

AP English Language and Composition
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Course Overview

The Advanced Placement English Language and Composition class is designed as an introductory college-level course in the reading and the writing of critical analyses of a compendium of essays from the human experience. This process involves the understanding of how authors communicate their thoughts through language as a rhetorical enterprise, and it involves the appreciation of the human phenomenon we call language.

The objectives and goals of this course are based on the **College Board's AP ENGLISH Language and Composition Course Description (May 2007, May 2008)**.

The course focuses on the reading of a rich diversity of essays, the analysis of the genres of essays, the writing of critical analyses as well as personal reflections and responses to these essays which originated from a “variety of periods, disciplines, and rhetorical contexts.”

Course Planner

Summer Reading

Two texts are required for summer reading:

Springer, S. P. & Franck, M.R. (2005). Admission matters: What student and parents need to know about getting into college. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass

Steinberg, J. (2003). The gatekeepers: Inside the admissions process of a premiere college. New York: Penguin Books.

Fall Semester

Unit 1 – Referenced Expository Writing (6 weeks)

The Fall begins with a review discussion and informal personal writing of the summer reading texts. Students personally reflect on the key concepts presented in the two texts. Students take Cornell Notes on the summer readings, on additional research in periodicals and websites, and on class discussions as a preparation for the gathering of sources for a formal expository paper on the topic of college selection and planning. Students use the Modern Language Association (MLA) to cite their sources in the writing of the referenced expository essay. Students practice the writing process by drafting and revising several versions of their referenced expository paper. Students learn to “read primary and secondary sources carefully, to synthesize material from these texts in their own compositions, and to cite sources...”

Course Texts

Kirschner, L. G. & Mandell, S. R. (2001). Patterns for college writing: A rhetorical reader and guide. ed. 8. Boston: Bedford/St. Martin's.

An assortment of non-fiction from the human experience found chiefly online.

Unit 2 – Referenced Analytical Writing (6 weeks)

The Fall semester continues with the reading and analysis of various genres of essays which include narration, description, and exemplification. Along with reading examples of these types of essays, students learn to write these essays using the American Psychological Association (APA) convention to cite their sources. Students practice analytical writing making arguments from additional sources to support their analysis of the material with fully referenced citations. Students learn to synthesize the arguments from several sources to create an effective essay of their own.

Narrative essays read and analyzed include

Maya Angelou: *Finishing School*,
Donna Smith-Yakel: *My Mother Never Worked*,
Martin Gansberg: *Thirty-eight Who Saw Murder Didn't Call the Police*,
George Orwell: *Shooting an Elephant* and
Frederick Douglass' *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, An American Slave*.

Descriptive essays read and analyzed include

Marty Gordon: *More than Just a Shrine: Paying Homage to the Ghosts of Ellis Island*,
N. Scott Momaday: *The Way to Rainy Mountain*,
Mark Twain: *Reading the River*, and
Michel de Montaigne's *On Cannibals*.

Exemplification essays read and analyzed include

Laurence Peter and Raymond Hull's seminal work, *The Peter Principle*,
Brent Staples: *Just Walk on By: A Black Man Ponders His Power to Alter Public Space*,
Jonathan Kozol: *The Human Cost of an Illiterate Society* and
Theodore Kaczynski: *Against Technologies: Human Suffering*. 167-180.

In the composition of their essays, students learn to “place their emphasis on content, purpose and audience and to allow this focus to guide the organization of their writing.” The students use the essays listed above as a model and as a source of inspiration to achieve this focus. Students also learn to synthesize the arguments from several sources to create an effective essay of their own.

Unit 3 – Referenced Argumentative Writing (6 weeks)

The last part of the Fall semester concludes with the reading, analysis and writing of argumentative essays under the genres of process essays, cause and effect essays, definition essays, and classification and division essays. Students learn to write these essays using the Chicago Manual of Style convention to cite their sources. Students learn both the Document-Note and the Author-Date options offered in the Chicago Manual of Style. Students practice argumentative essay writing by investigating additional sources to support their analysis of the material with fully referenced citations.

Process essays read and analyzed include

- Malcom X: *My First Conk*,
- Jessica Mitford: *The Embalming of Mr. Jones*,

Cause and Effect essays read and analyzed include

- Lawrence Otis Graham: *The “Black Table” Is Still There*,
- Linda M. Hasselstrom: *A Peaceful Woman Explains Why She Caries and Gun*

Comparison and Contrast essays read and analyzed include

- Bharati Mukherjee: *Two Ways to Belong in America*
- Deborah Tannen: *Sex, Lies, and Conversation*

Classification and Division essays read and analyzed include

- William Zinsser: *College Pressures*
- Alleen Pace Nilsen: *Sexism in English: Embodiment and Language*
- Stephanie Ericsson: *The Ways We Lie*

Argumentative essays read, analyzed and debated include

Ethnic Housing Debate

- Rebecca Lee Parker: *Why Special Housing for Ethnic Students Makes Sense*
- Dena S. Davis: *College Housing Should Avoid Ethnic and Religious Balkanization*

Date Rape Debate

- Camille Paglia: *It’s a Jungle Out There*
- Susan Jacoby: *Common Decency*

In the composition of their argumentative essays, students learn to write papers that are “based on reading, not solely upon personal experience and observation.” It is argued by this teacher that every paper written in college makes an argument of some sort. This course emphasizes that “researched argument papers help students to formulate varied, informed arguments.” Thus a heavy focus is placed upon researched argument papers.

Students learn to synthesize the arguments from several sources to create an effective essay of their own.

The first semester culminates with Jonathan Swift's argumentative essay, *A Modest Proposal*. Students analyze its rhetorical strategies and devices. Then students write referenced argumentative proposals of their own – some modest, others not.

Spring Semester

Segment 1 – AP Exam Practice

With the warming of the weather comes the approach of the month of May and the AP exam season. Direct attention is paid to the components of AP English Language and Composition exam. Students take mock AP exams. They analyze sample multiple-choice questions. Student also practice writing the analytical and open-ended essays taken from previous AP exams. Students also learn strategies that will help them write the synthesis essay. Included among these strategies is visual literacy where students learn to comprehend and analyze graphics and visual images. The students are exposed to published AP sample material such as the released AP English Language and Composition 1991 Exam and the downloadable samples from the College Board website. Mock AP exams are given **throughout** the Spring semester until the day of the exam itself.

Segment 2 – Reading and Analysis of a Variety of Essays

Along with AP exam practice, students will still read from a wonderfully diverse compendium of essays. The best way to prepare for the AP exam is to “become aware of how stylistic effects are achieved by writer’s linguistic choices.” This is achieved through the reading and analysis of richly written essays. These essays are read throughout the semester.

Essays read and analyzed in the second semester include excerpts from

Plato: *The Republic*

Sun Tzu: *The Art of War*

Religious Literature from the *Bible*, *Koran*, *Bhagavad Gita*

Machiavelli: *The Prince*

Marx & Engels: *The Communist Manifesto*

John Donne: *Meditation 17*

Charles Darwin: *The Origin of the Species*

Ralph Waldo Emerson: *Nature*

Mohandas Gandhi: *Speech to the Indian Congress*

Barak Obama: *Convention Speech 2004*

Epictetus: *The Enchiridion*

Segment 3 – Writing Rich Content and the Use of Rhetorical Strategies

One can hardly separate the reading of wonderful essays from the writing analysis of analytical responses. Through the writing of their own essays, students practice the rhetorical devices and strategies they have read and analyzed. Students write essays,

personal reflections, observations; they write formally and informally throughout the Spring semester.

Segment 4 – Review of Writing Conventions and the Review of Citation Styles

Students review “standard English grammar… and writing conventions at all levels.” Students also review the citation styles learned in the first semester: the APA, MLA, and Chicago Manual of Style. This review is performed throughout the second semester.

Segment 5 – Post AP Exam: A Time of Reflection

As the school year rapidly draws to a close, students are encouraged to reflect upon their learning, reading, writing and analysis through a series of projects. Reflective essays and projects force students into metacognition. Many of these students are seniors and they will be asked to reflect upon their entire high school and K-12 experience. Learning takes place upon reflection. Time permitting, students continue to read, analyze and write provocative essays, just as they have all year.

Student Evaluation

Students are taught to utilize the AP Exams 9 point rubric. From the rubric, points are at time derived to fit the 100%, 90%, 80% etc. grading convention. Both formal and informal assessments are used. Formal assessments include pre-formative, formative and summative assessments such as journals, exams, quizzes, timed-writings, mock AP exams, vocabulary assessments, peer editing, various projects (both individual and group) and researched/referenced essays. Informal assessments also include pre-formative, formative and summative assessments such as personal reflections and observations, peer editing, personal response system (prs) polling, wiki-writing, blogs, and podcasts/RSS feeds. Informal assessments are also both individual and group designed.

Hybridized Classroom Component

This AP class meets traditionally in a classroom. However, in order to meet individual needs, this course will also hybridized beginning in the Fall 2007 with the use of an online teaching platform, BlackBoard. Current students are familiar with the classroom use of teacher-made movies, the use of a personal response system (prs), wikis, RSS Feeds/PodCasts, blogs, and of course the Internet where the instructor has posted resources for this class.