



## Junior Honors Literature/ Spring 2024

Dr. Thaller (she/her)

[sthaller@guhsd.net](mailto:sthaller@guhsd.net)

### Who?

Dr. Thaller



### What?

This will be a college-style lit course that explores the notion of how we carry the past within our current selves.

### Why?

To empower you as part of the discourse community and help form connections between life and literature.

## The Things We Carry

Weirdly enough, this course was inspired by a book that we will not be reading. *The Things They Carried*, by Tim O'Brien, is a memoir/collection of short stories about the experience of being a soldier in the Vietnam War. O'Brien discusses the literal experience of being a soldier and all that they physically carried with them, such as pictures of loved ones, weapons, letters, blood and dirt from days prior. But he also explores what the soldiers carry with them figuratively into the war: toxic masculinity, shame, pressure, guilt, fear, and what they would carry with them long after, such as trauma, different guilt, different shame, resentment, and more.

It is a beautiful book, and important piece of American literature, but I want us to explore what we all carry not only as individuals, but also in larger populations, cultures, and national systems. The past forms so much of what we experience on a daily basis.

The past influences us, pushes us, restrains us, and often does so without any acknowledgement. This course is about seeing it, analyzing it, questioning it, and confronting it.

We will examine the theme of what we carry in various forms of literature as well as looking at

ourselves and the weights, whether positive or negative, whether inherited or newly-established, that are on our backs.

I hope that you will see yourselves not only reflected, but also that any assumptions you have will be challenged. And because we are dealing with such a personal theme, I hope you will find a greater sense of empathy for others and a community where burdens can be shared, eased, and presented in a safe space.

Where many high school literature courses aim to teach students what to think about books and how to understand them, this course is much more personal. The fact of the matter is, just like with the individual nature of how the past interacts with our present, literature does not exist in absolutes.

There is no absolute correct or incorrect way to understand, analyze, or interpret literature. It is a personal process that involves our own experiences of the world, our own willingness to be challenged and open, and our ability to truly consider the analyses and experiences of your peers. They might not agree with you, you might not have considered what they are saying, you might have entirely different frames of reference. Listen with an open mind. This is where true learning takes place in a literature course.

By the end of this class, the goal is that you feel comfortable expressing your experience with texts and understand the connections between literature and the world around you. My aim is that you understand the value of your unique interpretations and analysis, and realize that the entire class benefits from hearing a new perspective and a dissenting opinion. It opens our eyes and minds, and makes us better readers, thinkers, and scholars.

Open communication is important to me. Please feel free to contact me with any concerns, questions, or helpful information—I'm here to help guide you through this year. The following information addresses class expectations, select school policies, and reading selections for the year.

Please note that most assignments will be turned in on Schoology unless otherwise specified.

~ Dr. Thaller

## Major Texts

*American Born Chinese*- by Gene Luen Yang

*The Complete Maus*- by Art Spiegelman

*Ceremony*- by Leslie Marmon Silko

*Beloved*- by Toni Morrison

And several films/poems/short stories

## Course Structure

As Grossmont Middle College students, this will not be your typical high school honors literature course. This course will be formatted and will function much like a college literature course. In many ways, these courses feel like book clubs where the focus is on YOUR interpretation, experience, and interaction with the text, rather than a prescribed notion of what is right or wrong. I typically do not utilize quizzes, as I am not concerned with memorization, but there will be extensive discussion, reflection, and analysis.

As always, this also demands that:

You are  
**ACCOUNTABLE**  
You are in charge of your  
destiny and performance.  
Take ownership.

You are  
**SELF-SUFFICIENT**  
If you need something,  
seek it out.

You  
**SELF-ADVOCATE**  
Note: advocating and  
being entitled are NOT  
the same thing so be  
careful not to cross the  
line.

## Late Work Policy

In many college courses, late work is not accepted.

However, life happens. Stress happens. Mental health happens. If you know you will miss a deadline, it is important that you prearrange an extension with me to receive full credit for your assignments or contact me as soon as possible.

In general, without an approved extension, you will have 72 hours (three days) after the deadline to submit work for credit. Each day after the deadline results in a 10% deduction.

If you do miss class, remember that it is your responsibility to get any assigned work to me, find out the assignments, etc. The best way to go about finding out what you missed is by contacting a peer.

It is important that you do this before the start of the next class. Being absent is no excuse for coming unprepared when you return to class!

**Technology glitches or lost e-mails do not constitute valid excuses for late work.**

- Frequently save your work
- Back it up on a cloud or thumb drive
- Email it to yourself



## Attendance

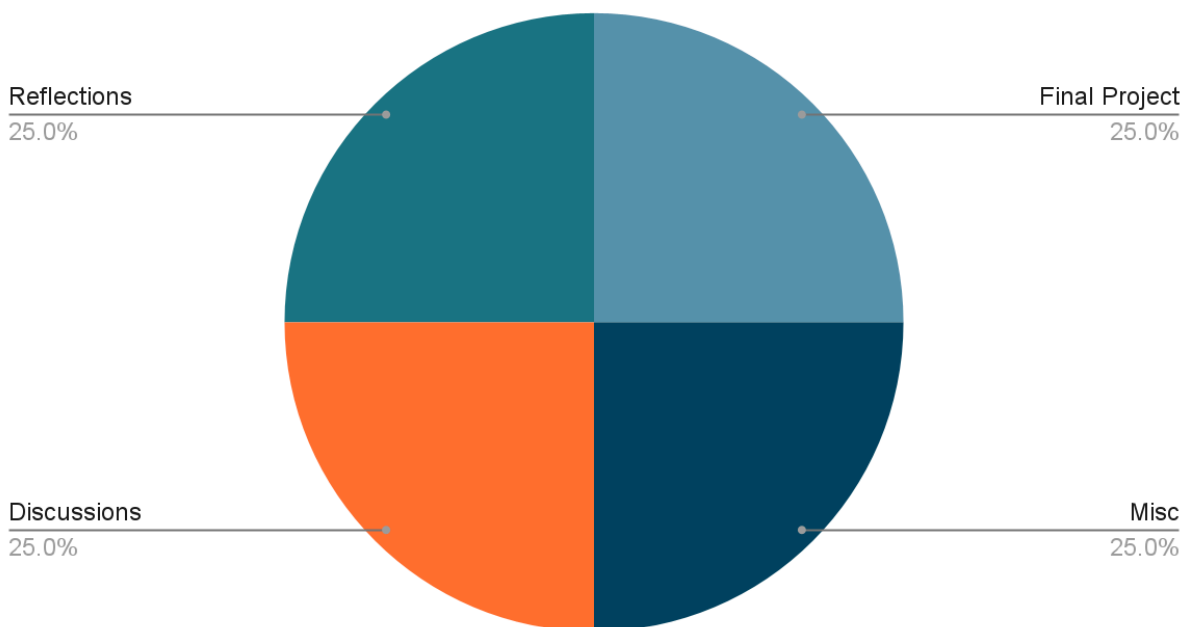
Attendance is essential to success in class!

I understand that emergencies may happen but missing class means that you are missing important information, explanations, discussions, and activities.

## Grading Breakdown and Scale

We will go over all assignments in-depth, with plenty of time for questions and clarification. This semester, each category weight will be by points rather than percentages. Be mindful of the larger assignments.

### Grade Breakdown



**100-90%= A, 89-80%= B, 79-70%= C, 69-60%= D, 59% and below= F**

## Behavioral Expectations

- To be a successful student you need to be in class on time, prepared to learn, and be a cooperative class participant. In addition, the class utilizes group work that requires student cooperation.
- While Chromebooks will be used extensively in the course, while in class, no cell phones, or other electronics may be in use or out on the desk unless directed by the teacher during school hours.
- Continued negative participation, including being off-task, defiant, or displaying a lack of cooperation, will not be tolerated.
- If you eat in the classroom, it is your responsibility to clean up after yourself. Also, try to avoid excessively pungent foods as we want to make sure the classroom is a welcoming space for everyone.

## Academic Honesty



- I take the misuse of academic materials very seriously and do not tolerate any form of academic dishonesty.

- A student using another's work or giving their work for any part of an assignment, with or without his/her permission, will be considered

academically dishonest, lose credit, and be given a referral. This includes unauthorized collaboration and plagiarism.

- Copying anything from online sources without citation information will be considered plagiarism and will not be tolerated. Students will receive a referral and loss of credit.
- Any unauthorized (by the teacher) collaboration of any kind will result in a referral and loss of credit on that assignment.
- Taking photos of your work (or another's work) and sending it in any form is plagiarism and will result in a referral and loss of credit.

### NOTE:

Using AI without permission IS PLAGIARISM.

I will be using several types of AI detection and you will receive an immediate ZERO on the assignment that is found to contain AI generated text.

If your work raises suspicion, this is already bad news..

## Classroom Community

### Inclusion

This is an inclusive learning community, respecting those of differing backgrounds and beliefs. As a community, we aim to be respectful to all citizens in this class, regardless of race, ethnicity, religion, gender expression or identity, physical or mental ability, language-levels, and sexual orientation. We are all here together and we all matter.



### Pronouns

This course affirms people of all gender expressions and gender identities. If you identify with a different name than what is on the class roster, please let me know. Feel free to correct me on your gender pronoun. If you have any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact me.

**Appreciating and Valuing Diversity:** I strive to create a welcoming learning community for all. I encourage multiple perspectives and the free exchange of unbiased and non-prejudicial ideas and experiences, which broaden our understanding of one another and the world around us. The expectation is that you will join us in this endeavor by contributing to an accessible, safe, and respectful classroom environment, free of discrimination and harassment. If you are offended, hurt or made to feel unsafe by something that another student does or says, please let me know. In the same way, please let me know if you are offended, hurt, or made to feel unsafe by something I say or do. It is my intention to ensure this classroom is a safe place for all.

Violating standard rules of conduct, in any form, will not be tolerated.

## Trigger Warnings and Sensitive Material

### Studying literature demands maturity.

As the major theme of this course involves trauma, memory, guilt, and issues surrounding survival, we will be encountering highly sensitive topics, scenes, dialogue in the literature for this course.

It is critical that you compose yourself and handle yourself like an adult. I expect that you are able to encounter and discuss texts as an academic, and focus entirely on the deeper meanings, impact, and significance, particularly as they connect to the course themes.

I will try to provide trigger warnings for individual texts, but please keep in mind that nearly every text will dive into something sensitive.

As we discuss, I expect appropriate language and that you keep all conversations tied to issues of academic or textual significance.

Perhaps of most importance is that you are keenly aware of and sensitive to your peers. You have no idea what other people have experienced or may be in the middle of. Keep discussion focused on the text, but always maintain awareness of those around you. Avoid language that may cause harm.