

Welcome!

Welcome to this class! You're seeing this page because my roster lists you as one of our dual credit students. Because being a dual credit student can be a bit tricky, I wanted to provide some extra information to help get you started.

What dual credit means

To me, dual credit represents a calculated risk. Upon successful completion of this course, you'll receive college credit as well as high school credit. But, your success here affects your high school GPA (and credits toward graduation) as well as your college GPA (this may or may not matter depending on your transfer plans). Because there is quite a lot at stake, **I know you'll do your best work for me.**

How to set yourself up for success

After more than two decades of experience working with college freshmen, I can tell you that all students struggle transitioning from a high school to a college mindset to some degree; however, that struggle is harder for dual credit students as they have to negotiate both high school and college simultaneously. Here's what you need/need to do to be successful

- **Commitment.** You likely have a number of competing priorities--a class trip, sports, clubs, events, part-time work--and it really can be challenging to balance them. As a Great Falls College student, though, it's important to recognize that you're obligated to follow the Great Falls College academic calendar. When you enroll, you commit to completing course activities by scheduled deadlines. I'm not able to provide extensions past the one available extension described in the syllabus.
- **Willingness to work on the go.** Today it's easier than ever to work wherever you happen to be. Observe the adults around you using their travel time wisely: planes, trains, and busses are typically not the highlight, so think about that travel time as available work time. Learn to use your phone as a hotspot or how to connect to airline or public wifi hotspots so that you can complete your work while you travel for school or sports. If you don't know how to do that, Google it. Expect that there may be charges (like on domestic flights) for connecting, and plan for a way to pay for them so that you can use those hours and still enjoy your trip once you arrive.
- **Openness to a new approach.** You may find that college classes ask you to do assignments differently, give you more latitude, or challenge you with more complex readings or darker subject matter. In fact, I hope you find that to be true. College is supposed to extend your range, building on what you already knew, not just offer you more of the same. Be open to the experience as you'll likely grow from it.

- **Self-advocacy.** If you need help, speak up! It can feel like there's nobody there supporting you, but that's only if you toil alone and in silence.
- **Self-sufficiency.** Don't remember which page a certain short story or poem is on? Take a look at the textbook's index! Don't really understand the definition of a literary term the book provides or how to use that information cogently in discussion? Google it! Success as a grown-up relies on your ability to conjure information.
- **Self-direction.** While I'll use tools available to push out critical information (like announcements in D2L Brightspace), I won't see you (obvs - this is online, right?) or necessarily communicate with you every day. That means nobody is hovering over you, which can be a relief, but it also means you need to own your decision to binge watch Netflix instead of read your novel and make the choice to carve that time from some other activity.
- **A reality check.** *Everyone is on your team.* You have a teacher or another contact person on your campus whose role is to help you interface with the college (paperwork, policies, etc.). You also may have someone on your campus, like your English teacher or Study Hall teacher, who is helping you with content either at your request or according to the practices of your district/campus. You have Staci Weigum, the Dual Credit Coordinator at Great Falls College to help answer general questions about the college. And, you have me! **I'm your primary contact at the college** - you have my email and phone number so that you can reach out to me at any time. You also have *many other people*, including the tutors in the college's [Academic Success Center \(tutoring lab\)](#) who are available via Microsoft Teams for extra help, and the college's [Technology Assistance Center](#) for tech help. Succumbing to thinking that we're not on your team undermines your success.

What's your parents' and teacher's role?

My relationship is with you, not with the other adults in your corner. Our relationship, the one between you and me, is largely defined by the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA), which guarantees the privacy of your academic record in college unless you've signed a release that grants limited access to that information to others, like parents or counselors. That means that you have to be the one to initiate contact with me about your work (you can't have your mom do it for you) and that you'll be the first one I come to with questions about grades, virtual attendance, or other pieces of your academic record.

Ways your parents and teachers may be able to help

Remember, *we're all on your team*, and your parents and teachers may be interested in helping out. Here are some things they may want to do.

- **Help you decide *whom* to ask for help.** Because you have so many people here to help you, it can be hard to know whom to ask about a specific problem. Ask for guidance with initiating that communication when you get stuck.
- **Read your assignments and other class materials in order to help you understand the expectations.** I firmly believe in transparency. I share materials housed in Google Drive (like assignment instructions) with whomever is curious - if your English teacher or mom wants to know why you got a grade, please share those links so that you can discuss, then ask me for clarification.

I'm looking forward to working with you!

Jana Carter Parsons
English Faculty
Great Falls College Montana State University
2100 16th Avenue South
Great Falls MT 59404
jana.parsons@gfcmsu.edu
(406)771-4363
My pronouns are she, her, and hers