AP English Language and Composition Course Syllabus

The AP English Language and Composition course is taught as a component of an American Studies course with AP US History. The course is designed to give students extensive opportunities to read and analyze a broad spectrum of literature, both fiction and non-fiction from a variety of eras and “to 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). Since the course is aligned with a US History course, some of the readings are related in a time sequence to the events studied in the history class. Other readings are related to the themes and skills developed in the course.

Because our students live in a highly visual world, we also study the rhetoric of visual media such as photographs, films, advertisements, comic strips, and political cartoons. As films are an important element of this visual world, the students also develop the skills to read a film and analyze the ways in which the elements of film work together to convey a message to the audience. *Reel Conversations* is used as a resource to instruct the students in reading a film. Additionally, each week, a variety of political and/or topical cartoons are reviewed and analyzed by students using rhetoric techniques as seen in *The Art of Voice*. This course is organized by rhetorical modes. Students study a wide variety of American Literature while exploring these rhetorical modes. Students also study a wide range of non-fiction texts from *The Art of Voice: Language and Composition*, *Spring Board AP Language Arts*, and other texts during the year. These texts are listed in the Course Resource section.

Students write in a variety of forms – narrative, expository, persuasive – and styles in response to a range of readings. Based on the *The Art of Voice*, *American Literature*, *Spring Board: English Language Arts* and other texts, students respond and analyze essays written in a variety of modes such as narration, process analysis, comparison and contrast, division and classification, definition, cause and effect, and finally persuasion and argument. Essays are evaluated using the AP Free Response Scoring guides (range of 1 to 9) where appropriate. Additionally, students write journal responses to ideas and various readings. Students are assigned a variety of compositions including formal analysis papers, in-class timed writings, informal critiques, and creative essays. Students write imitation essays based on “Sinners in the Hands of an angry God,” Declaration of Independence, and transcendental poetry for example. They understand a style through imitation and develop their own. Throughout the year, students revise class essays and formal analysis papers based on teacher and peer reviews to further refine and strengthen their writing style and voice. During each quarter, students must select an essay to revise and rewrite based on teacher and/or peer feedback.
During first semester, students are introduced to the AP English Language Rhetorical Analysis and Synthesis essay. They complete two essays based on material given by the teacher. They also write a research paper analyzing the cause and effect of an event in US History. They must argue the significance of the event and show evidence of the cause and/or effect of the event on US History, culture, or society. The research requires two primary source documents, three secondary sources and one visual. Documentation follows MLA standards. Intermediate steps are reviewed during the research and composition phases to ensure development of skills. As they complete this process, students revise their paper several times using self critique, peer and teacher feedback to refine their argument through several rewrites.

Second semester, students continue to focus on developing their own rhetorical skills through frequent in class writing assignments on a variety of topics including journal responses to readings, practice AP Free Response prompts, news articles and editorials, and continued assignments from The Art of Voice as well as two more synthesis essays that they research themselves and select sources based on prior instruction in research and documentation based on MLA standards.

For each reading assignment, students must identify the following aspects Thesis, Purpose, Tone, Audience, Supports/Details to prove claim, Appeals, Logic and fallacies (if present), Style -- including literary/language devices, Point of view/bias, Context of writing in order to develop close reading and analytical skills. Class discussions of the readings focus on analysis of the texts read.

Vocabulary:

Students’ vocabulary is developed through exercises in specific vocabulary, such as Latin and Greek roots in Vocabulary for the College Bound Student, vocabulary cartoons found in SAT Vocabulary Cartoons, words from 1100 Words, and finally words taken from the essays, speeches, AP Free Response prompts, and other readings from the curriculum. Rhetorical terms from The Art of Voice and various College Board publications are also studied and used.

Grammar:

Students focus on sentence structure, particularly coordination and subordination, through exercises from Sentence Combining, The New Oxford Guide to Writing, and sentence expanding assignments. Additionally, sentence structure is studied through various exercises based on The Art of Styling Sentences. Grammar is also developed through specific assignments in response to problems in students writing such as parallelism, pronoun/antecedent usage, and others as needed. Warm up exercises at the beginning of class focus on grammar and vocabulary development.
Summer Reading Assignment:

Students read *The Underground Railroad* and *I Wish I’d Been There* over the summer vacation focusing their note-taking on symbolism and recurring motifs, theme and character development techniques. A formal character analysis paper using MLA standards to cite the novel and one source is completed during the second week.

**Syllabus**

Certain assignments are expected during the entire school year. Close reading and annotating are reviewed and reinforced throughout the year with most readings. Fiction and poetry is used to find the subtext of a work, point of view, and techniques of the writer to communicate meaning. Vocabulary and grammar assignments are given during the entire school year. Weekly vocabulary words are studied and used in writing assignments. Students are given weekly assignments from *Sentence Combining* or other source material weekly. Class warm-up exercises in vocabulary or grammar are given for the first 5-10 minutes of the class period daily. Assignments from *The Art of Voice: Language and Composition* and *Spring Board: English Language Arts* are given throughout the year. Chapters one and two are read and developed during first semester, chapters three and four are read during 3rd quarter and chapters five and six are read during 4th quarter.

**Fall Semester/ 1st Quarter** covers the summer reading assignment and the foundation of the United States from 1620 to 1799.

The focus of this quarter is two questions:

- How does America come to define its basic human “natural” rights?
- How do writers construct an effective argument?

Introduction to course, overview of language, rhetorical modes, devices, and terms.

*The Underground Railroad* – discussion of summer reading assignment, author’s techniques in developing themes and characters. Formal analysis paper using MLA citations for *The Underground Railroad*. Instruction in Rhetorical modes and devices, language – connotation and denotation, slanted language, logic – deductive and inductive, and logical fallacies.

Assessments include class discussions, creating a deductive and an inductive logical argument, finding fallacies in current media sources (particularly in advertising), and various handouts and quizzes for these concepts. There is a Socratic Seminar on government following the readings by Aristotle, Hobbes, Locke, and Jefferson and another one following the Federalist 10 reading.
Readings:

Colson Whitehead  *The Underground Railroad*
Jonathan Edwards “Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God” – Imitation essay
Anne Bradstreet Poetry
Edward Taylor Poetry
Arthur Miller  *The Crucible*
Phyllis Wheatly Poetry
Thomas Paine “The Crisis”
Thomas Jefferson “The Declaration of Independence”
Senator John McCain “A Cause Greater Than Self”

*Building an Argument*

Rhetorical Triangle (Ethos, Pathos, and Logos)
Implicit/Explicit Argument
Language Connotation and Denotation

Socratic Seminar – *The Underground Railroad*
Essay – *The Underground Railroad*
Rhetorical Essay – Topic Abigail Adams’ “A Letter to her Son” – analyzing rhetorical framework

**Fall Semester- 2nd Quarter** covers the historical period from 1800 to 1900. Some readings reflect the period studied in the AP US History course.

Focus Questions:

- How does America view its role as a society and as individuals in a rapidly expanding nation?
- What techniques do authors use to construct meaning?

Readings:

Transcendentalism and Nature Writing:

Emerson  “Self Reliance” and “Nature”
Thoreau  *Walden* and “Civil Disobedience”

Tupac Shakur various poems – focus Transcendental characteristics
Joy Harjo various poems – focus repetition & cataloguing
Dickenson various poems – focus on denotation
Fredrick Douglas  Speech “What to a slave is the 4th of July”

Compare and Contrast Essay – Speech to *Narrative* excerpt
Syntax – Focus throughout the semester on analyzing sentences types, sentence variety, and style of different authors and in their own essays.

Rhetorical Essay – Topic Thoreau “Civil Disobedience” – analyzing rhetorical framework

Group Project – Analyze presidential campaign ads for rhetorical framework, fallacies, and visual imagery.

The Riverside Reader

Narrative

Judith Ortiz Cofer “The Myth of the Latin Woman”
George Orwell “Shooting an Elephant”
Review narrative AP Free Response Prompts
Write a narrative essay

Process Analysis

Nikki Giovanni “Campus Racism 101”
Serena Nanda “Arranging a Marriage in India”
Review Process AP Free Response Prompts
Write a Process essay

Spring Semester – 3rd Quarter covers the time period 1900 through World War II.

Focus Questions: How does America’s optimistic spirit and idealist point of view alter during this period?


How can I create a meaningful argument?

Readings: Satire

Mark Twain
Onion excerpts
Dave Barry
Student developed and written satire
AP Free response satire prompts

Readings: Erik Larson – The Devil in the White City

Synthesis essay using College Board “TV and Presidential elections”

Rhetorical essay - speech by Florence Kelly

Project – group The Devil in the White City

The Riverside Reader Chapters on:

Compare and contrast
Two essays from chapter chosen by student are analyzed for rhetorical strategies.

Review Compare and Contrast AP Free Response Prompts
Write a Compare and Contrast essay

Division and Classification
Two essays from chapter chosen by student are analyzed for rhetorical strategies.

Review Division and Classification AP Essay Prompts
Write Division and Classification essay

Spring Semester – 4th Quarter covers the time period from World War II to present day.
Focus Questions: How has foreign policy and Civil Rights shaped the political, economic, and domestic agenda for the later half of the 20th century? How do we resolve the contradictions in American Culture?
Rhetorical Question: How can I persuade the reader of my argument?

Readings:
The Riverside Reader Chapters on:

Persuasion and Argument
Two essays from chapter chosen by student are analyzed for rhetorical strategies.

Review Persuasion and Argument AP Free Response Prompts
Write an Argument essay

Modernism
T.S. Elliot
Meaning in imagery
Visual analysis of images
F. Scott Fitzgerald  The Great Gatsby  Power of Language & Symbolism

Oliver Stone  view Platoon

Essays on contemporary issues from Time Magazine, The New Yorker, New York Times

Rhetorical analysis and response journal

AP Test Review

Essay Types

Multiple Choice

Literary Terms
**AP English Language and Composition Textbook List**


**Resource Texts and Supplementary Material:**


