Course Description

An AP course in English Language and Composition engages students 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 between 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. This course often allows students to write in a variety of forms – narrative, exploratory, expository, argumentative – and on a variety of subjects from personal experiences to public policies, from imaginative literature to popular culture. We will focus on the expository, analytical, and argumentative writing that forms the basis of academic and professional communications as well as the personal and reflective writing that fosters the development of writing facility in any context. Students will move beyond such programmatic responses as the five-paragraph essay. Although such formulaic approaches may provide minimal organization, they often encourage unnecessary repetition and fail to engage the reader. Students will be encouraged to place their emphasis on content, purpose, and audience and to allow this focus to guide their organization. We will write in informal and formal contexts to gain authority and learn to take risks in writing. Imitation exercises, journal keeping, collaborative writing, and in-class responses are just some of the types of assignments students can expect on a daily basis. In addition, students will read a wide variety of prose styles from many disciplines and historical periods to gain an understanding of the connections between interpretive skills in reading and writing. Stylistic development is nurtured by emphasizing the following:

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

Upon completing the Language and Composition course, students should be able to:

- analyze and interpret samples of good writing, identifying and explaining an author’s use of rhetorical strategies and techniques;
- apply effective strategies and techniques in their own writing;
- create and sustain arguments based on readings, research and/or personal experience;
- demonstrate understanding and master of standard written English as well as stylistic maturity in their own writings;
write in a variety of genres and contexts, both formal and informal, employing appropriate conventions;
produce expository and argumentative compositions that introduce a complex central idea and develop it with appropriate, specific evidence, cogent explanations, and clear transitions; and
move effectively through the stages of the writing process, with careful attention to inquiry and research, drafting, revising, editing, and review.

Curricular Requirements

AP Language and Composition is based on the AP English Course Description, available as a free download on the AP English Language and Composition Course Home Page.
This course teaches 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).
This course requires students to write essays that proceed through several drafts, with revision aided by the teacher and peers.
The course requires students to write in informal contexts (e.g., journal writing, collaborative writing, and in-class responses) designed to help them become increasingly aware of themselves as writers and of the techniques employed by the writers they read.
The course requires expository, analytical, and argumentative writing assignments that are based on readings representing a wide variety of prose styles and genres.
The course requires nonfictions readings (e.g., essays, journalism, political writing, science writing, autobiographies/biographies, history, criticism) that are selected to give students opportunities to identify and explain an author’s use of rhetorical strategies and techniques.
The course teaches students to analyze how graphics and visual images both relate to written texts and serve as alternative forms of text.
The course teaches research skills, and in particular, the ability to evaluate, use, and cite primary and secondary sources. The course assigns projects such as the researched argumentative paper, which goes beyond the parameters of a traditional research paper by asking students to present an argument of their own that includes the analysis and synthesis of ideas from an array of sources.
The course teaches students how to cite sources using Modern Language Association (MLA) style.
The teacher will provide instruction and feedback on students’ writing assignments, both before and after the students revise, which helps students develop a wide-ranging vocabulary (used appropriately and effectively), a variety of sentence structures, logical organization, a balance of general and specific details, and an effective use of rhetoric.

(http://apcentral.collegeboard.com)
Course Timetable

First Semester

September

- Theme: Family
- Anchor Text: *The Glass Castle* (2005), a memoir
- Timed Essay: AP Released Exam free-response questions that highlight personal essays.
  - Close reading: students will analyze stylistic features of Jeanette Walls’ memoir, incorporating dialectical journal writing for note making
  - Pair/Share and Pair/Square discussion groups
  - Precis summary paragraphs, quick-writes, journal responses
  - Writing Assignment: The student will write a narrative, either as a first-person memoir or a story written in the third person observing the experience of someone else. This essay will be a polished paper with peer revision using the Stephen Dunning Small-Group Method (University of Michigan) <http://peninsulawriters.home.att.net/index2.html>.

October-November

- Theme: Morals, Values, Politics (M.V.P.)
  - Linking and Discrepant Texts:
    - To be determined: This is a new unit and the texts have yet to finalized.

December-January

- Introduction to Rhetoric: Students will analyze the following in select passages of *Nickel and Dimed*:
  - Key elements, rhetorical triangle, appeals to ethos, logos, pathos
  - Visual rhetoric – analyzing visual texts and their relationships to a theme
- Synthesizing sources: Students will analyze linking (parallel themes) and discrepant (similar theme through different perspective) by making connections to anchor text, i.e., *Teenage Affluenza is Spreading Fast* (2007). The following ideas will be considered:
  - Complex, debatable issues in texts
  - Clear and focused position on either side of an argument
Diverse perspectives within the sources

- Timed essay: Students will write a free response synthesis essay, focusing on a clear position and incorporating two sources

- **Theme: Education – To what extent do our schools serve the goals of a true education?**
  - Linking Poetry: “The History Teacher” (Collins)
  - Linking Visuals/Audiovisuals: “Spirit of Education” (Rockwell), “Reading at Risk” (National Endowment for the Arts); “Make You Think” (Seinfeld); *Freedom Writers* (2007) clip
  - Perspectives: Six short readings/visuals to scaffold work on synthesis

- **Timed Essay:** Students will write an in-class synthesis essay on education theme

- **Theme: Work – How does our work shape or influence our lives?**
  - Linking Poetry: “Harvest Song” (Toomer)
  - Perspectives: Six short readings/visuals to scaffold work on synthesis

- **Writing Assignment:** Students will brainstorm a list of general statements based on the theme of work. Each student will develop one succinct, arguable thesis, research and write an essay in which the thesis is both focused and supported by examples drawn from their readings, conversations, and experiences. This will be a polished paper resulting from in-class writing workshops and will serve as a model for a longer, more in-depth paper second semester. A works cited page is required.

**SEMESTER EXAM:** ONE PASSAGE, MULTIPLE-CHOICE QUESTIONS, ESSAY

**Second Semester**

January – February

- **Theme: Gender – What is the impact of gender roles that society creates and enforces?**
• **Linking Poetry:** “Barbie Doll” (Piercy)
  - **Writing Assignment:** Students will partner-write a copychange poem entitled “G.I. Joe,” modeling Piercy’s style and tone in “Barbie Doll.”

• **Linking Pop Culture:** Students work in small groups to design audio/visual presentations to show how pop culture reflects our society’s view of accepted gender roles.

• **Writing Assignment:** Students will write a researched argumentative paper based on a gender issue. The paper will incorporate a balance of paraphrasing, summary, and quotations from multiple sources. Students will use these sources to analyze and synthesize ideas as support for their own argument. Students must use MLA-style citations throughout the paper and include a works cited page.

**March – April**

• **Theme:** Language – How does the language we use reveal who we are?


• **Panel Discussion on “Raising Bilingual Children”**
  - **Writing Assignment:** The class will break into small groups to research and plan a panel discussion comprised of community leaders who have first-hand experience with English as a Second Language (ESL). Specific group activities will include researching and contacting sources, designing a brochure for community use, writing questions for panel, and inviting audience members.

• **Group Discussions:** Students will brainstorm complex, debatable issues from varying perspectives on language issues and focused on service learning and/or commitment to community.
  - **Writing Assignment:** In small groups students will create original synthesis essay prompts on a language-related theme and find six linking and discrepant sources, including one visual, for use in a free response. An annotated bibliography will be submitted with the prompt and sources.

**May - June**

• **Preparation for the AP Exam on May 13, 2009**
  - Practice MC questions
  - Deconstructing essay prompts

The final unit of study is designed for Juniors after the Seniors graduate:

• **Anchor Text:** *Frankenstein*
• **Theme:** Science and Technology – How are advances in science and technology affecting the way we define our humanity?


• Linking Poetry: “Sonnet – to Science” (Poe), “When I Heard the Learn’d Astronomer” (Whitman)

• Linking Visuals/Audiovisuals: “The Cosmic Calendar” (Sagan), “Food Fight” (Wilson), “Technology Fear Factor” (Davis), “Did You Know?” (Fisch)

• Writing Assignment: Students will write a review of a student-choice movie, focusing on the scientific implications of the content and the overall effects of the computer-generated production. Reviews will be sent to the Grand Rapids Press for possible publication.

### Teaching Strategies

Even though students in an AP English Language and Composition course may be strong readers and writers, they still need a bank of strategies to draw from as they encounter challenging text. The most effective strategies are those that teach students to infer and analyze.

**Subject-Occasion-Audience-Purpose-Speaker-Tone (SOAPSTone) – Tommy Boley**

This is a text-analysis strategy I was introduced to at an AP Summer Institute as I prepared to teach this class. It is also a method for initially teaching students how to craft a more thoughtful thesis.

- **Speaker** – the individual or collective voice of the text
- **Occasion** – the event or catalyst causing the writing of the text to occur
- **Audience** – the group of readers to whom the piece is directed
- **Purpose** – the reason behind the text
- **Subject** – the general topic and/or main idea
- **Tone** – the attitude of the author

### Overview-Parts-Title-Interrelationships-Conclusion (OPTIC)

The following steps are used to help students approach visual texts:

- **Overview** – write down a few notes on what the visual appears to be about
- **Parts** – focus on the parts of the visual. Write down any elements or details that seem important
- **Title** – highlight the words of the title of the visual (if one is available)
- **Interrelationships** – use the title as the theory and the parts of the visual as clues to detect and specify the
interrelationships in the graphic
• Conclusion – draw a conclusion about the visual as a whole. What does the visual mean? Summarize the message of the visual in one or two sentences.

**Rhetorical Analysis – Active Reading**
For each reading assignment, students must identify the following in their reading journals:
• Thesis or claim
• Tone or attitude
• Purpose
• Audience and occasion
• Evidence or data
• Appeals: logos, ethos, pathos
• Assumptions or warrants
• Style (rhetorical mode, rhetorical devices)

**Stephen Dunning Small-Group Revision Process**
After students have written a first draft, they form small groups of four. Each student brings four copies of his/her piece to be shared with the group.
• Decide on a timer for the group. Each person has 10-15 minutes to share their piece.
• The first person passes out his/her piece to the group. (S)he reads the piece aloud while the others follow along, annotating questions/concerns/suggestions to help the writer in the revision process.
• After the oral reading, the author sits back and listens to the discussion among the other three. The author may not speak but should take notes during this time.
• The other three members of the group discuss the piece as if the author were not present. The focus should be on ideas, rather than mechanical issues. Grammar, spelling, and punctuation errors should be noted on the paper. The discussion should last approximately ten minutes.
• The author of the paper should thank the other members of the group when finished and collect all papers.
• Repeat this process for all members of the group.

**Gradual Release of Responsibility: Collaborative Group Activities**
• **Roaming Team Leader**
Students team in groups of six. After a topic discussion, one student from each group moves to another group, i.e., #2 from each group. Roaming leader moves counter-clockwise through groups, spending approximately 3-5 minutes in each group. He/She debriefs his/her discussion ideas to next group, moving through all groups.
- **Pair-Square**
  Partners pair up with another partner group to discuss a topic or reading.

- **Say Something**
  Students form trios and alternately read a difficult portion from text. After each reading, the listeners synthesize and summarize what they heard in the reading. The second person may not repeat what has already been stated.

- **Seasonal Partners/Quartets**
  Students write down someone’s name for each season of the year by roaming around the room and asking for signatures. Keep list. At varying times, students will meet with their fall, summer, spring, or winter partner. This can also be done with times of the day (12:00, 3:00, 6:00, and 9:00).

- **Quiz/Quiz/Trade**
  Students write a multiple-choice question about the author’s use of rhetorical devices in a reading and write on a 3x5 card. Each student debriefs their question with another student. After both have debriefed, students trade cards and find another partner. Students then debrief their new card and switch again. The process can be repeated according to time allotment.

- **Each Teach (Jig Saw)**
  Each student within a group of 3, 4, or 5 silently reads a different article, annotating in the margins. Each person teaches his/her article to the rest of the group. This can be done by exchanging information with one other student, followed by each partner team teaching another partner team.

- **Paired Verbal Fluency (for activating prior knowledge)**
  Following a homework reading assignment, students form quartets. Students number off; the first student takes a specific number of seconds to talk about the topic. When time is called, switch to #2. This new student continues to summarize the reading, but no information may be repeated. Each student is allowed an increasing number of seconds to talk (20-40-60-80). Good for adding more information to prior knowledge. To synthesize information, reverse the number of seconds allowed (80-60-40-20). This is an excellent opening activity for reviewing the homework reading assignment.

- **3-2-1**
  Students read an article and write 3 ideas they found interesting, 2 ideas they can apply to their personal lives, and 1 question they still have. An alternate activity is to make connections: 3 text-to-text, 2 text-to-self, and 1 text-to-world connections.

- **Silent Discussion**
After reading a selection or participating in an activity, each student writes a reflection or synopsis of what he/she just experienced. After approximately 2 minutes, partners switch notebooks (or paper). Each student reads his/her partner’s response and then silently responds to the writing. After 1 minute, switch again.

**Vocabulary Acquisition – Robert Marzano’s Six-Step Process**

- **Step 1: Explain**—Provide student-friendly description, explanation, or example of new term.
- **Step 2: Restate**—Ask students to restate description, explanation, or example in their own words.
- **Step 3: Show**—Ask students to construct picture, symbol, or graphic representation of term.
- **Step 4: Discuss**—Engage students periodically in structured vocabulary discussions that help them add to their knowledge of the terms in their vocabulary notebooks.
- **Step 5: Refine and reflect**—Periodically ask students to return to dialectic notebooks to discuss and refine entries.
- **Step 6: Apply in Learning Games**—Involve students periodically in activities that allow them to interact with terms.

**Teaching Style**

Because style is a major component of writing skill, students will learn and apply the use of verbals, phrases, and clauses to improve the quality and sophistication of their writing. Primarily, students will model authors’ style, transferring this knowledge to their own writing. In addition, students will learn figures of rhetoric in a piece of writing, particularly schemes and tropes. See Marzano’s approach above to facilitate learning of these terms.

**Schemes:** parallelism, isocolon, antithesis, zeugma, anastrophe, parenthesis, ellipsis, asyndeton, polysyndeton, alliteration, anaphora, epistrophe, anadiplosis, antimetabole, chiasmus, erotema, hypophora, epiplexis.

**Tropes:** metaphor, simile, synecdoche, metonymy, antonomasia (periphrasis), personification, anthimeria, litotes, irony, oxymoron, and paradox.

**Periodic Activities**

- Timed readings and writings
- Journal writing
- Prompt writing
- Brainstorming
- Discussion/think tank activities
- Team building
- Vocabulary reinforcement
- Copychange

**Student Resources**

**Required Texts:**
Teacher Resources

Writing

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