

Advanced Placement English Language and Composition

A Course Syllabus

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AP English Language & Composition

Course Overview

Students in this introductory college-level course read and carefully analyze a broad and challenging range of nonfiction prose selections, deepening their awareness of rhetoric and how language works. Through close reading and frequent writing, students develop their ability to work with language and text with a greater awareness of purpose and strategy, while strengthening their own composing abilities. Course readings feature expository, analytical, personal, and argumentative texts from a variety of authors and historical contexts. Students examine and work with essays, letters, speeches, images, and imaginative literature. Featured authors include Truman Capote, Michael Shaara, Stephen King, William Zinsser, Anton Chekhov, Kurt Vonnegut, Thomas Foster, Mark Twain, E. B. White, and Tim O'Brien.

Students will frequently confer about their writing in class as well as having student/teacher conferences to discuss prescribed writing plans. Summer reading and writing are required. During this course students will prepare for the AP English Language and Composition Exam and may be granted advanced placement, college credit, or both as a result of satisfactory performance.

Central course textbooks include: *The Language of Composition*; *50 Essays*; *Everything's an Argument: With Readings*; *Everyday Use: Rhetoric at Work in Reading and Writing*; *The Elements of Style*; and *Writing to Learn*.

Course reading and writing activities are designed to help students gain textual power, making them more alert to an author's purpose, the needs of an audience, the demands of the subject, and the resources of language: syntax, word choice, purpose, and tone. By early May of the school year, students will have nearly completed a course in close reading and purposeful writing. The critical skills that students learn to appreciate through close and continued analysis of a wide variety of nonfiction texts can serve them in their own writing, as they grow increasingly aware of these skills and their applicable uses. During the course, a wide variety of texts (prose and image based) and writing tasks provide the focus for an energetic study of the usage and pattern of language, rhetoric, and argument.

As this is a college-level course, performance expectations are appropriately high, and the workload is challenging. Students are expected to commit to a minimum of five hours of course work per week outside of class. Often, this work involves long-term writing and reading assignments, so effective time management is important. Because of the demanding curriculum, students must have sufficient command of the mechanical conventions of writing and an ability to read, analyze, and discuss prose.

This course is designed in accordance with the guidelines described in the *AP English Course Description*.

Course Planner

Summer Assignment: *Develop/Refine Close Reading and Text-Annotating Skills*

Students will read *How to Read Literature Like a Professor* and *On Writing*. The focus of this reading is to develop or refine the close reading and text annotation skills that are necessary for students to be able to effectively analyze and write about the literature that they will read for this course and the other writing they will do later in their academic career. Developing close reading and annotation skills is important because these skills are the foundation that enables students to construct a larger analysis. Their thoughts will evolve not from someone else's truth about the reading, but from their own observations. The more closely students can observe, the more original and exact their thoughts and ideas will be when writing.

Students will be given instructions on close reading and annotation, and are required to annotate *On Writing* by Stephen King. They will be given guidelines for creating a journal based on their close reading and annotation of the text. These journals, and their annotated copy of *On Writing*, will be due during the first week of class.

First Six Weeks

Vocabulary

Students receive *Sadler-Oxford Vocabulary Workshop Level F* workbooks to build on SAT vocabulary. Units will be tested approximately every two weeks for basic understanding and usage of these words.

Reading

In Cold Blood by Truman Capote

On Writing Well by William Zinsser

Selected essays from *50 Essays* including: *The Joy of Reading and Writing: Superman and Me*, Sherman Alexie; *On Compassion*, Barbara Lazear Ascher; *Lost in the Kitchen*, Dave Barry; *How You Became You*, Bill Bryson; *Why Don't We Complain?* William F. Buckley; *A Clack of Tiny Sparks: Remembrances of a Gay Boyhood*, Bernard Cooper.

Viewing

In Cold Blood

Strategies

Students are introduced to strategies for analyzing prose and visual texts in relation to the five canons of rhetoric: invention, arrangement, style, memory, and delivery. Students receive instruction in the SOAPSTone strategy developed by Tommy Boley for use in analyzing prose and visual texts. In addition, Students practice these strategies with the above-mentioned works.

Students will keep a journal (Appendix A) for their reading from *50 Essays*. In these journals students will write a summary for each essay, identify the writing strategies (narrative, compare/contrast, persuasion, etc.) the author uses to craft the essay, identify schemes and tropes used by the author, and identify new words that the students are unfamiliar with or are used in interesting or unusual ways.

Discussion

The course offers many opportunities for students to collaboratively practice the skills they need in order to check and clarify their thinking. They will participate in Literature Circles with specified jobs in each discussion. The assigned task for each discussion will alternate from student to student with each Literature Circle. Students will also be assigned rhetorical devices that they must investigate and find an interesting way to present and teach their peers. This offers the students a direct input into their educational process as well as a unique approach to enhancing their knowledge of style.

Essays

Students will write a number of shorter essays in this first six weeks in order for the teacher to gain an understanding of each student's strengths and weaknesses. Writing tasks will be based on author's purpose modes: persuasion/argumentation; compare/contrast; exposition; entertainment; question; and elicit emotional response. Students will peer edit each other's work as well as have writing conferences with the teacher about writing technique and skills.

Assessments

Vocabulary assignments are graded by the teacher and the students have a writing assignment based on the vocabulary from their workbooks. An AP-style, multiple-choice, six-weeks examination is given based on the essays read from *50 Essays*. The students write an "AP Book Report" (Appendix B) and three reaction paragraphs (Appendix C) for *In Cold Blood*.

Second Six Weeks

A portion of the six weeks will be given to taking a TAKS Benchmark test.

Vocabulary

Students will continue to work with *Sadler-Oxford Vocabulary Workshop Level F* workbooks to build on SAT vocabulary. Units will be tested approximately every two weeks for basic understanding and usage of these words.

Reading

Writing to Learn by William Zinsser

Selected essays from *50 Essays* including: *The Declaration of Independence*, Thomas Jefferson; *On Keeping a Notebook*, Joan Didion; *Learning to Read and Write*, Frederick Douglass; *On Dumpster Diving*, Lars Eighner; *The Ways We Lie*, Stephanie Ericsson; *Women's Brains*, Stephen Jay Gould.

Strategies

Teacher lectures and class discussion come from the first three chapters of *The Language of Composition*, deepening their understanding of the structure and use of rhetoric. Students will receive instruction on DIDLS for use in analyzing tone as a rhetorical strategy and a tool in assessing author's purpose. In this six weeks, we will also discover strategies for tackling the multiple choice section of the AP Language Exam through *The Princeton Review: Cracking the AP Language & Composition Exam 2007-2008 Edition*, as well as *Cliff's AP English Language and Composition Preparation Guide*. Rhetorical device peer teaching will continue with special emphasis on syntax. The students continue their essay journals with six more essays from *50 Essays*.

Discussion

Students will discuss current events in roundtable discussions relating to historical events. Student/teacher conferences will be held periodically to discuss timed writings.

Writing

Students will have two AP-style timed writings based on the essays from *50 Essays*.

Assessments

Vocabulary assignments are graded by the teacher and the students have a writing assignment based on the vocabulary from their workbooks. An AP-style, multiple-choice, six-weeks examination is given based on the essays read from *50 Essays*.

Third Six Weeks

Vocabulary

Students will continue to work with *Sadler-Oxford Vocabulary Workshop Level F* workbooks to build on SAT vocabulary. Units will be tested approximately every two weeks for basic understanding and usage of these words.

Reading

The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn, Mark Twain

Selected essays from *50 Essays* including: *Salvation*, Langston Hughes; *Letter from Birmingham Jail*, Martin Luther King Jr.; *On Being a Cripple*, Nancy Mairs; *Shooting an Elephant*, George Orwell; *Crito*, Plato; *I Just Wanna Be Average*, Mike Rose.

Strategy

The students continue their essay journals with six more essays from *50 Essays*. We will review the elements of rhetoric and writing essays.

Discussion

Using literature circles, the class will discuss *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* with special emphasis on satire and theme, as well as identifying and discussing significant passages from the novel. Students will also have discussion groups over strategies for essay writing. Peer editing and collaboration will be the focus of these discussion groups. Student/ teacher conference will be held periodically to discuss Writing Process Journals, as well as timed writings. Students continue peer-teaching exercises with rhetorical devices, with an emphasis on rhetorical fallacies.

Writing

Students will have two AP-style timed writings based on the essays from *50 Essays*.

Assessments

Vocabulary assignments are graded by the teacher, and the students have a writing assignment based on the vocabulary from their workbooks. An AP-style, multiple-choice, six-weeks examination is given based on the essays read from *50 Essays*. The students write an “AP Book Report” and three reaction paragraphs for *Huckleberry Finn*.

Fourth Six Weeks

Some time will be spent during this six weeks preparing students for the ELA TAKS test.

Vocabulary

Students will continue to work with *Sadler-Oxford Vocabulary Workshop Level F* workbooks to build on SAT vocabulary. Units will be tested approximately every two weeks for basic understanding and usage of these words.

Reading

The Killer Angels by Michael Shaara

Selected essays from *50 Essays* including: *Clashing Civilizations?* Edward Said; *The Inheritance of Tools*, Scott Russell Sanders; *Me Talk Pretty One Day*, David Sedaris; *Declarations of Sentiments*, Elizabeth Cady Stanton; *A Modest Proposal*, Jonathan Swift; *Mother Tongue*, Amy Tan.

Strategy

Students will also be introduced to the synthesis essay for the AP Language exam. We will begin reviewing for the AP examination. The students continue their essay journals with six short stories from Anton Chekhov.

Writing

Students will have an AP-style, timed writing based on the synthesis essay.

Assessments

Vocabulary assignments are graded by the teacher and the students have a writing assignment based on the vocabulary from their workbooks. An AP-style, multiple-choice, six-weeks examination is given based on the essays read from *50 Essays*. The students write an “AP Book Report” and three reaction paragraphs for *The Killer Angels*.

Fifth Six Weeks

Vocabulary

Students will continue to work with *Sadler-Oxford Vocabulary Workshop Level F* workbooks to build on SAT vocabulary. Units will be tested approximately every two weeks for basic understanding and usage of these words.

Reading

The Things They Carried by Tim O’Brien

Selected essays from *50 Essays* including: *Where I Lived and What I Lived For*, Henry David Thoreau; *Shooting Dad*, Sarah Vowell; *Once More to the Lake*, E.B. White; *Television: The Plug-In Drug*, Marie Winn; *Death of a Moth*, Annie Dillard; *The Insufficiency of Honesty*, Stephen L. Carter.

Strategy

Students will write a research paper during these six weeks. Students have already been introduced to MLA citation with the introduction of the synthesis essay. In these six weeks, however, they will study more completely how to arrange a paper in MLA format and use correct citation. The research paper will serve as further practice for the synthesis essay that is a part of the AP Language and Composition exam. Students continue to review for the AP examination. They will also continue their essay journals with six more essays from *50 Essays*.

Discussion

Literature circles will continue to be the method for novel discussion. Special emphasis will be on comparing the country's current situation in Iraq with that of the 1960s. Students will incorporate strong knowledge of current events as well as other readings

Argumentation Research/Writing

Students will research and write in correct MLA format an argumentation paper. Choosing from current points of conflict, such as: capital punishment; euthanasia; stem-cell research/cloning; and HPV vaccinations, students will research both sides of each case and write a persuasive paper using their knowledge of rhetorical fallacies to contribute to their argument.

Assessments

Vocabulary assignments are graded by the teacher, and the students have a writing assignment based on the using vocabulary from their workbooks. An AP-style, multiple-choice, six-weeks examination is given based on the essays read from *50 Essays*. The students write an "AP Book Report" and three reaction paragraphs for *The Killer Angels*.

Sixth Six Weeks

Vocabulary

Students will continue to work with *Sadler-Oxford Vocabulary Workshop Level F* workbooks to build on SAT vocabulary. Units will be tested approximately every two weeks for basic understanding and usage of these words.

Reading

Slaughterhouse Five, Kurt Vonnegut

Short stories by Anton Chekhov including: *A Story Without a Title*; *Rothschild's Fiddle*; *Sleepy*; *The Student*; *Grisha*; *In Exile*.

Viewing

Slaughterhouse Five

Strategy

The majority of these six weeks will be spent reviewing strategies for the AP Language and Composition exam. Students will have small writing workshops for the different types of essay prompts they may be given on the exam: agree/disagree; author's attitude; analyze effect; author's purpose; general statement; compare/contrast; and synthesis. A "mock test" will be given on a Saturday at the school, so that students may have a better understanding of time constraints in a live setting.

Discussion

Literature circles will continue to be the method for novel discussion. Special emphasis will be on comparing the country's current situation with that of the 1960s. Students will incorporate strong knowledge of current events as well as other readings

Assessments

Vocabulary assignments are graded by the teacher, and the students have a writing assignment based on the vocabulary from their workbooks. An AP-style, multiple-choice, six-weeks examination is given based on the essays read from *50 Essays*. The students write an "AP Book Report" and three reaction paragraphs for *Slaughterhouse Five*.

Appendix A

AP Essay Journal

In *50 Essays*, you will read 30 (six every six weeks) essays in order to gain background, points of view, opinions, and a variety of perspectives on a range of topics. To keep track of the essays, and the background information they will provide, you will write a journal entry for each essay read. These journals should be kept in a spiral notebook and be hand-written neatly, in pen. Each journal entry will contain the following information (sample included):

Date of journal entry.

Title and author of essay.

Brief summary of essay (one paragraph, including theme or thesis or main idea)

Type of essay – pattern of arrangement used: narrative, descriptive, process analysis, exemplification, comparison and contrast, classification and division, definition, cause and effect, argument. One short passage that shows evidence of the pattern of arrangement (there could be more than one).

Three schemes (artful syntax) or tropes (artful word choice) used in the essay.

New vocabulary. Five words you may not have encountered before, or that you might have trouble remembering: Identify the part of speech (noun, verb, adjective, adverb); an example of how the words are used in a sentence from the essay; provide a definition.

You will read 30 essays before the AP test in May. I will check your journals at the end of each of the six-weeks grading periods. You will receive one daily grade for each assignment completed, and six must be completed each grading period.

We will discuss the essays in class.

First Six Weeks:

The Joy of Reading and Writing: Superman and Me, Sherman Alexie

On Compassion, Barbara Lazear Ascher

Lost in the Kitchen, Dave Barry

How You Became You, Bill Bryson

Why Don't We Complain? William F. Buckley

A Clack of Tiny Sparks: Remembrances of a Gay Boyhood, Bernard Cooper

Second Six Weeks

The Declaration of Independence, Thomas Jefferson

On Keeping a Notebook, Joan Didion

Learning to Read and Write, Frederick Douglas

On Dumpster Diving, Lars Eighner

The Ways We Lie, Stephanie Ericsson

Women's Brains, Stephen Jay Gould

Third Six Weeks

Salvation, Langston Hughes

Letter from Birmingham Jail, Martin Luther King Jr.

On Being a Cripple, Nancy Mairs

Shooting an Elephant, George Orwell

Crito, Plato

I Just Wanna Be Average, Mike Rose

Fourth Six Weeks

Clashing Civilizations? Edward Said

The Inheritance of Tools, Scott Russell Sanders

Me Talk Pretty One Day, David Sedaris

Declarations of Sentiments, Elizabeth Cady Stanton

A Modest Proposal, Jonathan Swift

Mother Tongue, Amy Tan

Fifth Six Weeks

Where I Lived and What I Lived For, Henry David Thoreau

Shooting Dad, Sarah Vowell

Once More to the Lake, E.B. White

Television: The Plug-In Drug, Marie Winn

Death of a Moth, Annie Dillard

The Insufficiency of Honesty, Stephen L. Carter

Sixth Six Weeks

Short stories by Anton Chekhov including: *A Story Without a Title*; *Rothschild's Fiddle*; *Sleepy*; *The Student*; *Grisha*; *In Exile*.

Essay Journal (Sample)

28 August: "I Know Why the Caged Bird Cannot Read," Francine Prose

Summary: Prose writes that she is increasingly worried that our high school students are not being asked to read serious, complicated literature. Instead, they are assigned to read middlebrow novels, not in a careful way, but only deep enough to learn the "lesson" each novel is supposed to convey to the student. Novels are not chosen for their literary merit, but to ensure that students are exposed to a "diversity" of writers. Students are not required to read "for aesthetic beauty – felicitous or accurate language, images, rhythm, wit, the satisfaction of recognizing something in fiction that seems fresh and true – is simply too frivolous, suspect, and even elitist to mention." Prose also observes, "We no longer believe that books were written one word at a time, and deserve to be read that way. We've forgotten the difference between a student who has never read a nineteenth-century novel and an idiot incapable of reading one."

Arrangement of essay: This essay is a narrative, cause and effect, and argumentative essay. "Like most parents who have, against all odds, preserved a lively and still evolving passion for good books, I find myself, each September, increasingly appalled by the dismal lists of texts that my sons are doomed to waste a year reading. In the hope of finding out that my children and my friends' children were exceptionally unfortunate, I recently collected eighty or so reading lists from high schools throughout the country."

Three schemes or tropes used: Alliteration: "leave such indelible impressions...." Metaphor: "lemminglike fervor...." Analogy: "To hold up this book as a paradigm of memoir, of thought – of literature – is akin to inviting doctors convicted of malpractice to instruct our medical students."

New vocabulary: 1. felicitous (adjective): "...felicitous or accurate language..." Meaning: very well suited or expressed; pleasant, delightful. 2. indelible (adjective): "...with literature leave such indelible impressions..." Meaning: that cannot be removed, washed away, or erased. 3. adolescence (noun): "...hypersensitivity that make adolescence a hell." Meaning: the period between puberty and adulthood. 4. benevolent (adjective): "...watching over us with protective benevolent attention." Meaning: for the purpose of doing good. 5. cantankerous (adjective): "The cantankerous, bigoted, elderly white janitor..." Meaning: ill-natured, quarrelsome.