

MR WOOD'S

Classroom Philosophy, Rules & Expectations 2014/15

**The Buddha came down from the mountain,
The wise man asked, "Are you a god?"
"Are you a man?"
The Buddha said, "I am Awake."**

In the end, this is what it's all about. Are we really awake to the events of this world? Do we get it; our role in the world, out on the street with our friends, at home with our families, or sitting at these desks at Oakridge High School? Are we really awake? You and me? If we are, then the obvious next step, "Is what do we plan to do about it?" What role will we play in making this a better planet? How do we insure that we take on the responsibilities that being a citizen in the richest country on the face of the planet in the history of the world, entails. What does that mean to you and to me?

For me it means that I provide an environment in this classroom where everybody has the opportunity to succeed. I'll do my best to present a curriculum where you are inspired to seek the truth, wherever that route may lead. I will make sure that you are intellectually challenged. I intend to force you to stretch your parameters – to think past the limits of how you thought before, to foster discussion and to provide you assignments that will force you to bring your thinking, whatever the class, into the real world. I will also be available every night after school and by phone and by email, to help insure that if you really want to succeed, you have that chance.

Your responsibility also stretches beyond your individual needs. The key to learning is to question; the success of your search depends on how well you listen. For that to happen everybody in this classroom must feel free to share his or her opinion without inhibition. However, that "freedom of expression" comes at a cost. You absolutely must respect all others rights to think and to share whatever they feel necessary to explore the issues of the day. This kind of inquiry takes not only a value for the rigors of education, but also for one another's belief systems. Our studies will force you to roll up your sleeves and dig in, sometimes into uncharted waters. You'll have to keep an open mind and understand that our goal is not to work towards any test but to grow academically and intellectually. That takes scholarly sweat and emotional discipline. In the process, we will not waste time on drama that leads in any other direction. If you cannot adhere to guidelines that allow such learning possible, your behavior here will not be welcomed; nor will any such detrimental actions be tolerated.

Finally, each of us must take our studies outside of this classroom and carry our wakefulness into action. Because we live in a nation that has such an influence in all corners of the globe, we have a responsibility to learn all that we can about the world. We have an obligation to seek the truth and to act on it. In this nation, with free public education, you can go and be and do whatever you truly desire. Don't take that opportunity lightly. Most teens living in the world today go to bed at night hungry. Many live under the constant watch of death and disease and war. They don't have all the wonderful opportunities and great responsibilities that await you.

Welcome. Our task is vital. The possibilities are endless. And the time is definitely now.

As-Salam Alaykum

BASIC GUIDELINES FOR ROOM 112

1 - BE PREPARED...

This means have paper and pen. You may use pencil for note taking - however work turned in for a grade should be done in *INK*. It is much easier for me to read, as well as more efficient for you in keeping your notes over an extended period of time. Assignments done in pencil lose a grade. Typed work goes up 5%. We will use my school blog (thebuddhasaidiamawake.com) and *google docs* for various assignments. If you have home Internet access problems, let me know and be prepared to work after school or at lunch on some of the web-based assignments. I will provide extra time for you if needed.

All students will be required to carry a spiral bound notebook used only for this particular Social Studies class. By limiting you to a single notebook, your ability to stay organized will improve, as will your chances for success.

2 - RESPECT FOR OTHERS...

Listening is key to learning; for you and for me. I anticipate that you will conduct yourself with maturity, that you will raise your hand before expressing yourself, and that you will focus your attention, both verbal and non verbal, on the individual who has the floor. If not, I will separate you from the classroom with ensuing consequences. Those consequences in order will be 1 - classroom detention. 2 – phone call home. 3 – office referral. If I believe the offense serious enough an office referral may be issues at anytime.

3 – ODD's & END's THAT MATTER...

- **Dismissal** - The bell does not dismiss you. That is my job. We will work through the bell in this class...I will let you know when it is time to go.
- **Please and Thank you** – I use both. I hope for the same from each of you. Telling anybody to “Shut up” for whatever reason is not an option.
- **Cheating** – I will not try to determine who copied who. If I find it happening, from paper to paper or student from Internet, each student will earn a zero. Parents will be notified.
- **Excessive Tardies** – Two tardies equals one absence in regard to the final exam policy. In this classroom every tardy over five per semester will result in a detention served to the office. Being late is a bad habit that does not transfer into success in the real world. Come to class on time.
- **Cell phones and such** – Unless they are requested for an assignment please leave your phone in your locker. Texting in class (without teacher permission) violates school policy and removes you from the moment. If your phone is out in this classroom, unless requested for use by me, you will receive a detention. If you carry your cell, please set it to vibrate.

4 – REMEMBER OUR MISSION...

Life is difficult; even here in the first world challenges are numerous. In order to “make it” in today’s society – to raise a family, own a home and have career, you must have an education. Your experience in high school is vital to these ends. I take this mission seriously; my standards for you will be high. However, my role in this process and your parents’ influence on your outcomes are secondary to your individual efforts. In the end this education thing is up to YOU! That means everything in this classroom; the atmosphere, my lessons, your approach to learning, all of it is directed to providing each individual student an equal opportunity to excel. No individual’s personal agenda will be permitted to interfere with the opportunity of all to learn. I will insure a wide avenue to achievement for those who strive to succeed.

Conversely, I will limit the interference of those who don't respect their classmates. You have got to remember, that when it comes to public education your right to self-expression stops when it interferes with your classmate's right to learn. Listen. Be mindful. Be kind. And stay AWAKE!

GRADES:

• BLOG WORK

Several Assignments in this class will originate on my blog. Specific Guidelines are noted there. Lesson Plans (current and past) will be posted weekly. Make sure to check the blog regularly for assignments, LP's, extra credit, or just to discuss pertinent issues.

• LATE WORK

I do not accept late work! If you are in school and you have an assignment due – the due date is your responsibility...that is called accountability. You may turn in your assignment at the end of the day - two grades down. However, if the assignment is not in on the day it is due, you will receive zero credit. Excused absences have a two day grace period according to school rules - unexcused absences will not receive the extension, so make sure your parents get your excused absence turned into the attendance office promptly.

FIVES WAYS TO BUMP YOUR MARKING PERIOD GRADE:

+2% to +20% - Speeches of Martin Luther King Jr.

At the front of the room in binders you will find 11 complete speeches and transcripts of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Evaluations from past students of the speeches are located in the binders as well. You may come in after school and listen to these speeches. You only need to listen and write a short evaluation to earn 2% per speech up to 20% extra credit for semester grade. This is a good deal – you earn a significant amount of extra credit for merely listening to the most inspiring orator of our time.

+3% to +9% - Read Books

Read! It is one of the greatest ways to truly learn. With that in mind, I am providing any student the opportunity to bump their grade up to 9% per marking period. In order to gain this percentage you must fulfill the following requirements. One - Read a book. The selection must be OK'd by me prior to your reading. The book needs to be remotely associated with the class, although I will be fairly lenient here. Two - The book cannot be a required assignment for any other class. Three - after you are finished we will sit down at lunch or after school and talk about the book. If you fulfill all requirements your grade for the marking period goes up 3%. Maximum 9% per marking period. I have several good books available for you to check out for your reading pleasure.

+5% Class Participation

- I keep track of A's and F's on the seating chart. In order to get an A all you have to do is raise your hand and volunteer the correct answer. You get an F if you talk out of turn, or interrupt when another student has the floor. A's & F's accumulate through out the Marking Period. If at the end of the Marking Period you have at least 15 A's and a ratio of 3 to 1 A's to F's your grade goes up 5%. A's & F's cannot lower your MP grade unless you accumulate 13 F's. And if that's the case you will not be in the classroom, anyhow.

+2% College Talk

College Talk podcast postings are available on line in I-Tunes education. These are 15 to 20 minute interviews that Mr. Wood has conducted with various Oakridge High School graduates, that concern college life (the good, the bad, and the ugly) I think you will find these podcasts enjoyable and enlightening. I have created assignments that go along with the pod casts. Some will be assigned for class credit. Others will be provided to you to listen to and write up for Extra Credit.

Variable Extra Credit – “Road to Tahrir” – Mr. Wood’s MA Thesis

In order to attain a MA in Political Science in 2011 from WMU, I was required to write a Thesis. It is a 153 page study entitled “Road to Tahrir – Regime Failures and Opposition Consolidation in the Overthrow of Egypt’s Hosni Mubarak.” In it I study the long-term events leading up to the 2010 Egyptian Revolution, which culminated with the ouster of Egypt’s 30 year dictator. If you would like to examine this research, all of it or portions, and set up an independent study with me about some specific issue(s), I would be honored to work with you to explore the Egyptian revolution and subsequent Arab Spring.

A Final Thought on grades...

A challenging education is significant for your success in today’s world. In an effort to raise graduation rates, in the past few years public schools have significantly lowered their standards. In some classrooms today, you are provided chance after chance after chance to pass. The only behavior being learned from such practice is that accountability does not exist in the real world. And that is not true.

While I provide several credible ways in which to raise your grade, I will not hand you credit. You have the responsibility to earn it. Providing an environment where you don’t have second and third and fourth chances, while preparing you for life, will result in a number of failures in this classroom. It does not need to be that way, but it is. Such is life. Failure can be a positive experience in achieving real success.

Stay organized, work hard, do your best and you’ll be fine.

A Final Thought about me (Mr. Wood)...

My primary directive is to provide an environment in which all kids can excel. To do that, I think I provide a fairly solid structure to the classroom. Since I expect you to conduct yourselves appropriately in my classroom, and since some individuals struggle with self-control, and since I will land on the side of the many in regard to the educational rights of the few, there is a tendency for various students to struggle with their adjustment to my style of teaching. I will not provide you an unlimited chance to get your act together; that is not fair to those who follow the rules and who seek all that they can from this education experience. The following however may help.

What I’ve done below is linked three letters from three Oakridge graduates who struggled early to adjust to my teaching style, yet in the end overcame. Each knows full well the value of an education. I respect all of them for allowing me to post their thoughts, in an effort to help you with your transition. Please consider these individual circumstances as you make your way through the 2014/15 school year. Thanks...Mr. Wood

- Cassie Vandermolen c/o2005
- Sarah Pennell c/o 2013
- Randy Lavoisier Jr c/o 2013