Mr. Martin’s Class Guidelines

Westside High School – Spring 2008 – Media Literacy

Dear Parent/Guardian and Student,

Rapidly expanding technologies and changing social and corporate systems demand that the citizens of the world not only understand how to access multiple forms of media messages but that we also understand their make up and origins.

Media literacy is the process of accessing, analyzing, evaluating and creating messages in a wide variety of media modes, genres and forms. It uses an inquiry-based instructional model that encourages people to ask questions about what they watch, see and read. Media literacy education is one means of developing media literacy. It provides tools to help people critically analyze messages to detect propaganda, censorship, and bias in news and public affairs programming (and the reasons for such), and to understand how structural features - such as media ownership, or its funding model-- affect the information presented. Media literacy aims to enable people to be skillful creators and producers of media messages, both to facilitate an understanding as to the strengths and limitations of each medium, as well as to create independent media. Media literacy is an expanded conceptualization of literacy. By transforming the process of media consumption into an active and critical process, people gain greater awareness of the potential for misrepresentation and manipulation (especially through commercials and public relations techniques), and understand the role of mass media and participatory media in constructing views of reality.

It is indeed an honor and a privilege to have your student in my class. With that in mind, I feel that it is important for you to know that I have been teaching for 7 years and have taught across the age range from first grade to middle school and now high school.

My main concern as a teacher has always been to help your child achieve success not only in class, but also in his/her other classes. I will need your help. Most recent educational scientific studies have proven how important parental involvement is in helping students achieve success in school. That is why I communicate so much with parents through e-mail first, and phone calls second. Because I know you want your student to have an excellent semester, I am pleased to tell you about what we are going to be doing in class and suggest some ways you can participate in improving your student’s performance.

In Media Lit, your child will be asked to view a wide variety of television programming and to understand the impact the medium has on the message being delivered.

Your can help your student get the most out of this year by helping me in the following ways:

1. Ask to see your student’s work at various times. Quite often, that task will simply be to listen to him/her talk about what’s going on in class. With projects and presentations, use constructive criticism: praise what he/she does well, explain what needs to be improved, and end with a positive comment. This alone could give a great boost of confidence!

2. Remind your child that school is important. Please stay involved. Discuss school at any time. In some way, please try to show your student that you value education and you value him/her giving the best effort possible.

I believe that learning is much more than listening to a lecture, reading a book, or taking a test. With your help and cooperation, I am going to help your child learn to do quality work and that what he/she learns in school will be useful in his/her life. If you want to know what we are up to please go to www.westsidewolves.org and there will be a link to my class web page that will have my schedule, contact information, lesson plans and syllabus. The direct link to that page is http://whscmarti15.edublogs.org.
This course will focus on:

A. The Five Key Questions
   i. Who created the message?
   ii. What creative techniques are used to attract my attention?
   iii. How might different people understand the message differently than me?
   iv. What values, lifestyles and points of view are represented in, or omitted from, this message?
   v. Why is this message being sent?

B. The Five Core Concepts
   i. All media messages are ‘constructed.’
   ii. Media messages are constructed using a creative language with its own rules.
   iii. Different people experience the same media messages differently.
   iv. Media have embedded values and points of view.
   v. Most media messages are organized to gain profit and/or power.

Grading Policy:
1. Daily Grade Assignments 100 points per assignment
   Tests: 200 points per unit exam
   Quiz: 100 points per quiz
   Projects/Presentations: 300 points (this includes a visual, written, and spoken component)
2. LATE work may result in serious reductions in grades. It is the responsibility of the student to get their work in on time. **I WILL NOT ACCEPT A ZERO. STUDENTS WILL COMPLETE ALL ASSIGNED SPEECHES AND PRESENTATIONS EVEN IF I HAVE TO WATCH THEM IN YOUR LIVING ROOM!!!**
3. I will be taking an organization grade at the end of every six weeks. This will be counted as a test grade. Because of this, all students will be required to have a three-ring, hard-backed binder with at least three dividers or a three to five subject notebook. The notebook needs to be for that subject only. Work from the previous six weeks should remain in the notebook and not be thrown away. Because of this, the ring size should probably be at least 1 ½ inches.
4. Audience etiquette is an important consideration respectfully given to everyone. Students who choose not to be good audience members will first have a conference with the instructor in order to correct behavior. If the disrespect continues, a parent/guardian will be contacted, and points will be deducted from his/her participation grade. Although rare, if misbehavior continues, then further disciplinary action will be taken through the administration.
5. When a student is absent, it is his/her responsibility to inquire about make-up work. All make-up work should be completed within three days of the absence.
6. Various presentations and performances may be filmed for classroom use only.

I look forward to working with your child and sincerely hope that you will contact me if you have any questions during the school year. My school e-mail is cmarti15@houstonisd.org. I primarily communicate through e-mail. The school phone number is 218-920-8000 x 6032 and my cell phone number is 832.646.1800 (no phone calls past 9:00 p.m. please!).

Please have your student return the document requiring your and his/her signature. Doing that will result in your student beginning the semester with a 100 as a daily grade. If you also send me an e-mail confirming your e-mail address, your student will automatically earn 20 points this six weeks in extra credit. I know we’re going to have a great semester!

Sincerely,

Heath Martin
Westside High School Speech and Debate
Signature Document

By signing, I have read, understood, and will follow the class guidelines in Mr. Martin’s class for the Spring semester at Westside High School.

_________________________  _________________________________
(Parent name - printed)    (Parent Signature)

_________________________  _________________________________
(Student name - printed)    (Student Signature)

_________________________
(Date)

_________________________
(Parent E-mail)

_________________________
(Student E-mail)

_________________________
(Mailing Address – please don’t forget to include the zip code)

_________________________
(Phone number where a parent/guardian can be reached during the day)

Thank you!!!