January 5, 2018

Dear Parents of 8th Grade Students:

Greenwich High School offers three levels of freshman English and social studies: 112, 113, 113A. For a full description of each level, please see below.

The 113A level covers the same curriculum as the 113 class. Enrollment in the class is determined by a placement exam. Because the course is intended to meet the needs of a small subset of students at the very highest level of academic achievement, it is limited to roughly 15% of the incoming class. Homework demands and grading in the course are roughly equivalent to those of 113. There is no weighted grading (for calculating GPA) applied to any freshman English or social studies courses. Students do not have the option to override a placement decision for 113A. Our preferred practice for freshman English and social studies classes is to place students in classes in their house. With few sections of 113A, it is likely that students in this level will be placed outside their house.

Placement: All 8th grade students are invited to take the placement exams for the 113A class. Participation in the placement process is optional. Students choosing not to take the placement exam waive their right to reconsider entrance into the 113A level. All placement exams will be administered between January 22 and February 2 in the middle schools.

Placement is based on two criteria:

* Performance on a written essay. GHS English and social studies teachers developed a writing prompt that takes 45 minutes to one hour. Scoring of the essay is completed by GHS English and social studies teachers using a rubric for evaluation and double scoring of each essay.
* Performance on a released Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT). The released test that we use requires 30-45 minutes.

Timeline for placement: Final placements will be made by February 23 and communicated to students and parents. All placements are final--the GHS override policy does not apply for this course level.

Sign up to take placement test: Students who would like to take the placement test must complete a simple submission form. The form can be filled out by parents or students. Click [**HERE**](https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSd1EkkS-4G1Av-JbIL5Z_V7ib9DjtVv6tfR5ZjDpFRFhfaESQ/viewform?c=0&w=1) for the form.

**The deadline for signing up is** **Friday, January 19, 2018**.

Please feel free to contact me with any additional questions. Email is the best form of communication ([chris\_winters@greenwich.k12.ct.us](mailto:chris_winters@greenwich.k12.ct.us)).

Sincerely,

Chris Winters, GHS Headmaster

**Course Descriptions:**

**Global Studies and English 113A:** Global Studies and English 113A will be unweighted courses designed to offer students the appropriate intellectual challenge and pace.

Students will be expected to analyze historical and literary perspectives using texts that go beyond the standard curriculum. Using past and current scholarship on course topics and themes, students will develop historical and literary knowledge, arguments, and divergent interpretations. They will be expected to work both independently and collaboratively to deepen critical thinking and analytical skills. The prerequisites for these courses are an entrance exam and teacher recommendation. The exam requires students to synthesize sophisticated historical and literary documents in order to develop and support a claim. Seminar/Skills include one additional block.

**ENGLISH 113:** English 113 level is an introductory course which includes the study of various literary genres, the refining of critical reading skills and the expansion of writing and vocabulary skills. Students are encouraged to reach their highest potential through varied readings and assignments, as well as independent and group projects. Reading instruction stresses the development of comprehension and interpretive skills, including the knowledge and application of the elements of literature. Writing instruction includes experience in narrative, explanatory, argumentative, and analytical composition. Focus in the writing program emphasizes the formulation of effective thesis statements, organized development of ideas, the use of textual support, and language conventions. Course assignments require long-range planning and independence on the part of the student. Seminar/Skills include one additional block.

**ENGLISH 112:** English 112 is an introductory course which includes the study of various literary genres, the refining of critical reading skills and the expansion of writing and vocabulary skills. Students will also be introduced to classical traditions/texts/themes which they will continue to study in later years. Much of the literature focuses on how individuals face challenges in different eras and cultures. Writing instruction includes experience in narrative, explanatory, argumentative, and analytical composition. Focus will be on the formulation of a thesis statement supported by logical development, of appropriate evidence, and language conventions. Independent assignments and projects as well as group work encourage students at all levels to reach their highest potential. Course assignments re divided into smaller units and there is regular teacher guidance and support in completing tasks. Ninth grade English and Global Studies, along with the combined twice a cycle Seminar/Skills program, anchor the freshman experience at GHS. The freshman English program focuses on strengthening reading, critical thinking and writing skills for all students.

**GLOBAL STUDIES:** Designed as an introduction to the social studies program at the high school, the Global Studies course examines significant developments in world history using chronological and regional approaches. Through essential questions, students will investigate key themes within each region. Regions include Europe, Sub-Saharan Africa, Middle East/Northern Africa, Asia, and Latin America. The course is designed to focus on the modern world and will incorporate current world conflicts and issues. The course will focus on developing appropriate reading, writing, research and analytical skills that will serve as a foundation for future social

studies courses. Study is guided by the enduring understanding that in the 20th and 21st centuries the world has increasingly been characterized by the challenges associated with democratization, development and interconnectedness.

* Political, economic, cultural and diplomatic systems are interrelated.
* Geography influences the development of societies.
* Social and ideological systems and their interactions influence

historical and contemporary events.

* People create and adapt structures of power, authority and

governance to meet changing needs.

**At the 112 level**, the course content also serves as a vehicle for the development and refinement of expository writing and reading comprehension skills, Emphasis is on not just acquisition of content knowledge, but the interpretation and effective manipulation of this knowledge for application in a variety of contexts. This is accomplished through class and homework assignments that increase in length and sophistication over the course of the year, analytical writing activities focusing on Common Core argument skills, structured group activities and oral presentations, and at least one major research project. In addition to scheduled class meetings, students meet with their English and Social Studies teachers two additional blocks per cycle throughout the year as part of the Seminar/Skills program.

**At the 113 level,** all the above outcomes are expected using extensive and interpretive materials. Students placed here are expected to function above grade level with a high degree of independence while utilizing analysis, inference and synthesis skills at a greater frequency. There is less time spent on the development of skills and a greater level of abstraction and complexity in everyday assignments and discussions as they apply to the major themes of the course. In addition to scheduled class meetings, students meet with their Social Studies teacher first semester one additional block per cycle as part of the Seminar/Skills program and English teacher. At both levels, the writing expectations for research and for the required essays parallel those of 112/113 English. Such assignments are designed to promote theme-development, establishment of point-of-view, fluency and cohesiveness of argument, appropriate and effective use of supporting detail and citation, and recognition of underlying assumptions in preparation for the United States history requirement in the tenth grade.

Chris Winters

GHS Headmaster

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*GHS is a collaborative community of learners dedicated to academic excellence, personal integrity, and interpersonal responsibility.*

