

AP English Language and Composition

COURSE OVERVIEW

Welcome to AP English Language and Composition! You are to be commended, as you have chosen to embark upon an academic year focused on college level composition and nonfiction texts. The jump to college level work during the junior year is a large one, but I hope you will enjoy the challenge. Throughout the year, you will explore autobiographies, essays, memoirs, letters, speeches, diaries, images, and book length creative nonfiction, and develop crucial critical thinking, literary interpretation, analysis, and college level writing skills. The course culminates in the AP Language and Composition exam in May. Students who pass the exam generally receive college credit for the course, as it is designed to replicate an introductory college composition course. Students are expected, but not required, to take the AP exam. Students who choose not to take the AP English Language exam will be required to take a final exam, which will consist of ALL pieces of a previous year's AP examination from College Board. Students who undertake the AP English Language and Composition exam will be exempted from the final exam. Seniors, please note: while seniors are welcome in this class, it is primarily a junior level course and there is no Senior Project component in this class.

This course is designed in accord with the standards set forth in College Board's *English Language and Composition Course Description*, and also is aligned to relevant state standards in reading, writing, and speaking. The materials used were originally published between the sixteenth and twenty-first centuries, inclusive. Works will range in era and genre from, for example, an Elizabethan speech to an editorial from the morning's paper. College Board does not prescribe a set curriculum; however, all works utilized for this course are of a calibre of those taught at colleges around the country and are works of rhetorical, literary, and/or historical significance. Expect the reading to be challenging and multifaceted, but also engaging and interesting.

Students are expected to keep up with the reading and **all** assignments. College courses are conducted with the expectation that students take responsibility for their own work and come to class prepared, and this class will be run in the same fashion. **NO LATE WORK WILL BE ACCEPTED!** If you are absent on a due date, your work is still due. Once per semester, you may request – in advance - a grace day.

CLASS WORK

Class work will consist of a variety of activities centered on analysis, group work, projects, discussions, and writing, both formal and informal. Keeping up with the reading assignments will be essential in order to be an active, thoughtful participant in the class. Regular participation is expected. Due to the learning opportunities that arise through teacher feedback with groups and individuals and through class discussions, your presence in class is essential. Absences should be minimized when possible, and any work missed will need to be made up promptly.

DISCUSSIONS

Discussions will be frequent, and always will be preceded by a period of student writing to brainstorm ideas, organize thoughts, and note textual support. This writing will occur during the class period or as homework. All students are expected to actively listen and orally participate on a regular, preferably daily, basis. Some discussion questions will be teacher generated, some class generated (such as when an interpretation problem arises) and some will be student generated. Some discussions will be graded, others will not.

VOCABULARY

While vocabulary exercises are not assigned in college courses, the development of a sophisticated and varied vocabulary is essential to comprehension of college level texts and to development of clear and articulate expression of ideas in writing. As high school students who are developing college level skills, students need to work to build their vocabularies. To that end, the course will introduce students to college level vocabulary on a regular basis, primarily during the first semester. Vocabulary will be included as part of the class assignments on alternate weeks, when the A day classes meet on a Monday. In addition to assisting students in comprehension of texts and writing expression, college level vocabulary will also aid students on the SAT. Furthermore, students are encouraged to explore and discuss the meaning of new words encountered in the class' reading assignments.

WRITING

Writing is a significant portion of this course. While students should arrive as strong writers, this course will include a variety of writing techniques in order to develop writing skills from a strong high school level to a strong college level. Students will write brief brainstorming notes prior to discussion, a variety of short responses and small papers in order to demonstrate and refine understanding of the readings and begin the process of analysis. All short responses and short papers should showcase composition skills, and are expected to be in complete sentences, with strong organization and clear ideas and with correct grammar and spelling. The class also includes a number of more formal writings, either in the form of timed AP essays or untimed papers, which will develop students' skills in writing in a variety of forms, on a variety of subjects, and for a variety of purposes. Furthermore, writing assignments, both formal and informal, will develop students' ability to write analytically about an author's use of rhetorical strategies and techniques. Formal citations in proper MLA format are expected whenever one utilizes material from another source. Essays will require students to analyze arguments, respond to arguments, create arguments, and synthesize sources into an argument of their own. Multidraft papers will require research, synthesis, interpretation, and analysis on a variety of subjects. Each written assignment will receive substantial written commentary from the teacher, highlighting areas of effective writing and/or improvement in skills, as well as focusing on areas to improve each student's individual argument, textual support, organization, vocabulary, or syntax. While comments will be individualized, the class will also contain mini-lessons on writing and grammar as needed. These will be presented, at minimum, each time the teacher returns a graded

essay. The teacher will conduct writing conferences with students periodically and students will occasionally rewrite papers or portions of them. Students will frequently review student writing samples in order to increase their understanding of college level writing and to develop strategies to improve their own writing.

GRADING

Assignments for this course are graded in a variety of ways. Vocabulary exercises will be spot checked, and there will be a vocabulary test for each unit. Daily annotation of short passages and daily annotation of visual texts will be collected once every grading period (every six weeks) and assessed based on development of ideas in annotation and overall strength of analysis. This method holds students accountable for annotations, rather than just jumping randomly into discussion. It also guarantees that absent students will make up this regular practice, and thus continue to build their skills even when they have missed a class. Short responses are assessed for understanding of literature, clear articulation of ideas, support for ideas, and quality of writing. Timed essays are scored according to College Board's nine point essay grading rubrics, linked to the specific essay question when possible. Multidraft papers are scored against a modified version of the AP rubric that reflects the same degree of rigor in analysis, but takes into account that students have written multiple drafts, rather than a brief, 40 minute, one draft written response. When class discussions are assessed for a grade, students will be notified prior to their pre-discussion writing. All students will be expected to participate, and will be graded on their useful participation. Group projects will have a group and an individual grade, as well as written, oral, and creative components. Separate rubrics will be provided to the students for each project. Large individual projects will have multiple checkpoints and multiple graded components. All assignments are given a point value that reflects both their difficulty and significance to developing student skills. Grades for this AP English Language and Composition course are weighted, with an A earning a 5.0 toward the GPA, a B earning a 4.0, and so on.

90%-100%	A
80%-89%	B
70%-79%	C
60%-69%	D
Below 60%	F

Students are expected to maintain a grade of C or higher to remain in the course. Students with a grade of D may consult with the teacher to arrange a schedule of meetings for tutoring in the area of weakness in order to remain in the class. Students with an F in the class will need to demonstrate extraordinary circumstances to remain in the AP English Language and Composition course.

A NOTE ON THE TEXTS, ASSIGNMENTS AND MATERIALS

As this class strives to include components to make students better informed young people, and to allow students an opportunity to explore nonfiction texts, written and visual, in many areas, materials may vary from year to year. While the major reading components remain constant, news articles, editorials, photographic images, editorial

cartoons, etc. will rotate in order to reflect current events, to remain fresh and relevant to the students and to the teacher, and to remain within the boundary of copyright laws. Materials may also vary to target certain areas of analytical weakness, based on my observations and assessments of the class. My timelines for teaching fluctuate yearly based on student needs, the school schedule, and the AP examination schedule; therefore, I may remove or replace a work. All timed essays, in analyzing rhetorical strategies, writing an argument, or responding to an argument, are officially released AP English Language questions, and vary from year to year. Synthesis essay questions are from the limited pool released so far by College Board or from those written by College Board consultants. Other assignments, while maintaining the rigor of the coursework, may vary as needs of an individual class dictate.

FIRST SEMESTER

Weeks 1-4 – Introduction to Rhetoric, Visual Analysis, and Composition

Assignments and activities: Students begin the year with some self-analysis of their skills, personalities, strengths and weaknesses (derived from the questions on the Smith College teacher recommendation form). Students write an introductory narrative essay based on their self-discoveries, which helps the teacher learn about the students as individuals and scholars.

Students take a series of leveling exams, consisting of portions of a practice multiple choice exam and a previous AP English Language and Composition exam's argument essay question. This initial evaluation serves the twofold purpose of allowing the teacher to assess the incoming level of student skill and allowing the students to see what is expected from them in the course.

Students review active and analytical verbs and complex syntax to stimulate metacognitive thinking about their individual writing choices. Students learn rhetorical techniques and their effects and review literary strategies and their effects. Students are introduced to the history and canons of rhetoric, the need for active, rhetorical thinking in modern life, and the concept of active viewing for visual texts. Students read Chapters 1-2 in *Everyday Use: Rhetoric at Work in Reading and Writing* and Chapter 1 in *Beyond Words: Reading and Writing in a Visual Age* and complete a variety of informal written tasks and discussions in small and whole groups.

After introduction to rhetoric is completed, students begin a near daily analysis of a variety of passages from texts (historical or contemporary) and a near daily analysis of visual text. After the first few practice days, one day's emphasis will be on written texts, and the next on visual texts, and so forth. Multiple College Board strategies (DIDLS, SOAPStone, OPTICS, etc.) are taught as foundational structures for these practice analyses. The daily work will continue throughout first semester, and will be continued intermittently throughout the remainder of the school year.

Students begin analysis of a passage from a previous year's AP English Language and Composition exam and work both individually and in small groups to develop attack strategies for AP questions and analytical ideas about the use of rhetoric. This will culminate in the students writing their first analytical essay on rhetorical techniques used in a given passage.

Vocabulary Unit 1.

Weeks 5-9 – 8 Modes of Writing

Assignments and activities: Students learn the eight modes of writing: narration, description, process analysis, definition, classification, comparison and contrast, cause and effect, and argument and persuasion. From *50 Essays: A Portable Anthology*, ed. by Samuel Cohen, students read a variety of pieces, written in different time periods and with different authors and purposes, in order to deepen their understanding of each mode of writing and how they can intertwine in a piece. Students keep a critically based dialectical journal for each essay read. During this unit, students also engage in a number of small group activities, large group discussions, informal writing assignments, and formal essays. Students learn and write style analysis, practice multiple choice questions, and analyze how footnotes add meaning to a text. Students grapple with timed AP essays and write a multiple draft analytical paper connecting an essay, Mike Rose's "I Just Wanna Be Average," and a famous James Baldwin statement about education. Students analyze a sample introduction to this essay, and then I conference with each student about the introductions to this paper. Students also outline several possible answers to various essay questions based on the multiple readings from *50 Essays: A Portable Anthology*. Students learn about logical fallacies and reader assumptions, and practice identifying and correcting both. Daily annotation and analysis of excerpts from written texts or visual texts continues. Students learn to write a précis in order to hone their analysis of author's purpose, develop their skills in textual support for their ideas, and build their skills in writing complex sentences.

Vocabulary Units 2-4.

Readings: "Graduation" by Maya Angelou, "Me Talk Pretty One Day" by David Sedaris, "How to Tame a Wild Tongue" by Gloria Anzaldúa, "I Just Wanna Be Normal" by Mike Rose, "The Ways We Lie" by Stephanie Ericsson, "Letter from Birmingham Jail" by Martin Luther King, Jr., and "Just Walk on By: Black Men and Public Space."

Weeks 10-15–The Mode Project

Assignments and activities: For the first part of this project, students read eight selected passages, one for each mode, all grouped around the idea of family. These pieces are read out of class, and then students take a multiple choice test with questions developed by Renee H, Shea and Lawrence Scanlon for the texts in *50 Essays: A Portable Anthology*.

For the second portion of this project, students pick eight previously unassigned essays, one for each mode, from *50 Essays: A Portable Anthology*, and write a précis for each, demonstrating their understanding of these texts while honing their writing skills. This process takes several days. During class, discussions and analysis take place among students who have chosen the same essay. MLA citation format is reviewed and refined for these précis.

For the third portion of this assignment, students individually choose broad, open ended topics. Using different techniques, students write a 2-3 page essay in each of the eight modes of writing. All eight essays must reflect some aspect of the students' individual topics. Several days of class time are devoted to developing ideas and writing the first drafts, and students meet with me frequently. On the first draft due date, students

submit anonymous papers to be peer edited. Each student group is responsible for peer editing all essays in one mode. I provide specific editing guidelines and work with each group to guarantee that substantive comments are being made. After this process is completed, the drafts are returned to the students. This takes the class up to Winter Break. During Winter Break, the students revise the essays based on their own ideas, the peer editors comments, and the conferences with me.

During this unit, students also write another argument essay from an AP exam prompt and another essay analyzing an author's use of rhetorical and literary techniques, also from an AP exam prompt.

Vocabulary Units 5-6.

Readings: From *50 Essays: A Portable Anthology*: "The Way to Rainy Mountain" by N. Scott Momaday, "Two Ways to Belong in America" by Bharati Mukherjee, "What Are Homosexuals For?" by Andrew Sullivan, "Mother Tongue" by Amy Tan, "In Search of Our Mothers' Gardens" by Alice Walker, "Once More to the Lake" by E. B. White, "Television: The Plug-In Drug" by Marie Winn.

From *The Riverside Reader* (8th edition): "Arranging a Marriage in India" by Serena Nanda.

Weeks 16-18–Synthesis

Assignments and activities: Upon return from Winter Break, students submit their final, revised copies of their eight mode essays. These essays include a polished final copy in all of the following modes: narration, description, process analysis, definition, classification, comparison and contrast, cause and effect, and argument and persuasion. Students warm up with a visual text – the short story "Ordeal by Cheque" by Wuerther Crue (published in *Vanity Fair* in 1932, and cited in *Content Area Reading: Literacy and Learning Across the Curriculum*, 6th ed.). This short story is made up entirely of pictures of checks over a twenty-nine year period, which tell the story of the life and rise and fall of a privileged young man in early 20th century California. Students read the text and form their own opinions as to the events in this character's life, then explain, challenge, defend, and reformulate their opinions in whole group discussion.

During this unit, class time is used to introduce the idea of a timed synthesis essay, and students learn and practice several techniques to improve both their analysis and synthesis of texts and their timed writing. A teacher lecture (based on "Tips for Writing the Synthesis Essays" and David Joliffe's "Six Moves Toward Success" – both from the AP Central Web site) provides students with foundational information about structure and style in a synthesis essay and techniques for tackling such a complex piece of writing on a timed basis. Students look at previous student samples of good and better synthesis passages; then, in pairs, they tackle improving a number of passages and presenting their changes to the class as a whole. Students review the AP Synthesis Essay scoring guide and read, analyze, and discuss the passages for a sample question. In pairs, students compose detailed outlines for their answers to a synthesis question prompt, including details about which sources they plan to use to support their arguments. Students score student sample essays to a synthesis question. Students also write an argument essay in response to an AP exam prompt, working on building development of their argumentative points through specific examples from their own knowledge, parallel

to the synthesis exam techniques. The final exam for the semester occurs at the culmination of this unit and consists of writing a timed synthesis essay from an AP exam prompt.

Outside of class, students are engaged on an assignment following a nationally syndicated columnist. A list of columnists of all political stripes from such papers as *The New York Times*, *The Washington Post*, *The Los Angeles Times*, *The Chicago Tribune*, etc. is provided for the students as a starting point. Students select and annotate five columns from their chosen columnist, find a straight news article on the same subject as one of the editorials, find an editorial with an opposing viewpoint, again on the same subject, and write an analysis of the three different treatments of the subject, including which was the most compelling and convincing text and why. Students must cite all information using proper MLA format for this project.

SECOND SEMESTER

While annotation of specific brief stand alone passages is replaced more often than not with close analysis of longer passages from the reading selections this semester, the evaluation and annotation of visual texts continues on a near daily basis. These annotated texts continue to be collected and assessed as in first semester.

Week 1-2–*The Autobiography of Benjamin Franklin*

Assignments and activities: As an introduction to a unit on a variety of texts, in multiple genres, from the Colonial Era and forward, students read *The Autobiography of Benjamin Franklin*. Activities and assignments for this unit are focused on a close look at the rhetorical strategies utilized by Franklin in his writing, and include analysis and discussion of Franklin's various personas, close reading analysis of selected portions of the text, précis writing, and tone analysis. Students will also tackle, in small group discussions and individual essay writing, previous AP exam prompts and sample tests focused on writing by such individuals as Esther Burr, Thomas Jefferson, Lord Chesterfield, and Thomas Jefferson. The purpose of these writings is to continue to build students' abilities in analysis of rhetorical strategies used by authors. Students rewrite introductions to various timed essays completed near the end of the first semester.

Vocabulary Unit 7.

Week 3-9–Revolutionary Era Project

Assignments and Activities: This unit begins with a review of famous 20th century speeches (Franklin Delano Roosevelt, Winston Churchill, John F. Kennedy, Martin Luther King, Jr., Robert Kennedy, and Malcolm X) and a review of argument and persuasion (Ch. 13 in *The Bedford Reader*, 9th edition). During this unit, students will read a variety of texts from a range of public genres (pamphlets, speeches, written arguments) and private genres (letters, diary entries) tackling a range of issues. Most of the texts come from the Revolutionary War era, but some are revolutionary in nature and spring from later eras. Students write a Reader's Response Notebook entry for every text read, focusing on analysis of the authors' rhetoric and how it is used to develop argument. A wide range of activities also occurs in class, leading to the final activity of researching an issue and writing and presenting a speech which will try to persuade the

audience to accept and/or take action on an idea. Students will work on the research independently, but will have several days in class to write their speeches, revise them, conference with me, and layer in rhetorical strategies. These strategies are drawn from a list of required and recommended rhetorical techniques I give the students to use in their writing. Over Spring Break, the students refine their speeches, and they are formally delivered in class during the week following the vacation.

Periodically, students continue to write timed essays in response to AP prompts asking students to write an argument, respond to an argument, and analyze the use of rhetorical strategies in an author's writing. Students also continue to practice with multiple choice questions, either from previously released AP multiple choice exams or practice exams. After receiving written responses from me and engaging in discussion, students rewrite one of the timed essays from the previous unit. Often, this is the letter from Lord Chesterfield to his son essay, but it varies depending on the needs of the class.

Readings: "Argument and Persuasion: Stating Opinions and Proposals," from *The Bedford Reader*, 9th edition, "The Crisis" by Thomas Paine, "Speech to the Second Virginia Convention" by Patrick Henry, "The Declaration of Independence" by Thomas Jefferson, excerpts from "Poor Richard's Almanac" by Benjamin Franklin, excerpt from "What is an American?" by Michel-Guillaume Jean de Crèvecoeur, "Letter to the Reverend Samson Occam" by Phyllis Wheatley, "Letter to John Adams" by Abigail Adams, "Letter to George Washington" by Esther Reed, "Letter to Alexander Hamilton" by Maria Reynolds, "Letter to James Hillhouse" by Judith Cocks, "And Ain't I a Woman?" by Sojourner Truth, "The Gettysburg Address" by Abraham Lincoln, "I Will Fight No More Forever," by Chief Joseph, excerpt from "Stride Toward Freedom" by Martin Luther King, Jr., "Protect Ourselves," by Malcolm X, and "If We Must Die," by Claude McKay.

Week 10-15: Creative Nonfiction Seminar

Note: In Spring Semester 2008, this unit will be revised to include two weeks with all students reading Truman Capote's *In Cold Blood*, with daily student response writing which leads to student led discussions focused on rhetorical analysis of the text. The seminar unit portion will be reduced to four weeks, otherwise following the pattern described below.

Assignments and activities: During this unit, students will select from six different nonfiction works, which are written in various modes and for various different purposes, and which cover a variety of topics and time periods. Students self-select books and work in small groups comprised of classmates who are reading the same work. During the course of the reading, students use Post-It notes to annotate their texts highlighting significant passages, rhetorical or literary strategies used and their effect, unfamiliar words and their meanings, information providing significant characterization, areas that strike the reader as unusual, areas that the reader wishes to discuss for clarification, and any connections or personal comments the reader wishes to include. Each day, students engage in small group discussion analyzing portions of their text, utilizing a list of rhetorically based questions provided by the teacher as well as their own ideas and

questions. During these discussions, the teacher reads and scores the annotated notes in each individual student's book, answers questions, and monitors discussions. Students receive a score for their discussion notes and their Post-It annotations. In addition, students complete a variety of assignments, incorporating analysis, interpretation, and creative elements, in order to demonstrate their mastery of the text.

Throughout this unit, which leads directly to the Advanced Placement English Language and Composition exam, students also write weekly timed essays in response to AP exam prompts in the areas of writing argument, responding to arguments, analyzing an author's rhetorical techniques in a provided passage, and synthesizing information from sources into an argument. Furthermore, students take quizzes on rhetorical terms and take practice multiple choice exams.

Readings: *In Cold Blood* by Truman Capote (adding in spring 2008), *Silent Spring* by Rachel Carson, *Pilgrim at Tinker Creek* by Annie Dillard, *Into Thin Air* by Jonathan Krakauer, *Walden* by Henry David Thoreau, *Let Us Now Praise Famous Men* by James Agee and Walker Evans, *Angela's Ashes* by Frank McCourt, and (adding in spring 2008) *Seabiscuit: An American Legend* by Laura Hillenbrand.

Week 16-18: Post-AP Exam Project: Rosetta Stones

Assignments and Activities: This assignment is based on the historical Rosetta Stone as a translation key, and is designed to allow students to explore language beyond the boundaries of formal academic English. Students first explore various dialects, both regional and cultural, through PBS' web site for the program "Do You Speak American?" Then, they brainstorm their own language use, and all the formal languages they speak, as well as the informal dialects they use. Once students have acquired a fully developed sense of their own rich language use, they select a passage which holds some personal significance to themselves, and embark on a translation into two other languages or dialects. One version of the passage must be in English. After the translations are accomplished and polished, then the students create a translation artifact, incorporating clues, visuals, artistry, etc. as they see fit. These artifacts are accompanied by a formal written reflection based on their explorations of language and what was revealed. Students then present their own "Rosetta Stones" to the class and students attempt to crack the codes and write responses for each other. Students needing to take a final exam do so in this time period. The final exam is a previously released AP English Language and Composition exam, and is taken over the course of three class periods. Students who have taken the AP English Language and Composition exam in May are exempt from the final.

Texts Used in Class

This course uses a variety of textbooks and other supplemental reading and visual materials.

General Texts, Anthologies, Source Material and Teacher Resources:

Chin, Beverly Ann, and Denny Wolfe, et al, eds. *Glencoe Literature: Reader's Choice:*

American Literature. New York: Glencoe/McGraw Hill, 2000.

Cohen, Samuel, ed. *50 Essays: A Portable Anthology*. Boston: Bedford/St. Martin's, 2004.

Franklin, Benjamin. *The Autobiography of Benjamin Franklin with Related Readings*. Edited by The Glencoe Literature Library. New York: Glencoe/McGraw Hill, 2000.

Kennedy, X.J., Dorothy M. Kennedy, and Jane E. Aaron, eds. *The Bedford Reader*. 9th ed. Boston: Bedford/St. Martin's, 2006.

Roskelly, Hepzibah, and David A. Joliffe. *Everyday Use: Rhetoric at Work in Writing and Reading*. AP Edition. New York: Pearson Longman, 2005.

Ruszkiewicz, John, Daniel Anderson, and Christy Friend. *Beyond Words: Reading and Writing in a Visual Age*. New York: Pearson Longman, 2006.

Shea, Renee H. and Lawrence Scanlon. *Teaching Nonfiction in AP English: A Guide to Accompany 50 Essays: A Portable Anthology*. Boston: Bedford/St. Martin's, 2005.

Trimmer, Joseph, and Maxine Hairston, eds. *The Riverside Reader*. 8th ed. New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 2005.

Creative Nonfiction Seminar Texts:

In Cold Blood by Truman Capote

Silent Spring by Rachel Carson

Pilgrim at Tinker Creek by Annie Dillard

Into Thin Air by Jonathan Krakauer

Walden by Henry David Thoreau

Let Us Now Praise Famous Men by James Agee and Walker Evans

Angela's Ashes by Frank McCourt

Seabiscuit: An American Legend by Laura Hillenbrand (adding in spring 2008)