

School of the Arts

Course Summary/Expectations

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AP English Language and Composition Syllabus 2011-2012

The AP English Language and Composition course is designed to enable students to become skilled readers and writers in diverse genres and modes of composition. As stated in the Advanced Placement Course Description, the purpose of the Language and Composition course is “to enable students to read complex texts with understanding and to write papers of sufficient richness and complexity to communicate effectively with mature readers” (The College Board, *May 2007, May 2008*, p.6). The focus of this course will be to acquire the skills that will allow students to read critically and write effectively in different modes in the college classroom and beyond. Students will learn to understand the importance of purpose, audience, and voice as they explore different rhetorical strategies that can improve their own styles. In addition, students will learn how to analyze the texts of other writers.

While the emphasis of this course is primarily composition, AP English Language and Composition also fulfills the 11th grade English Language Arts requirement according to New York State Standards. For this reason, each marking period students will be expected to read from a wide variety of nonfiction sources, *The Brief Bedford Reader*, and **will also be asked to read key works in American Literature in preparation for both the AP exam in May and the new New York State Regents Comprehensive exam in January.** It is also hoped that this course will be a preparation for students who wish to take the AP English Literature and Composition course in the 12th grade.

During the course, students will focus intently on writing. A typical weekly class schedule might be: Monday—language/grammar review; Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday—literature readings and discussion of the writer’s craft; Friday—timed writing practice in response to a variety of prompts. This schedule will vary depending on the focus of each 6week marking period.

The focus for each 6 week marking period (in addition to the nonfiction readings) is as follows:

Marking Period 1—Contemporary authors

Marking Period 2—The Modern period

Marking Period 3—early 20th century, Regents prep

Marking Period 4—Realism

Marking Period 5—The Romantic Period/Transcendentalism/AP preparation and exam

Marking Period 6—Shakespeare, 19th century authors project, Regents preparation and exam

Students are expected to perform at a college level if they wish to continue in the course. It is expected that they will take the AP exam in May, return work according to the homework policy,

attend 90% of the classes, and spend an additional 5 hours per week outside of class reading and/or writing.

Course Overview

1. **Literary and Rhetorical Terms:** Students will become familiar with and be able to apply these terms to the reading selections. Each student will also work on a personal **vocabulary**, a list of words they are not able to define from the reading selections. Quizzes will be given on these terms.
2. **Oral Contributions:** Students will contribute to class/group discussions. Sharing ideas enables students to sustain, develop, and/or better comprehend the works studied.
3. **Note Taking:** Students will be asked to take notes while reading and during class/group discussions. The notes will aid the students as they study for a test, write an in-class or out-of-class essay, or prepare for the AP exam.
4. **Writing:** Students will write in class and at home. Classroom essays will often follow the AP format (40 minutes for one essay question). All writing papers will be graded using the AP nine-point rubric scale. Take-home essays will allow for further development of style and content. All papers prepared out of class need to be typed. Documents need to be double spaced; typed in a 10 or 12 font; have a centered title (not underlined and regular font); and top, bottom, right, and left hand margins need to be 1”.

Students will have an opportunity to revise and rewrite their papers. Students will be given the opportunity to confer outside of class (by appointment) concerning their papers. Students need to read closely to become aware of how stylistic effects are achieved by writers’ rhetorical and linguistic choices. Students’ interpretive skills will be developed as they learn to read with increasing maturity.

Reading:

Students need to read closely to become aware of how stylistic effects are achieved by writers’ rhetorical and linguistic choices. Students’ interpretive skills will be developed as they learn to read with increasing complexity.

Reading will center on nonfiction, particularly the essay in its many forms. *The Brief Bedford Reader* will be the main text for readings ranging across the centuries and continents, from Plato to Thomas Jefferson to Joan Didion. Each marking period will also include the reading of at least two important works of American literature, mostly from the 20th century, from such authors as O’Brien (*The Things They Carried*), Fitzgerald (*The Great Gatsby*), Faulkner (*As I Lay Dying*), Morrison (*The Bluest Eye*), and Doctorow (*Ragtime*). Also see suggested titles from the College Board.

Writing:

As the English Language and Composition course is the equivalent of a first year college course, the closest example from the typical college curriculum is Freshman Composition. As this is a composition course, it is not surprising that the course will require a lot of writing. The writing will mostly take these four forms:

- extensive journaling while reading and analyzing the assigned writing;

- short essays, either analyzing or emulating pieces of writing;
- timed, in class essays, using prompts from AP exams from previous years
- at least one longer paper each semester according to MLA style

Marking Period 1—Contemporary Authors

The course begins with a follow-up on the summer reading assignment:

Students will complete the 11th grade summer reading assignment.

In addition, students will read and respond in writing to two works of nonfiction:

Lynne Truss's Eats, Shoots, and Leaves (available in the library) and Strunk and White's Elements of Style. In addition, students will read five essays from five different sources (newspapers and magazines) and respond in writing to these essays using the SOAPSTONE.

Each response should be 1-2 pages, typed, 12point font, doublespaced, MLA style.

The focus of each response should be a discussion of the author's content, purpose and audience as well as style (what the author says and how the author says it). These responses should be analytical in approach and should avoid becoming mere personal opinion or a book review.

Focus on the rhetorical strategies the author uses to persuade, argue, or inform.

The reading assignments for this marking period include:

Tim O'Brien, *The Things They Carried* and "How to Write a True War Story"

Toni Morrison, *The Bluest Eye* and "The Nobel Lecture"

James Baldwin, "Stranger in the Village"

Zora Neale Hurston, "How It Feels to be Colored Me"

Langston Hughes, "Salvation"

Alice Walker, "Beauty When the Other Dancer is the Self"

Gloria Naylor, "The Meanings of a Word"

Maya Angelou, "Champion of the World"

Major Paper #1: Based on Tim O'Brien's *The Things They Carried*

After visiting websites about the Vietnam War, students will listen to Tim O'Brien's lecture and read Chapter 12, "Analyzing a Short Story," in Allyn & Bacon Guide to Writing which distinguishes between reading a short story "literally" versus reading it "literarily." Students will be asked to analyze O'Brien's use of rhetorical devices to achieve his overall purpose as a writer by writing a 3-5 page paper using MLA citation to answer the following questions:

How would you read the novel *The Things They Carried* literally? How would you read it "literarily"?

Rough drafts of the paper will be discussed and students will be asked to revise and edit a final version of the paper for the end of the marking period.

Writing assignments: Additional shorter writing assignments will accompany the reading and discussions of Morrison's The Bluest Eye and the accompanying essays. Students will be asked to write personal narratives of experiences with racism and hurtful words as well as an essay exploring how media representations of beauty affect our self image.

This unit will carry over into Marking Period 2.

Marking Period 2 – The Modern Period

The reading assignments for this marking period include:

William Faulkner, *As I Lay Dying* or *Intruder in the Dust*

William Faulkner, “The Nobel Lecture” and “A Rose for Emily,” “Impressions of Japan”

F. Scott Fitzgerald, *The Great Gatsby*

Brent Staples, “Black Men in Public Spaces”

Anna Quindlen, “Homelessness”, selection from *One True Thing*

Elisabeth Kubler Ross, selection from *On Death and Dying*

Joan Didion, selection from *The Year of Magical Thinking*

Russell Baker, “The Plot Against People”

Chitra Divakurani, “Live Free and Starve”

Barbara Lazear Aschar, “On Compassion”

Thomas Sowell, “Needs”

James Baldwin, “Notes of a Native Son”

Introduction of Abraham Maslow’s “Hierarchy of Needs”

Students will choose one of the Faulkner novels and work in two different reading groups, learning about Socratic Seminar as a model for their book discussions. Both novels, while very different, are rich sources for the exploration of themes and rhetorical strategies. The essays are designed to accompany the texts and relate to themes of dying, poverty, African American dignity, and the “American Dream” as portrayed in *The Great Gatsby*. This last theme will connect with the reading of E. L. Doctorow’s *Ragtime* during Marking Period 3.

Major Paper #2: Based on the Faulkner novels and F. Scott Fitzgerald’s *The Great Gatsby*
Persuasion/Argumentation

Using examples from literature, history, and personal experience, students will be asked to write a 3-5 page paper that supports, qualifies, or refutes the following “critical lens” quotation (New York State ELA exam terminology).

“To gain that which is worth having, it may be necessary to lose everything else.”

—Bernadette Devlin

The Price of My Soul, 1969

Additional writing assignments: These shorter timed in class writing assignments will focus on literary and critical analyses of the assigned essays and themes. For example, students will be asked to write about the complexity of the opening chapter of *Intruder in the Dust* or the impact on the reader of the use of multiple perspective and the structural design of *As I Lay Dying*. Students will write a personal essay about the stages of dying and their experiences with death and loss. Students will share these essays within the reading groups for peer editing and commentary.

Marking Period 3 – early 20th century

The reading assignments for this marking period include:

E. L. Doctorow, *Ragtime*

Alexis de Toqueville, "What is an American"

E. B. White, "Democracy"

Martin Luther King, "I Have a Dream" and "Letter from Birmingham Jail"

Adnan R. Khan, "Close Encounter with US Immigration"

Linda Chavez "Everything Isn't Racial Profiling"

Review of key documents in American history: Thomas Paine, Declaration of Independence, Federalist papers,

This marking period is shortened by the winter break and midterm exams. Students will read *Ragtime* and several essays connected to the themes of the "American Dream" and immigration and identity. This corresponds well with what most students will be studying in AP US History.

Students will also prepare for the midterm exam, which will be the new New York State Regents comprehensive exam.

However, the central project for this marking period will be a research paper and class presentation about an American poet.

Major Paper #3: Poetry Project

Students will select an American poet from the list provided. They will be asked to read a collection of poems by the poet, a biography or compilation containing biographical information about the poet, and a work of critical analysis by an established scholar about the poet analysis by an established scholar. The 5-7 page paper with MLA citation should contain introductory biographical information about the poet (1-2 pages), and then a close reading and analysis of two of the poet's major poems. The analysis of the poems should focus on the use of rhetorical devices such as voice, form, figurative language, and other poetic devices such as imagery, rhyme and meter. In doing scholarly research, students should also be able to cite commentary on the poems from published scholars. Internet sources must be kept to a minimum and cited properly.

List of poets to choose from:

John Ashberry

Margaret Atwood

W. H. Auden

Amiri Baraka

Elizabeth Bishop

Anne Bradstreet

Gwendolyn Brooks

Lucille Clifton

Billy Collins

Hart Crane

E. E. Cummings

Emily Dickinson

Rita Dove

T. S. Eliot

Robert Frost

Jane Hirschfield

Henry W. Longfellow

W. S. Merwin

Marianne Moore
Mary Oliver
Sylvia Plath
Ezra Pound
Theodore Roethke
Carl Sandburg
William Stafford
Wallace Stevens
Mark Strand
Richard Wilbur
C. K. Williams
James Wright

Marking Period 4 – Realism

The reading assignments for this marking period include:

Mark Twain, *Huckleberry Finn* and essays, “Fenimore Cooper’s Literary Offenses,” “What is Man?” “The War Prayer” “The Diary of Adam and Eve”
Kate Chopin, *The Awakening* and “The Story of an Hour”
Jonathan Swift, “A Modest Proposal”
Charlotte Perkins Gilman, “The Yellow Wallpaper”
Judy Brady, “I Want a Wife”
Armin A. Brott, “Not all Men Are Sly Foxes”
Emily Prager, “Our Barbies, Our Selves”
H. L. Mencken, “The Feminine Mind”
Norman Mailer, “Who Finally Would Do the Dishes?”
Germaine Greer, “The Stereotype”
Erica Jong, “The Artist as Housewife”
Susan Sontag, “The Liberated Woman”
Abraham Lincoln, “Gettysburg Address,” “Emancipation Proclamation”

Two themes dominate this marking period. Mark Twain’s *Huckleberry Finn* continues to deal with the issues of race and slavery in America as well as the American pursuit of independence and selfreliance. Yet its real value along with Twain’s other essays is the focus on tone and the rhetorical strategies of satire and irony. This develops further in discussions about the relationships between men and women as seen in “The Diary of Adam and Eve” and Chopin’s *The Awakening*. The essays on the theme of male/female relationships further develop the how writers employ humor and satire to get their point across.

Major Writing Project 4 –Synthesis Paper and Powerpoint/Prezi Presentation

Since this course is taught in a computer lab, the following assignment maximizes the use of technology and introduces Powerpoint presentations to the students. Students will utilize class time to prepare their presentations.

Using a variety of visual and textual sources, students will prepare a Powerpoint/Prezi presentation on a compelling theme or question explored during this marking period. Students will develop their own themes, but possible themes include: The Battle of the Sexes, The Evolving Roles of Men and Women, The Fight for Equal Rights, Freedom: What is It? and Satire in the

Modern World. Students will also write a 3-5 page paper to accompany the Powerpoint/Prezi presentation in which they develop a strong thesis and support it by an elaboration of the sources they have used.

Additional writing assignments: Timed writing practice continues with a focus towards the AP exam. Students will receive practice essay questions to work on. Some of these exercises will focus on improving the writing style of the students, especially in relation to writing effective introductory paragraphs and conclusions. Individual student writing difficulties will also be addressed in writing practices.

Marking Period 5 – The Romantic Period/Transcendentalism/

AP Prep

The reading assignments for this marking period include:

Ralph Waldo Emerson, “Self-Reliance”

and other essays

Henry David Thoreau, *Walden*

Walt Whitman, *Leaves of Grass*

E. B. White, “Once More to the Lake”

Annie Dillard, “Living Like Weasels” “Sight into Insight” “Mirages” “The Present”

E. M. Forster, “My Wood”

Loren Eiseley, “The Bird and the Machine” “The Brown Wasps”

Bertrand Russell, “A Life Worth Living”

Virginia Woolf, “The Death of a Moth”

George Orwell, “Shooting an Elephant”

Rachel Carson, selection from *Silent Spring*

Barbara Kingsolver, selection from *Small Wonders* or *High Tide in Tucson*

Gretel Ehrlich, “Spring”

Diane Ackerman, selection from *Natural History of the Senses*

The focus of this marking period will be readings from the Romantic period of American literature and exploring essays of several nature writers. After all, this marking period ushers in spring as well as the AP exam. Much of the homework (in addition to the readings) will be practice packets for the multiple choice section of the exam and we will review the terms you need to know regarding the rhetorical strategies that writers use. We will again look at the different kinds of persuasive and argumentative appeals, and further examine the concepts of ethos, pathos, and logos as they occur in the readings this marking period.

AP EXAM—May

Major Writing Assignment 5-- Formal/Informal Writing About Nature

In the style of one of the writers you have studied this marking period, write a 35 page essay on a topic of your choice relating to nature or human nature. Be sure that you develop your thesis and clearly focus on a strategy to explain, define, classify, compare and contrast, describe, and/or illustrate a process within your paper. Topics need prior approval and rough drafts should be submitted and discussed before the final paper is due.

Additional writing assignment:

Critical lens focus:

“Most men lead lives of quiet desperation and go to the grave with the song still in them.”

Henry David Thoreau

Write an essay that supports, qualifies, or refutes Thoreau's assertion using examples from literature, history, and personal experience to develop your thesis.

Marking Period 6 – Shakespeare, 19th century

The reading assignments for this marking period include:

Shakespeare, *Othello or Hamlet*

19th century novels (one per reading group):

Stephen Crane, *The Red Badge of Courage*

Harriet Beecher Stowe, *Uncle Tom's Cabin*

Herman Melville, *Moby Dick*

Nathaniel Hawthorne, *The Scarlet Letter*, *The House of Seven Gables*

The students will read a Shakespeare play aloud in class, view videos of play and the Reduced Shakespeare Company video. Then they will form small reading groups to cover one more novel

Major Assignment #6 Writing Portfolio

The students will put together a portfolio of their best writing—showing drafts as well as revisions and write a 4-5 page reflection about the pieces they have selected, their strengths and weaknesses as a writer, and their writing goals for the following year.

Additional assignment—Creative Shakespeare Project

Students may work within the framework of their art major, expressing an “understanding” of the play through art (visual representation), music (a score or performance), drama/dance (a performance), photography/film, and of course, writing.

Class presentations/performances will be assessed and graded according to a multigenre presentation rubric.

Grading Scale:

A+ = 95%

A = 90%

B+ = 85%

B = 80%

C+ = 75%

C = 70%

Weighted Scale:

Tests and quizzes 25%

Classwork/Homework 15%

Performance (Writing) 50%

Participation 10%

Additional Teacher Resources:

Axelrod, Rise B. and Charles R. Cooper. *The St. Martin's Guide to Writing*

Bauman, M. Garrett. *Ideas and Details: A Guide to College Writing*

Dean, Nancy. *Voice Lessons: Classroom Activities to Teach Diction, Detail, Imagery, Syntax,*

and Tone

Gibaldi, Joseph and Walter Achtert. *MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers*

Hacker, Diana. *A Writer's Reference* (online grammar and usage guide))

Hall, Donald. *The Contemporary Essay*

Kennedy, X. J., Dorothy M. Kennedy, and Jane E. Aaron. *The Bedford Reader*

Longknife, Ann and K. D. Sullivan. *The Art of Styling Sentences*

Lunsford, Andrea A. *St. Martin's Handbook*

Peterson, Linda H. and John C. Brereton, eds. *The Norton Reader*

Shrodes, Caroline, Clifford A Josephson, and James R. Wilson. *Reading for Rhetoric*

Stewart, Donald C. *The Versatile Writer*

Strunk, William and White, E.B. *The elements of Style*

I have read and understand the expectations and requirements of this course:

Student signature and date: _____

Parent signature and date: _____