

AP English Language & Composition

Syllabus

Course Overview

The AP English Language and Composition course provides an equal opportunity for students of all abilities to engage in becoming skilled readers of prose written in a variety of periods, disciplines, and rhetorical contexts, and in becoming skilled writers who compose for a variety of purposes. Both their writing and their reading should make students aware of the interactions among a writer's purposes, audience expectations, and subjects, as well as the way generic conventions and the resources of language contribute to effectiveness in writing. Students in this course are taught to "write effectively and confidently in their college courses across the curriculum and in their professional and personal lives" (The College Board, *AP English Course Description*, May 2007, May 2008, p. 6). We also believe in strongly addressing student citizenry, guiding students to interact with material and conversations so that they can create their own informed opinions and decisions which contribute effectively to real conversations that impact their worlds (The College Board, *AP English Course Description*, Fall 2014, p.10)

Course Goals

Upon completion of the AP English Language and Composition course, students should be able to:

- Developing critical literacy to construct rhetorically sound compositions
- analyze and interpret samples of good writing, identifying, explaining, and critiquing an author's purpose and use of rhetorical strategies and techniques;
- create and sustain arguments based on readings, research, and/or personal experience;
- write for a variety of purposes encouraging inquiry, deliberation, and argument;
- produce expository, analytical, and argumentative compositions that introduce a complex central idea and develop it with appropriate evidence drawn from primary and/or secondary sources, cogent explanations, and clear transitions;
- demonstrate understanding and mastery of standard written English as well as stylistic maturity in their own writings;
- demonstrate understanding of the conventions of citing primary and secondary sources;
- move effectively through the stages of the writing process, with careful attention to inquiry and research, drafting, revising, editing, and review;
- write thoughtfully about their own process of composition;
- revise a work to make it suitable for a different audience;
- analyze image as text and critique media and technology use;
- evaluate and incorporate reference documents into researched papers; and
- demonstrate informed citizenry preparing students for lifelong learning.

Advanced Placement Course Description, May 2007, 2008; Fall 2014

Course Expectations

Students who enroll in this course have entered through an open door, as is the policy in this school. Most of the students arrive with a solid foundation in conventions, critical reading, and writing skills. Also, students know that this is a college level course that will take them beyond the safety net of previous high school language arts classes. The course centers on nonfiction and pushes students to read closely and critically, past the surface of the text, with intensity most have not yet encountered. This paradigm shift is expected in the first semester. The course expectations remain fluid and flexible, easily adjusting to the needs of the students. A loose calendar works best so day to day plans can change if further exploration of a topic is needed. Each student is treated as an individual who merits personal attention to keep him focused on the course goals and on track to a five on the AP exam. Since our course must include a survey of American literature (per Georgia Department of Education graduation requirements), students encounter literary works and primary sources from different periods of American literature. All American literature movements are covered, with special attention to letters, diaries, speeches, journals, and other primary sources. The organization of the course does not lend itself to an exclusive chronological study, so many works of American literature are used when the course dictates their inclusion. Following AP Language guidelines, when poetry and fiction are assigned, students analyze the writers' linguistic and rhetorical choices, scrutinizing voice, style, and tone. Nancy Dean's *Voice Lessons* is used in the course for further exploration of voice, style, tone, and diction.

Writing Expectations

Multidraft:

The course teaches and requires students to write in several forms (e.g., narrative, expository, analytical, and argumentative essays) about a variety of subjects (e.g., public policies, popular culture, personal experiences). Major writing assignments include a revision process aided by teachers and/or peers. Students see sample essays from the College Board or samples from their classmates and/or teacher archives when the revision process begins.

Modelling essays is an excellent method to discuss the writers' style, voice, diction, and syntax.

Timed Writings: Timed essays are integrated into the curriculum throughout both semesters.

One on one conferencing occurs at least twice each semester.

Reflection: Students write informally on a regular basis through short responses, a powerful tool when used as a place for reflection and experimentation. Since the responses are an effective way to allow students' personal reflection and student/teacher communication with the students, weekly assignments may include, but are not limited to, responses to literature, current events, or personal experience. Not all reflection topics are dictated.

Vocabulary: Students keep a notebook of vocabulary words and terms associated with rhetoric, tone, and style.

Daily warmups may include work with allusions, grammar, literary terminology, or vocabulary.

Research Expectations

Any research for the class, whether formal or informal, must include internal citation and works cited. The course emphasizes the importance of proper research methods and documentation. In the synthesis researched paper, students formulate clear research questions and utilize appropriate research venues (e.g., library, electronic media, personal interview, survey) to locate and incorporate evidence from primary and secondary sources. Students use appropriate conventions for documentation in the text, notes, and works cited by adhering to those in style manuals (e.g., Modern Language Association).

Course Calendar:

Semester One

Required Summer Reading:

And Still We Rise by Miles Corwin

Mountains Beyond Mountains by Tracy Kidder

Task: Students find 4 opinion pieces supporting their argument and 4 opposing their argument and write précis for the opinion pieces. They also reflect on the connections they have made between the non-fiction texts they have read and the purpose of the authors of the opinion pieces and how these have contributed to shaping their own arguments.

Required First Semester Reading:

The Lively Art of Writing by Lucille Vaughan Payne

List of Rhetorical Terms

Texts: *Timeless Voices, Timeless Themes: American Experience* – Prentice Hall

The Language of Literature: American Literature – McDougall/Littell

The American Tradition in Literature – McGraw Hill

The Bedford Reader

The Scarlet Letter – Nathaniel Hawthorne

Into the Wild by Jon Krakauer

Huckleberry Finn by Mark Twain

Supplemental texts:

The Rhetoric and the Poetics of Aristotle – Aristotle

Elements of Argument – Rottenberg / Winchell

– *Visualizing Argument* – Patrick Clauss

Semester Two

The Great Gatsby – Scott Fitzgerald

The Bedford Reader – Kennedy/Kennedy/Aaron

Applied Practice exams and prompts

Voice Lessons – Nancy Dean

Unit One: Introduction to Rhetoric and Analysis (2 weeks)

The first two weeks of the year begins with an overview of the course requirements and goals, including taking a released AP English Language and Composition multiple choice exam. The exam offers students a baseline from which to work and sets expectations for what they need to accomplish in order to be successful. The overview includes a look at released prompts, a discussion of information needed to respond to a prompt, and an experiment with argument and debate. Students are exposed to the process of arguing with support through verbal interaction in the classroom. The arguments stem from selected current newspaper and magazine articles covering controversial issues which contain a human interest slant. Students quickly learn to withhold hasty judgments and rash decisions made before all of the evidence is presented. In this week we will review the elements of classic argument through teacher directed discussion of Aristotle's art of persuasive oratory (appeals to logos, pathos, and ethos). Students read introductory material and exemplary essays on argument and persuasion from *The Bedford Reader*. Some essays are read in preparation for class; some essays are read in class. Students analyze the effectiveness of the rhetorical strategies and elements of argument used by the authors. We will discuss the rhetorical triangle as a model for reading as well as using the Toulmin method as a tool for every essay we read and write.

Selections for discussion and debate include, but are not limited to, essays by Singer, Divakaruni, Menken, Kroll, and Wenke. After this week, students are ready for the fun and excitement of studying the power of the written word.

In conjunction with the next three units, students will read *The Lively Art of Writing*. Students are required to complete chapters in a time frame provided by me covering topics addressing style, transitions, passive voice, rhythm in writing, parallel structure, and figurative language.

Skills: A clear and deep understanding of ethos, logos, and pathos as appeals in argument as well as a clear understanding of the rhetorical triangle focusing on author's purpose as the goal in the analysis of argument.

Unit Two: Arguing Equity, Creativity, and the Struggle to Retain Individuality in Education (2 weeks)

STATEMENT TO CONSIDER:

If you have watched the news or read popular news magazines or seen major websites' newsfeed headlines, you will have heard that America's schools are in crisis - that we rank well behind other industrialized countries in academic test scores – that our schools are in desperate need of reform if we are to compete for jobs and advancement on the world stage.

To the contrary, the following is an excerpt from "School Work" by Nicholas Lemann, published in *The New York Times*:

"The school-reform story draws its moral power from the heartbreakingly low quality of the education that many poor, urban, and minority children in public schools get. This problem isn't new...The gap in educational achievement between black and white children narrowed during the nineteen-seventies and eighties, and has been mainly stuck since then, but it's misleading to suggest that the gap is getting bigger. The story line on education, at this ill-tempered moment in American life, expresses what might be called the Noah's Ark view of life: a vast territory looks so impossibly corrupted that it must be washed away, so that we can begin its activities anew, on finer, higher, firmer principles. One should treat any perception that something so large is so completely awry with suspicion and consider that it might not be true—especially before acting on it."

The class discusses the required summer, *And Still We Rise* by Miles Corwin. The summer assignment requires students to research an argument about education stemming from issues that arise from the reading of the text. Students will read current texts and opinion pieces and essays addressing education issues in America like the cheating scandal in Atlanta. The unit will end with a graded Socratic discussion, addressing the issues raised about education.

Skill: Creating cohesive organization in argument. Addressing the appeals and evidence in argumentative writing.
Supplemental Text: Documentary: *Saving Superman*

Unit Three: Overcoming the Hopelessness of Human Suffering (2 weeks)

STATEMENT TO CONSIDER: Learning about the vastness of human suffering around the globe can foster a sense of hopelessness. An individual may feel he or she is too small to make a difference (especially given the structures of poverty and violence); even Paul Farmer, who gives just about everything he can, still feels that what he does is too little. Yet, some individuals don't act to help others, even when they identify a moral obligation. The difficulty of having to choose to give and where to give can be emotionally overwhelming. Our culture has developed socially acceptable means of attending to obligations to the poor, such as black-tie fundraising dinners and tax deductions in exchange for charitable donations; these practices make an abstraction of the idea that other humans are suffering. Kidder notes, "The world is full of miserable places. One way of living comfortably is not to think about them or, when you do, to send money" (8). But Farmer does not want people to feel comfortable about the fact of poverty.

The next unit is inquiry into the issues of poverty using *Mountains Beyond Mountains* as the anchor text. Students read essays like "Dumpster Diving" and "A Modest Proposal" to investigate issues surrounding poverty.

Students will end the unit with a Socratic discussion. They will also write an argumentative essay, choosing either to respond to the question posed in Unit 1 or in Unit 2.

Skills: Finding cohesion and structure in argumentative writing. Using evidence to support claims.

Supplemental Text: 60 minute Paul Farmer Interview

Unit Four: Literary and Philosophical Movements Driving Writing and Thinking (2 weeks)

Student groups research the literary movements in American literature or they research a philosophy guiding writing periods. Each group researches an assigned time period and presents to the class the political events, social conditions, literary styles, characteristics, and key authors of the movement. Groups create a handout which includes a timeline plus the information discussed for classmates to use throughout the year. All information included in the presentation and handout must have internal citation and works cited. From this point forward, all literature read will be connected to the literary/ philosophical movements discussed.

Skills: awareness of time periods that influenced the writing and thinking of writers

Unit Five: Arguing Law and Morality (2 weeks)

Students should have read *The Scarlet Letter* as the anchor text for this unit. The difficulty of the text provides students with an excellent study in syntax. While students are reading the novel, class discussions center on how Hawthorne uses language to create voice and characterization, and Hawthorne's purpose in writing the novel. We will connect this purpose to current issues involving law and justice and morality, allowing students to debate these issues. The unit continues with discussion of the language in *The Scarlet Letter* and allows time for further practice on multiple choice tests and prompts.

The major writing assignment includes argument writing written from released AP Lang prompts covering issues of morality.

Skills: addressing opposing arguments and seeing argument as grey versus a black and white experience. Further work on organizing argumentative writing.

Unit Six: Critically Reading and Analyzing Writing Impacted by Romanticism (3 weeks)

The anchor text for this unit will be *Into the Wild* by Jon Krakauer.

Students will analyze art impacted by the philosophy of the sublime. They will read essays by Annie Dillard, Virginia Woolf, Thoreau, Emerson, and Mary Oliver analyzing audience purpose and how the purpose is achieved.

Students will write a rhetorical analysis essay.

Supplemental Text: *Dead Poet's Society*

Unit Seven: Finding Voice (2 weeks)

Students critically analyze the writings of writers from around the world who do not fall into the stereotypical white patriarchal mold. Readings will come from writers like Jamaica Kincaid, Isabelle Allende, C. S. Lakshmi, Lun Xun, Mikhail Bulgakov, Wole Soyinka and Sahar Kahlifeh.

Skills: rhetorical analysis of author's purpose from different cultural experiences

Major Assessment: Quick write identifying audience purpose.

Unit Eight: Critical Reading and Analysis of Writing impacted by the Realism Movement(4 weeks)

The anchor text is *Huckleberry Finn*. Students will use the text as an introduction to the realism as well as satire as a form of communication. Students read, discuss, and debate issues surrounding *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* in this unit. Students rewrite modern literature in Huck's voice, dialect, and syntax. Students discuss and analyze Twain's descriptive passages in the novel and how he uses diction and syntax to compare and contrast settings. Students research the justification for banning the book in high schools across America. The students come prepared to debate either side of the issue and are assigned a position to take. Practice exams and prompts are used throughout the reading of the novel.

The study of Twain continues with imitation of passages from *Life on the Mississippi* which contain complex description and syntax. Other imitation exercises are selected from the American literature textbooks.

American Literature as the final exam grade. The AP final is a released free response question.

Students research the effectiveness of satire. Selections include the works of Twain, Swift, Thoreau, and Franklin. Students research and bring to class examples of satirical essays and pointed visual images such as political cartoons which are meant to be interpreted as satirical text. Students respond informally to the satire discussed through class discussion.

Supplemental text: John Stewart and Stephen Colbert Clips

Skills: identifying and analyzing dialect, diction, satire, sarcasm, irony, paradox, and humor.

Unit Nine: The Impact of Media (2 weeks)

The anchor text will be *The Great Gatsby*. In this unit we address propaganda, advertising, and news sources and the messages these media sources send to their audiences. We also address technology as a tool to relay opinion. Students will discuss Scott Fitzgerald's purpose in writing his novel and his criticism of the American "message" in the 1920's comparing that to the American "message" now. The students will write an argumentative essay in response to an AP style like prompt.

Supplemental text: Watch the documentary *Misstreated*

Unit Ten: Research with Purpose (3 weeks)

In preparation for a nonfiction/synthesis/researched project, Unit Ten introduces students to synthesis as a skill in argument. In groups, students will create a synthesis AP style essay, creating an argumentative prompt and situation as well as finding essays and articles with supporting and opposing views. All sources will have to be cited correctly in MLA format. Students will practice writing a synthesis essay by responding to each other's synthesis projects and grading each other's essays.

Major Writing Assessment: Students will write a synthesis essay in response to a released AP synthesis essay prompt.

Unit Eleven: Understanding Struggle and Courage in Illness and Disability (2 weeks)

Students have an opportunity to investigate and discuss essays and articles that address issues about mental illness, other illnesses such as Multiple Sclerosis reading Nancy Mairs' essay, and other essays addressing physical disabilities. This unit is often personal to students who struggle themselves with anxiety or a disability of some sort or who have family members who have a disability/illness.

Skill: Students focus on language use analyzing subtlety, bias, and connotation.

Assessment: Paragraph responses where students practice writing with logos as an appeal, and then ethos as a appeal, and then pathos as an appeal.

Unit Twelve: The Art of Speech Giving (2 weeks)

Students read and listen to various famous speeches for different purposes. Students will analyze purpose, audience, and ethos of speaker, reading speeches, and listening to speeches.

Assessment: Students watch 5 TED Talks and address purpose, audience, and speaker for each talk.

Skills: Close reading analysis of argument in speeches.

Unit Thirteen: My Voice in Writing (2 weeks)

Students address the value of narration and personal experience in the art of argument. Texts like Annie Dillard's "Write Till You Drop" and McMillian's "The Movie that Changed my Life" investigate the power of using narrative techniques to create persuasion and pathos. We will also read letters from various periods for exigence, purpose, and audience, and rhetorical strategies used to develop their purposes. The intended goal is for students to have a deeper awareness of their own voices. They will look at their writing over the year to help them determine their growth as writers and their greater understanding of who they are as citizens of their world.

Assessment: Timed writing essay analysis of text that is in letter format or is more narrative than expository like Eudora Welty's "On Writer's Beginnings." Students will choose their best essay for scoring and then peer edit the other essay, rewriting the essay as extra practice.

Unit Fourteen: Modes of Discourse/ Practice (5 weeks)

Students will spend time practicing released AP prompts. This is an opportunity for differentiation, helping students with their specific weaknesses. We will focus on multiple choice practice and discussion as well.

The final weeks of the course, the students will work in groups to investigate a topic. Student knowledge of the topic will be tested in a graded Socratic seminar. The students will also work in groups to create a 10 day AP unit of their choice.

Skills: The tasks require collaboration and in-depth research to ensure full preparation for the assessments.

Resources

Applebee, Arthur N., et al. eds. *The Language of Literature: American Literature*. Evanston, IL: McDougal Littell, 1997.

Applied Practice. Austin, TX: Applied Practice, 2000.

Aristotle. *The Rhetoric and the Poetics of Aristotle*. New York: The Modern Library, 1984.

Claus, James. *claim*

– *Visualizing Argument*. New York: Bedford/St. Martin's, 2005.

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Glenn, Sheryl, et al. eds. *Hodges Harbrace Handbook*. Australia: Thomson Wadsworth, 2004.

Kennedy, X.J., Dorothy M. Kennedy, and Jane E. Aaron. *The Bedford Reader*. 8th ed. Boston: Bedford/St. Martin's, 2005.

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Payne, Lucille Vaughan. *The Lively Art of Writing*. New York: Follett Publishing Company, 1965.

Perkins, George and Barbara Perkins, eds. *The American Tradition in Literature*. 10th ed. Boston: McGraw Hill, 2002.

Rottenberg, Annette T. and Donna Haisty Winchell. *Elements of Argument*. Boston: Bedford/St. Martin's, 2006.

Timeless Voices, Timeless Themes: The American Experience. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson Prentice Hall, 2005

The Bedford Reader

Selected satirical editorials and cartoons

Voice Lessons – Nancy Dean

Applied Practice exams and prompts

