Selected Books:
*The Immortal Life of Henrietta Lacks*, by Rebecca Skloot  
*On Writing*, by Stephen King

Both books are available at Barnes and Noble. You may also purchase used copies at amazon.com. The writing assignment for *On Writing* will be assigned when you return to school in September. If you have any questions about this assignment, you may email me at awriter14@yahoo.com.

**Part One: Essay Assignment:** *The Immortal Life of Henrietta Lacks*, by Rebecca Skloot

*The Immortal Life of Henrietta Lacks* is the story behind the HeLa cell line, an immortal line of cells that is responsible for some of the most important innovations in modern science, from the vaccine for polio to discoveries in cancer and AIDS. The HeLa cells were taken from an African American mother of five in Baltimore without her consent. She later died from a very aggressive cancer. Despite the importance of Ms. Lacks’ cells, her family continued to live in poverty and ill health, knowing nothing of her great contributions. Rebecca Skloot spent ten years and great personal expense investigating this story and her book raises questions about ownership of one’s cells and the ethics of medicine in the context of race, class, and education.

Writing prompt:

In the wake of a failed experiment, a scientist says, “The scientific enterprise is all about failure; I mean, you learn so much from failure. And you learn almost nothing from success.” Does Rebecca Skloot’s account of the story of HeLa support, dispute, or perhaps complicate this statement?

In a well-constructed paper of about 750 words, develop your own answer to this question using specific material from the book to support your argument. Parenthetical citations should be in correct MLA format. Your argument should have a workable, logical thesis without an overly broad introduction. The paper must be double-spaced and use a 12 pt. Font. It should have a title (but not a title page), and your name, the name of the course, and the date should appear in the upper right-hand corner of the first page.

The essay is due on the first day of school. No late papers will be accepted.
Part Two: Journal Assignment: The Immortal Life of Henrietta Lacks

Rebecca Skloot introduced us to topics of values and ethic in The Immortal Life of Henrietta Lacks. Skloot dived the book into three sections: Life, Death, and Immortality.

(1) Select a character from each of the three sections of the book and discuss what you believe his or her values and ethic were, as applied in that particular section of the book. Be sure to pick a unique person for each section. (For example, you can’t pick the author for two out of the three or three out of three sections.)

(2) Next, compare and contrast the values that you observed between each of the three characters you have selected. What did they value that was the same or similar? What was different? Give examples.

(3) Select one of the three characters that you chose in number (2) and compare and contrast your own values and ethics with those of that individual. What do you think you would have done had you been in the place of that person, based on your values and ethics: What would you have done the same? What would you have done differently?

(4) Finally, think about a time when one of your personal values was challenged? What were the circumstances? How did you respond?

This journal assignment is also due on the first day of school. No late papers will be accepted.
Part Three: Portfolio Assignment: *On Writing*, by Stephen King

Stephen King, master of the horror genre, offers interesting advice about writing and the writing process. A combination of personal memoir and the art of writing, King remarks in the first foreword that “No one ever asks about the language.”

Your job is to analyze King’s use of language in his memoir in a way that makes sense to you, as a writer. You will become an active reader as you comment and reflect on passages that strike you as meaningful or important. Your portfolio must be typed in a 12 point font and double-spaced.

Top Ten Passages
Select the ten most influential passages that illustrate ideas about writing that have meaning to you.

1. Write the sentence (or sentences), complete with page number citation in MLA format.
2. Discuss the use of this sentence (or sentences) in the context of the text. Why did you select this passage? How does King’s use of language (ie. The actual words being used) play an important role in understanding his purpose?
3. What is the tone of the passage? How does King use specific strategies to create this tone?

Toolbox