INTRODUCTION: Some individuals believe that the American Dream cannot be achieved by all people. Those who believe this say that our culture contains too many roadblocks and obstacles. Others believe that America is the “land of opportunity” and that if you dream it, you can achieve it. They cite the various “rags to riches” stories in our society, as well as the numerous individuals who have stumbled upon success or have worked hard to rise to the top.

DIRECTIONS: Review all of the sources that we have read and discussed regarding the American Dream during this unit (see below). Then write a 1400-1600 word essay in which you develop a perspective on whether American Dream can be achieved by all people.

OTHER PARTICULARS:

1) You must synthesize at least five of the sources (two must come from Gatsby, Their Eyes Were Watching God or Raisin in the Sun) in your paper.
2) You must create an MLA Works Cited page (not part of word total). I do not want a title page.
3) 12pt, Times New Roman, one-inch margins is the standard.
4) All papers will be submitted to turnitin.com
   Sources are listed below; you may use additional sources if they are cleared by Ms. Daughters ahead of time.

DUE DATES:

Tuesday, November 1 – Thesis due for feedback. 10 points (practice category)


Monday, November 7 – Full rough draft due. 30 points (practice category). No late passes may be used.

November 14 – Final draft due to turnitin.com by 3pm, 200 points (assessment category)

There will be some short lessons on citations, integrating sources, synthesis-style writing, transitions, and other academic paper writing skills along the way.

Sources:

1) The Great Gatsby, F. Scott Fitzgerald (novel)
2) Their Eyes Were Watching God, Zora Neale Hurston (novel)
3) Raisin in the Sun, Lorraine Hansberry (play)
4) Paradox and Dream, John Steinbeck (essay)
5) I Hear America Singing, Walt Whitman (poem)
6) I Too, Langston Hughes (poem)
7) Separate and Unequal, Frontline (documentary)
8) What Happens to the American Dream in a Recession?, Katherine Q. Seelye, NYT (article)
9) Daughter of Immigrants Challenges the American Dream, Octavio Blanco, Money (article)
10) Chasing the Dream, The Economist, (article)
11) The Trouble With Geniuses, Parts 1 and 2, Malcolm Gladwell (chapters of non-fiction book)
12) Letters From an American Farmer 3, Michel Guillaume Jean de Crèvecœur, (letter, essay)
13) The Declaration of Independence, Thomas Jefferson (a declaration)
14) Why the American Dream Will Never Die, series by various writers at The Atlantic (articles)
15) Sizing Up the American Dream, NPR (infographic)
RUBRIC:

A+/A (excellent, unique): Papers in this range effectively synthesize at least five sources. The writer has crafted a very strong thesis which gives the paper clear direction and describes a unique perspective on whether the American Dream can be achieved by all people. The writer then builds upon that thesis fluently weaving in source and novel material, connecting and analyzing ideas, dealing effectively with counter-arguments, conversing with the sources. The essay is organized, easy to follow, anticipates reader objections, acknowledges complexity of the issue, and includes sophisticated transitions. This writer is particularly good at choosing details from sources which specifically support his/her thesis and develop strong ideas. Word choice, particularly verbs, is sophisticated and specific. Writers demonstrate the ability to write with varied sentence structure and pacing. The voice behind the writing is confident, authoritative, bright, and interesting. The paper contains very few spelling, usage or mechanical problems. Papers in this range also meet or exceed minimum length requirements.

B/B+ (thoughtful work): Papers in this range synthesize at least five sources. The writer has crafted a good thesis which gives the paper clear direction and describes a unique perspective on whether the American Dream can be achieved by all people. The writer then supports that thesis fluently and effectively. There may be some small lapses in the writer’s ability to weave source and novel material as well as in connections, choice of support and analysis of ideas. There may also be small lapses in the writer’s ability to organize the essay. The writer includes concessions and deals with counter-arguments but not as effectively as those writing higher-scoring papers. Word choice is strong – natural, varied. There may be points in which more specific word choice would have strengthened ideas. Sentence structure is varied but does not show a highly mature style. The voice behind the writing is confident and interesting. The paper contains few spelling, usage or mechanical problems. Papers in this range also meet or exceed minimum length requirements.

B-/C+ (basic work, some parts great, other parts need work): Papers in this range synthesize at least five sources. The writer has crafted a workable thesis which provides a perspective on whether the American Dream can be achieved by all people, but the thesis is not as complex, specific or unique as higher-scoring papers. There is ample support for the thesis, but the support less developed and fleshed out. The writer does attend to some counter-arguments. There may be lapses and inconsistency in the writer’s ability to weave source and novel material as well as in connections and analysis of ideas. Word choice is good but may be occasionally imprecise or unsophisticated. Sentence structure is clear and varied but may also be repetitive, immature or inconsistent. The writer’s voice does not stand out, may not be confident and/or highly informed. The paper contains noticeable spelling, usage and mechanical problems. Papers in this range meet or exceed minimum length requirements.

C/C- (minimal, needs a lot of polish): Papers in this range synthesize at least five sources. The writer has crafted a thesis which achieves a perspective on whether the American Dream can be achieved by all people, but the thesis is very general, not very debatable or not specific. Support for the thesis is inconsistent and/or underdeveloped. Writer needs to work on weaving support into his or her argument and writer’s connections and analysis are underdeveloped or can be unclear at times. The writer does attend to some counter-arguments and concessions. Word choice is often simple and/or occasionally imprecise. Sentence structure is quite basic. The writer may use comma splices, run-ons, fragments or may write sentences that are occasionally unclear and make the paper hard to understand or make rereading necessary. The writer’s voice does not stand out. There may also be an inconsistent point-of-view. The paper contains several spelling, usage or mechanical problems per page, making the rereading necessary. Papers in this range meet or exceed minimum length requirements.

D+/D (flawed, writer needs to spend more time): Papers in this range synthesize at least five sources. The thesis is either unclear or a restatement of the prompt and provides little perspective on whether the American Dream can be achieved by all people. Support for the thesis is very inconsistent, very general, and very underdeveloped. Source information tends to be a non-specific paraphrase of events or ideas from sources rather than direct quotations or specific ideas. Thus, the argument is not very convincing. Source information tends to be simply dumped into the body of the paper and underdeveloped, rather than integrated and discussed. Writer’s analysis and connection of ideas is very hard to follow, requires frequent rereading. The writer may or may not attend to some counter-arguments. Word choice is frequently repetitive and/or imprecise. The writer’s structure includes many simple sentences, short sentences, incomplete sentences or unclear sentences. Spelling, usage, and mechanical problems make the paper very difficult to read. The instructor may spend most of his/her time simply deciphering meaning.

F (incomplete): Papers in this range do not meet the minimum source or length requirements or are off-prompt. Some score of below 60% will be given to these papers depending on length and development.

NOTE: Much more weight will be given to a student’s content - ideas, analysis, connections – and organization than to surface traits – word choice, sentence structure, mechanics.