

2012-13 PARENT NOTES FOR MARGARET SHUMAN'S CLASSES

*I would like to build a supportive relationship with you.
With that in mind, here are some insights into the nuts and bolts of my classes.*

Communication

- ❖ Email is often the best way to reach me. I usually check email a few times a day and try to answer promptly—I do want to keep communication open with you, the parent, as well as with the student. Please use my work address: shumanhw@gmail.com. I will be sending homework through this address as well.
- ❖ If your son or daughter is confused or upset over something I have assigned for a class, listen carefully, but please **ask him or her to communicate with me directly and quickly**. At the high school age, any student benefits from practicing the important life skill of approaching a teacher/supervisor in writing or in person to respectfully express a concern or a need for clarification. I love our students and want to facilitate a good relationship with each of them.
- ❖ My number is 404-508-8318, and you are welcome to call me with your own concerns. I may answer an email faster than a phone call. I do not give out my cell number since it is for emergency or family use only. In-person conferences and class observations are always good options, so please feel comfortable discussing ways we can connect.
- ❖ I do not usually work on Sundays, but if you or your student has what has been called “an ox in the ditch” issue that must be attended to, I might be available.

Homework

- ❖ Parents should not be doing homework for my students. I need an accurate picture of each student's work so that I can know if each is learning the skills we are working on. I grade my own papers and develop a dialogue with individual students as we go through the year—this can get muddled if I am seeing homework that you have edited or strongly influenced outside of class. If you feel your child has **a particular need for some intermediary steps you can provide at home**, please discuss this with me—your intuition as the primary teacher is valid.
- ❖ I will be implementing **a new late-work policy** this year—details will come in writing. Parents will need to be involved after a grace period is over if there is chronic tardiness with a student submitting work. The important lesson for a student to learn is not to wait until the last minute to submit work, in case of a technical or other problem. This applies to homework handed to me in class or by email.
- ❖ All families need access to the Internet—homework assignments that echo what is discussed in class will come to the parents' (and students' if available) email addresses within 24 hours after a class. Some Internet research may be required, such as MLA-style guidelines.

Grading

- ❖ I consistently return graded papers at the next possible class meeting or with online feedback. **Please look at graded papers**. You will know when to expect the return of graded assignments based on the homework sent home. All students generally bring home at least one graded assignment per week.
- ❖ In SPCO in particular, I target certain skills at a time, and do not mark every error on each paper that comes in. I have found comprehensive error marking overwhelming for most students to

process. I instead target kinds of errors students consistently make and plan specific workshop exercises to remedy “real” student errors (anonymously chosen). After we have attacked an error sufficiently as a group, I take off points (3 to 5 for each comma splice, for example) for the rest of the year. Meanwhile, I try to dish out as much positive feedback as needed to keep students motivated, while keeping high expectations for all, based on their abilities and needs.

- ❖ For SPCO/CL, parents are always able to initially see graded work because it should be brought home and then returned to class or corrected online. These assignments (minus brief quizzes) are then filed in a teacher-provided (and stored) folder, which is emptied out at home at the end of each semester. For each folder, I give the student a semester grade on how well he has tracked his work on a chart I provide, and whether he has corrected his mistakes (answering questions correctly, spelling words the right way 10 times, adding detail where needed, etc.)

- ❖ AP and BL students bring home graded assignments regularly.

- ❖ I use a simple grading system, which combines all grades into a big fraction: the number of points received over the number of points possible. No matter the size of the grade (quizzes might be 30 points, essays 50, exams 100, homework checks 10), each is lumped into a big fraction, and an average can be determined at any time. For example, if by October your child has received 220 points out of a possible 250, that average would be $220/250$, or .88. This would be an 88/B on the grade scale in the next bullet. If I begin to use grading software this year, it will follow this same principle.

- ❖ I use the following **scale for grade averages**: A/Excellent/90-100, B/Good/80-89, C/Average/74-79, D/Passing/70-73, F/Failure/0-69, I/Incomplete. I send out paper grade reports at mid-semester and at the end of each semester, and will continue to do so unless I adopt an online system. My grade system is always open for discussion with you or your student.

Textbooks

- ❖ CL textbooks are supplied by parents: Laurence Perrine’s *Literature: Structure, Sound, and Sense* (ISBN 0155511084). This is an older edition and priced around \$10.

- ❖ Pre-class required readings for AP Language are described on the summer reading list, found at my website.

- ❖ BL textbooks can be borrowed from me. However, **they must be covered** and treated carefully, with no markings being made inside. Some families order their own copies so that students can make notes in BL books: *England in Literature* (Medallion Edition-Hamlet), ISBN 0673129225. AP Lang students are encouraged to have their own copies of the BL text.

- ❖ There is no text for student use in SPCO—we use materials made to suit each class’s needs, as well as a variety of College Board documents.

Miscellany

- ❖ Supplies for daily class attendance include: notebook paper, a binder to collect handouts, something to write with (sometimes including pencils for SPCO), optional hole punch for handouts.

- ❖ If you haven’t seen the handouts from my personal website course descriptions, please look them over and gather them as needed for your records.

- ❖ MAS and LAC students can come to the alternate class time/location during the week if there is a schedule conflict. **Classes within the same week at both locations will have the same lesson plan** and are therefore interchangeable.
- ❖ If you find that the **name of my CL, BL, or SPCO class needs tweaking for your transcript**, I can adjust the name on semester and final grade reports and the formal course description. You can see examples on the course descriptions online. The AP class must be called “Advance Placement English Language and Composition” as per my class approval by the College Board, though you can add brackets after that title and add [British Literature].
- ❖ AP Lang families who are in accredited groups need to have your “principals” **contact the College Board** and add me as their AP teacher for this year. My syllabus has been submitted and approved, and paperwork must be initiated by your group for you to officially have the AP label on your transcript. If you are not in an accredited group, I can be listed as your home school AP teacher, and we can look into how that is done.
- ❖ Payment for my classes is arranged through Mrs. Caryn Becker—there is a note from her at my website. Please don’t send or give checks to me for tuition—Mrs. Becker will handle that work while I focus on teaching. Please feel free to contact me at any time about needs and fees in general—I’m here to work with you as we all work to use our money the best we can.
- ❖ Parents are always welcome to visit any of my classes, except when speeches in SPCO are scheduled second semester. Check with me first regarding how students might react to visitors on speech days. If you would like to review nonverbal communication or *Hamlet*, Act IV, drop in!
- ❖ Families who have invested in my year-long classes during the year may take a \$10 discount on my verbal SAT workshops at any time. The schedule is at my website. SPCO students do practice some SAT essays, but do not cover the verbal multiple choice parts of the test.
- ❖ Please stay in touch with me throughout the year as needed—I **value our partnership**.

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