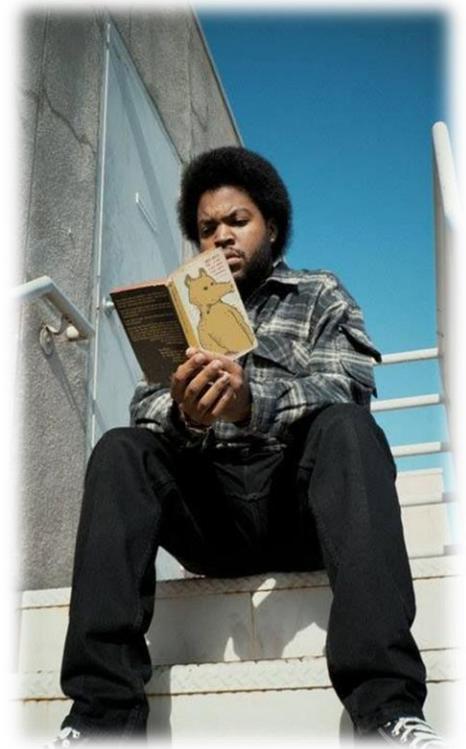
creating it via use of drawing, collaging, painting, stamping, pasting in objects and/or materials? In sum, both written and creative responses should be polished work that reflects *serious* consideration of the viewing and reading. I will collect the Sketchbook 3 times during the semester, assigning a grade each time. Thus, 4 entries—2 written and 2 creative—are due on each of the 3 dates on the

detailed course schedule below. At end of semester, I will average the 3 installment grades together. This average will make up 30% of your grade.

Soon, I will bring examples—the good, bad, and ugly—to class for you to see as you begin this multimodal project. For now, purchase your 9x12, blank-page Sketchbook. Since you must create 24 entries in all, purchase a Sketchbook with at least 30 pages in it.

→ *Critical Review Vlog or Podcast*

Part of learning to be an analyst of all sorts of texts is moving beyond simple reaction and observation into argument and interpretation. Your final project will require you to work alone *or* with two others to create a ten to twelve-minute vlog or fifteen-minute podcast in which you argue how and why one of our class films works for a particular audience. Conversely, you may find that one of the films we have watched is in some way problematic before arguing how/why, or you/your group could choose to focus on a single concept or production aspect. We will practice for this assignment by studying what a critical review is, reading excellent and poorly done critical reviews, and even examining styles of critics who regularly film their critical reviews. I will also provide directions for crafting audio or video.



→ *Class and Community*

Your participation in class—and out—is included in this portion of your grade. Arriving prepared with readings and annotations, viewing each film in a steadfast manner, collaborating with enthusiasm, helping others when needed, discussing and responding in

class, participating in class activities, bringing annotations to class, conferencing with me, responding to e-mails, punctuality, and every effort to create academic excellence are the qualities I look for, here. Our discourse community—this class—is only as good as you and I make it *together*.

### Grading Rubrics and Methods of Evaluation

Quizzes are plot-based and based on a 100-point scale.

As stated above in the assignment for the Sketchbook, grades are based on your ability to *focus* in the written responses. The best written responses will possess a clearly stated **central idea** (a mini-thesis) that then references **specific details** of the text(s) in along with your **commentary**, which explains how/why the details help to prove your point(s). In the creative responses, evaluation is based on whether the artwork/articles/objects connect to the text(s) in a recognizable fashion. When evaluating the creative entries, I also look for those put together with much care—colorful, full-page creative entries that are neatly done or even those that make use of tactile objects and different mediums (painting, sketches, collaging). In sum, both written and creative responses must reflect serious consideration of the viewing/reading.

Class and Community grades are based on my observations of those activities listed in the detailed description above. Typically, I take a bit of time after each class to reflect on participation and collaboration.

You will have a rubric for the Critical Review Vlog or Podcast.

### Detailed Course Schedule through October 21, 2019

*Hint: read this chart from left to right as you prepare for each class →*

Class Period	What Major Assignment is Due? <small>* major assignments appear in red, and Weekly assignments in black</small>	What Should I Complete Before I Come to Class Today?	What Are We Doing in Class Today?
August 14	You!		Course Introduction  The “Culture of the Kid”
August 19	Reading, viewing, and annotations	<i>Read</i> “The ‘Grammar’ of Television and Film”  <i>Read</i> “Successful Annotation: The First Step”  Read “Film Therapy: The Benefits of Watching Movies”	More “Culture of the Kid”  Discuss how to “read” a film and practice annotation
August 21	Viewing and annotations of <i>My So-Called Life</i>	<i>View</i> and annotate the pilot episode of <i>My So-Called Life</i> (purchase on Amazon). Use one of the strategies of annotation you have read about in class reading so far	Discuss annotation and our reading of <i>My So-Called Life</i>  The “Adolescent Lens”

		<i>Bring</i> annotations of <i>My So-Called</i> life to class to class (I will collect these)	
August 26	Viewing, annotations, and reading	<i>View and annotate Higher Learning</i>  <i>View the 1995 interview of John Singleton on Charlie Rose</i>  Quizzes begin today!	Quiz 1  Discuss <i>Higher Learning</i> and the “Adolescent Lens”
August 28	Viewing, reading, and annotations	<i>Review</i> scenes from <i>Higher Learning</i> assigned at the end of last class  <i>Read “Higher Learning: In Praise of John Singleton’s Forgotten Masterwork”</i>	Quiz 2  Discuss <i>Higher Learning</i>
September 2	Labor Day Holiday: no class or regular office hours		
September 4	Viewing, annotations, and reading	<i>View and annotate Stand by Me</i>  <i>Read “Stand by Me at 30: Why this Stephen King Movie is Timeless”</i>  <i>Read “Stand by Me Oral History: Rob Reiner and Cast on River Phoenix and How Coming-of-Age Classic Almost Didn’t Happen”</i>	Quiz 3  Discuss <i>Stand by Me</i>
September 9	Viewing, reading, and annotations	<i>Review</i> scenes from <i>Stand by Me</i> assigned at the end of last class  <i>Read “From the Archives: Stand by Me is a Summer Standout”</i>	Quiz 4  Discuss <i>Stand by Me</i>
September 11	Viewing, annotations, and reading	<i>View and annotate River’s Edge</i>  <i>Read “An Oral History of River’s Edge, 1987’s Most Polarizing Teen Film”</i>  <i>Read “The True Story Behind River’s Edge”</i>	Quiz 5  Discuss <i>River’s Edge</i>
September 16	Viewing and reading	<i>Review</i> scenes from <i>River’s Edge</i> assigned at the end of last class	Quiz 6  Discuss <i>River’s Edge</i>
September 18	Viewing, annotations, and reading	<i>View and annotate Moonlight</i>  Watch “Anatomy of a Scene: <i>Moonlight</i> ”	Quiz 7  Discuss <i>Moonlight</i>

		Read “Director Barry Jenkins on the Music that Made <i>Moonlight</i> ” (pay attention to music, folks!)	
September 23	<b>Sketchbook due (4 entries in all—2 creative and 2 written)</b>	<i>Review</i> scenes from <i>Moonlight</i> assigned at the end of last class	Quiz 8  Turn in Sketchbook, installment 1  Discuss <i>Moonlight</i>
September 25	Viewing and annotations	Read “ <i>Moonlight</i> : Is This the Year’s Best Movie?” (make sure to watch the short, embedded videos, too!)  Read “Barry Jenkins Reads from the <i>Moonlight</i> Oscar Speech He Couldn’t Deliver”	Quiz 9  Discuss <i>Moonlight</i> , introduction to <i>Boys Don’t Cry</i>
September 30	Viewing, annotating, and reading	View and annotate <i>Boys Don’t Cry</i>	Quiz 10  Discuss <i>Boys Don’t Cry</i>
October 2	Reading and annotations	<i>Review</i> scenes from <i>Boys Don’t Cry</i> assigned at the end of last class  Read “ <i>Boys Don’t Cry</i> Protests: Listen to Trans Activists Criticizing the Milestone Film—Editorial”  Read “Flashback: Brandon Teena is Raped and Murdered (December 23, 1999)”	Quiz 11  Discuss <i>Boys Don’t Cry</i>
October 7	No regular class or office hours—work on your Sketchbook, viewing, and reading assignments today, please		
October 9 (mid-term—last day to drop with a “W”)	Viewing, annotations, and reading	View and annotate <i>Pretty in Pink</i>  View “Heartbreak and Triumph: The Legacy of John Hughes”  Read “ <i>Pretty in Pink</i> —Review from 1986”  Read “ <i>Pretty in Pink</i> Director on that Original (and Hated) Ending”	Quiz 12  Discuss <i>Pretty in Pink</i>
October 14	Viewing and reading	<i>Review</i> scenes from <i>Pretty in Pink</i> assigned at the end of last class	Quiz 13  Discuss <i>Pretty in Pink</i>

		<i>Read “Neon Nostalgia: The <i>Pretty in Pink</i> Soundtrack 30 Years Later”</i>	
October 16	Viewing, annotations, and reading	<i>View and annotate <i>The Virgin Suicides</i></i>  <i>Read “<i>The Virgin Suicides</i> Still Holds the Mysteries of Adolescence”</i>	Quiz 14  Discuss <i>The Virgin Suicides</i>
October 21	Viewing and annotations	<i>Review scenes from <i>The Virgin Suicides</i> assigned at the end of last class</i>	Quiz 15  Discuss <i>The Virgin Suicides</i>

### Student Support Resources:

- [Accessibility Services](#) or call 678-839-6428
- [Center for Academic Success](#) or call 678-839-6280
- [Center for Disability Services](#)
- [Course Den D2L Home Page](#)
- [Counseling](#)
- [Ingram Library Services](#)
- [Student Services](#)
- [University Bookstore](#)
- [UWG Cares](#)
- [UWG Statements of Accessibility](#)

### Campuswide Course Policies



Please read through the [Common Language for Course Syllabi](#) for official information on UWG’s Academic Integrity Policy. You will also find information related to UWG Email, Credit Hour, and Honor Code policies as well as information on Academic Tutoring, Student Services, Technical Requirements, Privacy Policy, and Accessibility Statements.

### Attendance Policy

Our class meets *twice* per week. During each class period you can expect to discuss readings and viewing, both primary or secondary, and work together to arrive at increasingly complex conclusions because of our ongoing collaborative analysis. Because of the discussion-centered environment I want to have with you, *attendance is mandatory*.

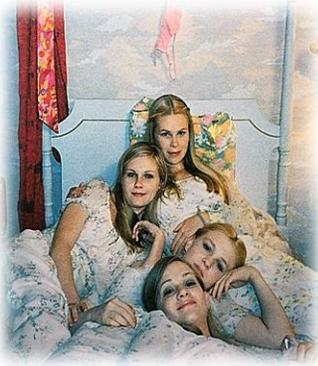
Students may miss *up to 4* class periods. Upon their fourth absence, students will not be able to pass our course because of the large amount of unobservable discussion and in-class practice, both of which signal to me your growing ability to complete major assignments successfully.

I do not distinguish between excused and unexcused absences, so please choose the days

you must miss wisely.

Avoid tardiness as well, since I start class promptly and do not want you to miss a single moment of instruction or disrupt ongoing learning of others here in HUM 206.

### **Late Work/Make-Up Work**



Missed quizzes cannot be made up under any circumstance. In-class group work cannot be made up, either, since it occurs during class time and cannot be duplicated.

Should you feel you have an extenuating circumstance which will cause you to miss a deadline for the Sketchbook, do see me in office. That way, we can discuss the challenges you are facing. Often, I have found, with swift and honest communication problems can be solved to your advantage.

### **Americans with Disabilities Act Statement**

If you are a student who is disabled as defined under the Americans with Disabilities Act and/or require assistance or support services, please seek assistance through the [Center for Disability](#). UWG also provides [Accessibility Statements for Technology](#) that you may be required to use for this course. For more information on the Americans with Disabilities Act, please see the [Common Language for Syllabus](#) document.

### **Technology Policy**

While our course is 100% face-to-face, I will utilize Course Den to post this document, assignment sheets, grades, and links to assigned readings. I also make use of the Announcements section on the front page of our course. Check there often. I will show you on this first day how to navigate our course's documents.

Please use my UWG e-mail, listed at the top of this document, to contact me. Do not use the Course Den e-mail function.

You may use your laptop or tablet in class, but only to access class material. If you use these devices to shop, e-mail, work on another class's assignments, text, Insta, etc., you will forfeit permission to use them in our class.

Phones: we love them. They are natural extensions of our bodies. However, unless I ask you to look something up or film a short clip, please silence your phone and keep it face down on your desk. Remove Air Pods or earbuds as well.

It is inappropriate to listen to music, text, accept calls, or e-mail me or anyone else while in any classroom, unless asked to do so. If I see phone use, I will ask you to put it away—once. Any further use that I observe will affect your Class and Community grade negatively and could cause you to be dismissed, especially if you flagrantly use your phone. Phone use has become more of a disruption than I am willing to handle with much flexibility, especially over the past few years.



Adult learners avoid disruption in favor of instruction. We all seek to learn, and we all seek to be treated as responsible adults. Plus, “unplugging” as you learn increases your chance of doing even better in the course.

### Words on Workload



Our class is primarily a viewing, reading, and response course. It does require you to view films outside of class, to be detail-oriented as you annotate, and to come to class ready to discuss ideas about each film you view. Thus, much work for this class will occur as you prepare outside of class, and you must commit to that in order to succeed. In sum, just because you are not in class does not mean that the work ends or that you should not be actively

engaged in assignments, viewing, annotating, and thinking.

### Plagiarism

You have read about the Honor Code above at the link for campus-wide policies. Here is a bit more about how I apply that code to our course: since you have much time for practice—in and outside of class—and I offer much instruction on crafting successful assignments, I have a *zero-tolerance* policy on cheating. Should you cheat, I will assign you an “F” in our course.

If you get in a place where you feel you have no choice but to cheat, stop. Contact me instead. I can help. Do not sacrifice your personal integrity. You will live with your actions long after you leave school. Instead, reach out to me. We will talk it through.

### Communication Policies

In class, we will discuss required texts, focusing often on your interpretations within the framework of your growing knowledge of adolescent representation on film and film study. Such discussion can be instructive, enjoyable, and even tense. I ask that you come at the discussions with an open mind but also engage consistently, honestly, and even passionately. I regularly assess

your progress and deepening understanding during these discussions, so your voice is imperative. Do recall that we exist in an academic environment where respect for others’ ideas— even the ones we struggle to understand—is a must. So, engage but do so academically.

You may always email me at my university email address ([ainsenga@westga.edu](mailto:ainsenga@westga.edu)) to ask questions or request appointments using your university e-mail. Typically, I reply within 12 hours; however, as the semester heats up, I reserve the right to take as long as 36 hours to answer. I will not answer email over the weekends (from Friday at 11:59 p.m. until Monday at 9:00 a.m.). I list my office hours at the top of this document, and I welcome you there. You may come by to introduce yourself, to talk about classwork at any stage, to ask questions, or even just to chat. You might even want to continue a discussion begun in class. Whatever the case, I encourage you to make use of office hours or, if needed, appointments. Allow me to use my expertise in reading, viewing, and writing to help you navigate this academic terrain.

I do want to say a word about confidential discussion. The Board of Regents, the governing body for the University System of Georgia, recently passed new rules regarding sexual misconduct and its reporting on our campus. As of July 1, 2016, all faculty and staff must promptly and fully report complaints of or information regarding sexual misconduct to the Title IX Coordinator on campus. Here is the UWG [Title IX website](#).



For you, this means that I cannot guarantee confidentiality if you come to me and tell me about an instance of sexual misconduct. I must report. However, the following locations and individuals can offer confidential support, and I strongly encourage you to talk to them. I can help you contact these places, too, and I can accompany you, if you would like. You are still welcomed to talk to me about such issues; but know that, since I am not a

trained professional counselor and I am most concerned with your health, I must report and will always encourage you to obtain help to ensure your safety and well-being. Below are various confidential places on campus to go for help. Above all, whether you share with me or self-report, know this: You deserve safety. You deserve wellness. You deserve a positive, professional outlet for any sexual misconduct you experience.

<p><u>UNIVERSITY POLICE</u> 678-839-6000 (9-6000 on campus)</p>	<p><u>COUNSELING CENTER</u> Location: 123 Row Hall Office Hours: Monday-Friday, 8-5 Tel: (678) 839-6428 Call UWG Police after hours Email: <a href="mailto:counseling@westga.edu">counseling@westga.edu</a></p>
<p><u>HEALTH SERVICES</u> 678-839-6452</p>	<p><u>PATIENT /VICTIM ADVOCATES</u> 678-839-0641; 678-839-5338; or, after hours, 678-839-6000</p>

### Administrivia

- The best way to contact me outside of office hours is by sending an email to my university email account via your university email account. Of course, you may call my office or come by during office hours. Finally, you can schedule an appointment with me outside of office hours by talking with me in class or via email. While I am *incredibly interested* in discussing your work with you, please note: email is not an appropriate—or legal—venue to discuss grades or to hold extended conversation related to classwork, and I do not check email after around 9 p.m. or on weekends.
- Please turn all phone notifications off or to vibrate when entering our classroom. Ringtones and notifications distract your fellow classmates and me. They prevent us from doing the work and do not allow you to get all the instruction for which you paid. If you have an emergency that may require electronic communication, put your phone on vibrate and exit the classroom if you receive a notification. Avoid texting or any phone use during class, unless we are using technology for a meaningful purpose.
- You may make use of small laptops or tablets while in class; however, if they become noticeably distracting to you, peers, or me, you will forfeit the right to use them.
- I reserve the right to amend this document with future handouts.
- You must have your materials with you in order to participate fully. This means printing out or having electronic means to examine texts, bringing annotations, and/or having access to assignment materials. This means taking notes and contributing. You will, of course, be free to stay in class when not prepared, but you are essentially not present when you do not have your materials.

