

Course Overview:

The purpose of this course is to help students “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*, Fall 2010, p.7). The course is organized according to the requirements and guidelines of the current *AP English Course Description*, and, therefore, students are expected to read critically, think analytically, and communicate clearly both in writing and speech. Three skills we will be stressing are close reading, rhetorical analysis, and expository and analytic writing.

Grading System:

Grades will be based on a combination of major essays, timed in-class writings, “Stuff I’ve Been Reading” Essays, AP reading practices, class work, language card assignments, quizzes, class participation (including blogs), literature assignments and the researched argument paper.

Approximate breakdown: Homework 15%, AP Practice Essays 20%, Stuff I’ve Been Reading 20%, Major Essays 20%, Quizzes 15%, Participation 10%.

Exam

The AP Language and Composition Exam is scheduled for Wednesday, May 16, 2012. **All students are expected to take the exam.** The cost of the exam is \$87.00. If you have a demonstrable financial hardship, please see me regarding fee reductions and scholarship opportunities. Remember, taking the AP exam is the only way you may become eligible for college credit for this class—although our main focus **is** on you becoming a better writer and reader, the exam is an excellent opportunity for you to assess your success in this class.

Writing

This is a writing class. We will write informally to learn, and formally to share learning and practice the techniques we are seeing modeled in the reading we do in class. You will write narrative, expository, analytical, and argumentative essays on assigned topics as well as topics of your own choosing.

Each writing unit requires you to acquire and use rich vocabulary, to use standard English grammar, and to understand the importance of diction and syntax in an author’s style. Therefore, you are expected to develop the following:

- a wide-ranging vocabulary used appropriately and effectively
- a variety of sentence structures, including appropriate use of subordination and coordination
- logical organization, enhanced by specific techniques to increase coherence, such as repetition, transitions, and emphasis
- a balance of generalization and specific illustrative detail
- an effective use of rhetoric including controlling tone, establishing and maintaining voice, and achieving appropriate emphasis through diction and sentence structure

(College Board *AP English Course Description*, Fall 2010, p. 9)

In addition to timed, in-class writings, informal reflective essays and other writing exercises, you will write one major paper for each thematic unit. Your papers will initially be submitted electronically via the hand-in folder/email as polished first drafts, which will be assessed with comments and suggestions by the teacher and/or peers for changes but not graded. You will then resubmit finished essays for a holistic grade according to the AP 9-point scale. The AP scale will carry a progressive grade point conversion as the year goes on; as we expect you to improve as writers throughout the year, we will adjust our expectations accordingly.

Summer Reading

Over the summer of 2011, we will read Eric Schlosser's *Fast Food Nation* and Malcolm Gladwell's *The Tipping Point*. You will be responsible for a number of informal writing assignments throughout the summer to be posted on a class blog. Details of these assignments will be distributed in June 2011. We will maintain the blog throughout the year to create a community of writers and readers sharing our reactions to the reading and writing we do in class.

Independent Reading/ "Stuff I've Been Reading" Paper

It has been often said that the only good writers are voracious readers. You will be expected to independently read a wide variety of outside materials in addition to the required reading assignments for class. Each month, you should read one outside book, as well as items from the newspaper, magazines and online materials. On the first Friday of each month you will be required to hand in a critical/reflective essay describing and commenting on what you have been reading the previous month. As there are 9 first Fridays in our school year (not including September), you will be expected to read 9 books: 3 fiction titles selected from an approved fiction list, 3 selected from an approved non-fiction list and 3 titles you select on your own that are appropriate to the level of our work in this class.

Language Cards

We will begin each class with an index card with a language mini-lesson. Topics of these lessons include grammatical rules, rhetorical devices, proofreading exercises, and sentence combining/imitating exercises to develop our writing styles.

Timed In-Class Essays

Timed in-class essays will be 40-minute essays modeled on previous AP Exam questions. They will be graded on the 9-point AP writing rubric.

Researched Argument Paper

Throughout the year, you will be learning research skills in order to strengthen your own arguments. As a class, you will move beyond research to *find* sources, to learning to analyze, evaluate, use and cite primary and secondary sources. You will continue to use the Modern Language Association (MLA) style for citing sources as you have throughout high school, but we will also examine other editorial styles, including the American Psychological Association (APA) and The Chicago Manual of Style.

In the spring, you will also be assigned a researched argument paper, which insists, "Students move past assignments that allow for the uncritical citation of sources and, instead, take up projects that call on them to evaluate the legitimacy and purpose of sources used. One way to help students synthesize and evaluate their sources in this way is the researched argument paper." (College Board *AP English Course Description*, Fall 2010 p. 8-9)

Thematic Units

The writing of a particular time period examines the issues facing the people in that time period. We will examine issues and questions facing us now and where those issues came from historically. Our focus will be on the **what** and the **how**. **what** are the writers saying and **how** are they saying it? We begin with the assumption that all writers are attempting to persuade us and that all writing inherently presents an argument. As we study each unit, we will "enter the conversation" about the issue being studied in a formal essay.

Readings will come from *The Language of Composition* and teacher provided materials.

Course Outline

Introduction:

September

- Rules and Responsibilities
- Grading System
- Review of Summer Reading Assignments
 - Visual: Scenes from *Super Size Me* by John Banzhaf

Mini-lessons

Throughout year

- Vocabulary building
 - New York Times Learning Network Test Prep
- Language cards
 - Rhetorical Devices and Literary Terms
 - Grammatical Points
 - Sentence combining

Introduction to Rhetoric

- Essential Question: *How does language persuade?*
- Chapter One: An Introduction to Rhetoric

Close Reading

- Essential Question: *How do we analyze writing?*
- Chapter Two: Close Reading – The Art and Craft of Analysis

Synthesizing Sources

- Essential Question: *How do we get involved?*
- Chapter Three: Synthesizing Sources – Entering the Conversation

September

Thematic Units

Education

October

- To what extent do our schools serve the goals of true education?*
- “I Know Why the Caged Bird Cannot Read” – Francine Prose
- From “Education” – Ralph Waldo Emerson
- “Superman and Me” – Sherman Alexie
- “Learning to Read” – Malcolm X
- “How to Read a Difficult Text” – Mortimer Adler
- “Stuff I’ve Been Reading” #2
- 2 AP Practice essays
- Major Essay – Synthesis Essay

Politics**November*****What is the nature of the relationship between the citizen and the state?***

Convention acceptance speeches — Barack Obama and John McCain

“Politics and the English Language” — George Orwell

“On Seeing England for the First Time” — Jamaica Kincaid

“A Modest Proposal” — Jonathan Swift

“Shooting an Elephant” — George Orwell

“Stuff I’ve Been Reading” #1

2 AP Practice essays

Major Essay – Rhetorical Analysis

Novel: *The Things They Carried* – Tim O’Brien**Work****December*****How does our work shape or influence our lives?***

From “Serving in Florida” – Barbara Ehrenreich

“The Atlanta Exposition Address” – Booker T. Washington

From “Labour” – Thomas Carlyle

From “The Writing Life” – Annie Dillard

“Stuff I’ve Been Reading” #3

2 AP Practice essays

1 Major Essay

Play: *Death of a Salesman* – Arthur Miller**Community****January*****What is the relationship of the individual to the community?***

“Letter from Birmingham Jail” – Martin Luther King Jr.

“Where I Lived, and What I Lived For” – Henry David Thoreau

“All Happy Clans Are Alike: In Search of the Good Family” – Jane Howard

“The New Community” – Amitai Etzioni

Nature***What is our responsibility to nature?***From *Silent Spring* – Rachel CarsonFrom *Nature* – Ralph Waldo Emerson

“An Entrance to the Woods” – Wendell Berry

“Stuff I’ve Been Reading” #4

AP Practice essay – Rhetorical Analysis “Migration”

1 Major Essay

Gender**February*****What is the impact of the gender roles that society creates and enforces?***

“Women’s Brains” – Stephen Jay Gould

“Professions for Women” – Virginia Woolf

Letters – John and Abigail Adams

“Stuff I’ve Been Reading” #5

AP Practice essay – Argument Essay

1 Major Essay

Novel: *The Great Gatsby* – F. Scott Fitzgerald

Sports and Fitness**March*****How do the values of sports affect the way we see ourselves?***

“The Silent Season of a Hero” – Gay Talese

“The Proper Place for Sports” – Theodore Roosevelt

“Kill ’Em, Crush ’Em, Eat ’Em Raw!” – John McMurtry

“A Spectator’s Notebook” – Kris Vervaecke

“Stuff I’ve Been Reading” #6

AP Practice essays

1 Major Essay

Popular Culture**April*****To what extent does pop culture reflect our society’s values?***

“Corn-Pone Opinions” – Mark Twain

“High-School Confidential: Notes on Teen Movies” – David Denby

“Show and Tell” – Scott McCloud

“Dreaming America” – Danyel Smith

“Stuff I’ve Been Reading” #7

AP Practice Essays

Major Essay – Researched Argument Paper

Exam Preparation**May*****How are we going to get college credit for all this?******Macbeth* – William Shakespeare****May – June*****To what extent do we control our own fate?*****New York State Regents Exam Preparation****June*****What do we have to do to graduate in New York State?*****Texts:**Cohen, Samuel, ed. *50 Essays: A Portable Anthology*. Boston: Bedford/St. Martin’s, 2004.Gladwell, Malcolm. *The Tipping Point: How Little Things Can Make a Big Difference*. Boston: Little, Brown, 2000Fitzgerald, F. Scott. *The Great Gatsby*. New York: Scribner, 1925.Miller, Arthur. *Death of a Salesman*. New York: Penguin, 1949O’Brien, Tim. *The Things They Carried*. New York: Broadway Books, 1990.Schlosser, Eric. *Fast Food Nation*. New York: Harper Perennial, 2002.Shakespeare, William. *Macbeth*. New York: Dover.Shea, Renée, Lawrence Scanlon, Robin Dissin Aufses. *The Language of Composition*. Boston: Bedford/St. Martin’s, 2008.