**AP English Language and Composition Syllabus**

Ms. Fitzell-Stevens

AP English Language and Composition

Room 105

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**Course Overview**

The AP English Language and Composition course is designed to help students successfully transition to college-level reading, writing, and analysis and to identify the use of rhetoric by identifying the authors’ purposes, the impact on the audience, and the context at hand. 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. Visual texts, such as advertisements, photographs, and film, will also be read, analyzed, written about, and created to illustrate the presence of rhetorical strategies. Students will develop a sense of their own writing style through practicing a variety of types of writing (analysis, argument, synthesis) to varied audiences and for various purposes. The course is organized according to the requirements and guidelines of the current AP English Course Description.

**Student Responsibilities**

* Students will be required to keep a binder for the course divided into sections labeled as follows:
  + Vocabulary & Terms
  + Multiple choice practice and notes
  + Rhetorical Analysis
  + Argument
  + Synthesis
* Students are required to attend 3 Saturday sessions during the course of the school year to prepare for the AP exam. This is a minor cost to equal a larger payoff. If you do well on your AP exam (a score of 3 or higher), you have the potential to “skip” classes in college. That is a monetary and time savings. These sessions are generously provided by the Massachusetts Math & Science Initiative, or MMSI, and all run from 8 a.m. until 12 p.m. During these sessions, you and your classmates will be working with AP teachers and students from other schools or taking a practice exam that mimics the conditions of the real AP exam. **Attendance is mandatory.** The required Saturday dates are listed below:

**1. November 15th @ Chicopee Comp.  
2. January 10th @ Holyoke High  
3. March 7th @ Dean**

**Student Evaluation**

Students are evaluated on the basis of major papers, homework, quality and character of class participation and involvement, and AP-style writing prompts. Major papers count a great deal toward each quarter’s grade, but other elements are also significant. Students earn both numbered scores and grades on AP prompts they take during the year. The grade associated with particular AP essay scores varies according to the time of year, that is, a very good essay written in November earns a higher grade than a similar essay written in April. That’s because students are at work building the skills needed to succeed as the year proceeds.

Student performance in connection with important course components contributes to each student’s final grade for the course in the following manner:

Exams/Analytical Essays/Projects - 35%  
Quizzes/Timed Writing - 20%  
Homework - 20%  
CW/Discussions/Seminars - 25%

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| AP English Language Rough Year Outline | |
| Quarter One: | **Quarter Three:** |
| Intro. To AP  Intro. to Rhetorical Analysis  Chapters 1 (Rhetoric) & 2 (Style)  Tools   * AP Toolbox for tone, verbs, etc. * Soapstone * Says/Does * DEL charts * Thesis builders   Chapter 10 (Language)  Outside Literature (*I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings* or *Cry the Beloved Country*) | Intro. to Synthesis  Chapter 4 (Synthesis)  Tools   * Sources to inform/appeal * Framing quote * Integrating quotes * Citing quotes   Chapter 6 (Community)  Chapter 7 (Economy)  Chapter 9 (Sports)  Chapter 12 (Environment)  Chapter 13 (Politics)  Outside Literature (*Heart of Darkness*, *Metamorphosis*) |
| Quarter Two: | **Quarter Four:** |
| Intro. to Argument  Chapter 3 (Argument)  Tools   * Classical Argument * Rogerian Method * Toulmin Model * Fallacies   Chapter 5 (Education)  Chapter 8 (Gender)  Chapter 11 (Pop Culture)  Outside Literature ( *Macbeth, A Christmas Carol*) | AP Exam Review  Exam practice  Dystopian/Social Commentary Unit  Literature (*1984, Brave New World, Harrison Bergeron, The Veldt, Handmaid’s Tale, Herland, Genesis*) |
| Continuous:   * Multiple Choice practice (MC) * Timed writing and timed MC practice * Examining student sample writing * Grammar focus * Dialectical journals * Vocabulary | |

**AP English Language and Composition**

**“What makes up the ‘AP Exam’ and what are ‘AP scores’ all about?**

The AP English Language and Composition Examination is 3 hours and 15 minutes long.

**Overall AP Examination scores are as follows:**

5 = Extremely well qualified

4 = Well qualified

3 = Qualified

2 = Possibly qualified

1 = Not qualified

*• Section 1*: 55 (approximately) multiple‐choice questions = 45% of the AP Exam score.The multiple‐choice questions involve analysis of rhetoric, language, and footnotes. Read and answer time: 1 hour.

***Following a short break it’s on to…***

*• Section 2*: 3 free response questions = 55% of the AP Examination scoreReading period (provided, but not limited to, Q1, the synthesis question): 15 minutes. Student respond to three essay prompts: a synthesis question (Q1) , a rhetorical analysis question (Q2 or Q3), and an argument question (Q2 or Q3). Reading and writing time: 2 hours (40 minutes per question).

Student free responses (essays) scores are assigned on a scale of 1-9 as follows:

Highest scores, effective writing: 8 and 9

Higher scores, adequate writing: 6 and 7

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Middle score, suggests adequacy: 5

Lower scores, suggests inadequacy: 4 and 3

Low scores, little success: 2 and 1

*The above representation oversimplifies the free response scoring process. Refer to actual, released AP free response question scoring guides for precise scoring details.*

**Course Planner**

**Fall Semester**

**Quarter one: Course Orientation, Introduction to Close Reading, and Rhetorical Awareness**

The course opens with an introduction to the AP English Language and Composition Course Description, Grading System, establishing Class Rules and Responsibilities, and setting up routine practices to learn Rhetorical and Style Terms (Definitions) and reflect on statements and ideas in a weekly journal entry that corresponds to the writing type and thematic content of each unit. Journal entries will be written on Mondays (or Tuesdays of long weekends). Journal entries in the first quarter will focus on diction analysis (How does the writer’s choice in language shape the tone of a quote or phrase?). Students will also take a practice test multiple choice and free response for a pre-assessment.

Students will then follow-up on a summer assignment, which consists of reading two memoirs and a novel and keeping a reading response journal as well as record of a current event for each week of summer vacation. With a focus on style, students find ways to recognize what’s remarkable in Esmeralda Santiago’s *When I Was Puerto Rican* and Frank McCourt’s *Angela’s Ashes*. They consider rhetorical context—purpose, audience, and strategies—as they focus on close reading. They study the first two chapters of the course reader (Bedford St. Martin’s *The Language of Composition,* second edition) and begin annotating, accounting for purpose and context, and recognizing strategies and tactics. The entire class considers the substance and context of William Faulkner’s Nobel Prize acceptance speech.

**Major Paper #1:** After considering Faulkner’s closing statement concerning “the writer’s duty,” students select two passages, one from Esmeralda Santiago’s *When I Was Puerto Rican* and one from Frank McCourt’s *Angela’s Ashes*, which allow them to discuss the style of each book. They then draft an essay in which they analyze their selected passages, illustrating how each writer fulfills Faulkner’s “writer’s duty” concept. Students may draw on their summer reading journals and subsequent class work with the books. Following discussions over their drafts with me, students revise, prepare, and submit the final versions of their essays. All quotes and texts will be cited using MLA citation formatting.

Focus on rhetorical purpose, language, close reading and annotation continues with prose selections drawn from personal essays, including Frederick Douglass’s “Learning to Read and Write”, Maya Angelou’s “Champion of the World”, and Amy Tan’s “Pretty beyond Belief.” Students will also analyze readings from *The Language of Composition* focusing on the topic of Education to address “To what extent do our schools serve the goals of a true education?” Represented authors and essays include Francine Prose’s “I Know Why the Caged Bird Cannot Read”, Ralph Waldo Emerson’s “Education”, Sherman Alexie’s “Superman and Me”, and David Sedaris’s “Me Talk Pretty One Day” as well as visual texts, like Norman Rockwell’s *The Spirit of Education* and Roz Chast’s *What I Learned: A Sentimental Education from Nursery School through Twelfth Grade.* In their close reading, students are expected to recognize the author’s choices when using generalization and specific, illustrative detail, and later to be aware of such choices in their own writings. Students develop the habit of accounting for their close reading in a variety of ways—by producing descriptive outlines, “says/does” analyses, close reading response forms, annotated photocopies of assigned texts, and double-entry notebooks as well as using the SOAPStone method of analysis (an acronym derived to help students pull meaning from texts: Speaker, Occasion, Audience, Purpose, Subject, and Tone). We will practice identifying tone in writing through using visuals and music. Students will practice applying tone to writing after doing these exercises. This practice of analyzing an argument through the SOAPStone method can then be applied to helping students craft their own arguments and checking their writing for content and strength. Students will work with a graphic organizer that addresses SOAPStone method from the vantage point of the writer to help them develop an awareness of establishing each in their own writing.

**Major Paper #2:** After reading and annotating Donald Murray’s “The Stranger in the Photo Is Me,” students write their own personal essay or memoir. Following consultations with peers, they select personal photos (or a series of photographs) as points of departure for purposeful memoirs of their own that integrate images and related words. Each student is asked to use details, memories, perceptions, and ideas that can be gathered up and purposefully arranged.

Each student prepares for two major student/teacher writing conferences over the course of planning, drafting, and editing the “Stranger” essay. These one on-one conferences often set the tone for the year’s work with my students. The first conference occurs during the essay’s “discovery” phase as each student reports on initial efforts to fashion his or her text. Students learn to choose language in order to create the tone they desire in their work. In those instances when the student is well underway to giving shape to his or her text, I may ask about the precise use of certain words and the character and consistency of particular phrases. This discussion builds on vocabulary development exercises in class, helping students to recognize the need for first knowing, and, second, using the exact word. Students will also be encouraged to consider varying their sentence structure as they revise their essay, focusing in this case on integrating appositives into their memoir. The second conference typically opens with the following question: “How can I help you now?” At this point, the student identifies portions of the piece that require additional attention and discussion. Each student’s ear and voice come into play during the conferring phase of the revision process.

As the first quarter draws to a close, students complete their first timed essay. This will require students to read closely and account for how language and rhetoric are purposefully employed. Once the students have completed the timed analysis, they write an essay describing a significant moment in their own lives, demonstrating awareness of how to use language and rhetoric to best engage their readers.

**Quarter two: Accounting for Purpose, Deepening Appreciation of Rhetorical Strategies, and Analyzing Argument**

The second quarter opens with a return to the course reader focusing on chapter three, “Analyzing Arguments: From Reading to Writing.” Students will read and analyze examples of components of arguments in essays, editorials, reviews, and cartoons as well as learn Argument Terms and Fallacies. Journal entries in the second quarter will be based on quotes provided. For each quote, students must provide a clear explanation of the writer’s assertion, then defend or challenge it, noting the complexity of the issue and acknowledging any possible objections to the student’s point of view to practice a key concept in argumentation: acknowledging alternative points of view. Students will read and annotate articles with contrasting viewpoints on the same topic to analyze the rhetorical devices each writer uses to support his/her argument. Identifying the strategies, strengths, and weaknesses of the arguments will be a focus. Students will also read current editorials from local and national news sources as a whole class.

The next topic focused on from *The Language of Composition* will be Community and an individual’s relationship to the community. Students will read and analyze for rhetoric and argument a variety of texts, including Martin Luther King Jr.’s “Letter From Birmingham Jail”, Henry David Thoreau’s “Where I Lived, and What I Lived For,” Richard Rodriguez “Aria: A Memoir of a Bilingual Childhood,” Robert D. Putnam’s “Health and Happiness,” Scott Brown’s “Facebook Friendonomics,” and Malcolm Gladwell’s “Small Change: Why the Revolution Will Not Be Tweeted.” Students will study parallel structures to incorporate into their own writing as well as understanding the impact on establishing purpose and tone.

**Major Paper #3:** After reading, annotating, and discussing essays connecting to community, students will be given the following Kurt Vonnegut Jr. quote to consider, “What should young people do with their lives today? Many things, obviously. But the most daring thing is to create stable communities in which the terrible disease of loneliness can be cured.” After analyzing the quote to consider diction and author’s purpose, students will write a speech they would deliver to a group of their peers using Vonnegut’s idea as their main point and recommending ways for their peers to “create stable communities.” The initial draft will be written as a timed response. Students will then meet with a peer editor to discuss the speeches strengths and weakness, working to strengthen diction and integrate the grammatical structures practiced. Students will conference with me after a second draft to further analyze the piece and to determine if a tone and voice appropriate to their audience present in their writing.

Students learn OPTIC, a strategy for analyzing visual arguments that helps students complete a close reading of visual text. Each student will provide three examples of visual text (advertisements, cartoons, etc.) and will write a short analysis of each using the OPTIC strategy.

• O is for overview—write down a few notes on what the visual appears to be about.

• P is for parts—zero in on the parts of the visual. Write down any elements or details that seem important.

• T is for title—highlight the words of the title of the visual (if one is available).

• I is for interrelationships—use the title as the theory and the parts of the visual as clues to detect and specify the interrelationships in the graphic.

•C is for 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.

Students will choose three essays/texts we have read as a class and will then create visuals to demonstrate the argument of the speakers. They will work individually but workshop with classmates and have at least one teacher conference to ensure they are accurately representing the author’s purpose. Finally, students will choose a topic of interest and importance to create their own visual argument demonstrating their stance on the issue.

**Major Paper #4:** With an awareness of rhetoric, appeals, and argument in the background, students read Shakespeare’s Macbeth. During the unit, students work in small groups, becoming experts on one of several key scenes and keep a dialectical journal tracking rhetorical devices. Then they get to apply their knowledge of rhetoric to a pivotal scene. They write an essay in which they analyze the rhetoric of both Macbeth’s and Lady Macbeth’s arguments in Act 1, Scene 7, and explain why Macbeth is persuaded by his wife to murder King Duncan. They are asked to consider such elements as the use of appeals, choice of details, and audience. In this way they apply their appreciation of the language of the play and their understanding of rhetoric and appeals in an evaluation of argument. Students must carefully consider and thoughtfully discuss two related excerpts taken from the scene. Accordingly, I ask students to arrive at required writing conferences ready to discuss the organizational features of their papers. After their papers have been completed, students view the film version of *Macbeth* starring Patrick Stewart and explore how its visual elements correspond with the language of the play and its themes.

**Midterm Exam**

At the end of the second quarter and first semester, students take a 90-minute exam featuring two AP free-response questions from released exams—one focuses on prose analysis and rhetoric, the other on argument, and a reading with multiple-choice questions.

**Spring Semester**

**Quarter three: Understanding and Developing Argument & Introducing the Synthesis Essay**

The spring semester continues to acquaint students with various argumentative structures: causal argument, argument of proposal, and visual arguments. We begin with a return to the course reader focusing on the Economy. Texts students will be reading include Barbara Ehrenreich’s “Serving in Florida,” Jonathan Swift’s “A Modest Proposal,” and Lars Eighner’s “On Dumpster Diving.” Students will read selections from the unit on Economy and continue to work with examples of expository and argumentative writing to use as models for their own writing. Students will study short simple sentences and fragments to incorporate into their own writing as well as understanding the impact of those sentence structures on establishing purpose and tone. Journal entries in this quarter will be short responses to readings- students will be given a time limit to help prepare for timed reading and responses on the AP exam.

**Major Paper # 5:** After reading, annotating, and discussing essays connecting to economy, students will be given the following two quotes to consider: “The real price of everything is really worth to the man who has acquired it, and who wants to dispose of it or exchange for something else, is the toil and trouble which it can save for himself, and which it can impose on other people.”- Adam Smith. “If it is asserted that civilization is a real advance on the condition of man—and I think that it is, though only the wise improve their advantages—be shown that it has produced better dwellings without making them more costly; and the cost of a thing is the amount of what I will call life which is required to be exchanged for it, immediately or in the long run.” – Henry David Thoreau. Students will compare the two and evaluate which speaks more accurately and eloquently to our time. They will make reference to at least three of the selections in the economy chapter of their textbook to support their claims.

Students will begin to work with synthesis, focusing on using sources to inform an argument as well as appeal to an audience. As a whole class, students will “walk through” the process of writing a synthesis essay on Mandatory Community Service.

**Major Paper #6:** Students will work independently on writing a synthesis essay. Students will read and analyze eight sources related to social critic and Professor Mark Bauerlein’s claim that those under thirty constitute the “dumbest generation.” Students will synthesize at least three sources to evaluate Bauerlein’s claim in a coherent, well-developed essay. The reading for the essay will be done during one class period and the essay completed the following class period. Students will discuss the challenges of the synthesis essay the following class period and work together to determine strategies to help students be more successful.

With an awareness of rhetoric, appeals, and argument in the background, students read George Orwell’s *1984*. During the unit, students work in small groups, becoming experts on one of several key sections and keep a dialectical journal tracking rhetorical devices. Then they get to apply their knowledge of rhetoric to a pivotal scene from the text.

**Major Paper #7:** They write an essay in which they analyze the rhetorical strategies used to convince Winston Smith, in George Orwell’s *1984*, of the beauty of destroying language, and explain why the argument is convincing. They are asked to consider such elements as the use of appeals, choice of details, and audience. In this way they apply their appreciation of the language of the play and their understanding of rhetoric and appeals in an evaluation of argument. Students must carefully consider and thoughtfully discuss an excerpt taken from the text. Accordingly, I ask students to arrive at required writing conferences ready to discuss the organizational features of their papers. This conference typically opens with the following question: “How can I help you?” At this point, the student identifies portions of the piece that require additional attention and discussion. Each student’s ear and voice come into play during the conferring phase of the revision process.

**Quarter four: Continuing with the Synthesis Essay, Focused Preparation for the AP English Language and Composition Exam, and Understanding the Rhetoric of Cinema**

Students will continue to prepare for the AP exam by continuing to practice timed writing until the exam. Journals during quarter four will focus on students responding to quotes from various authors. Students will read essays connecting to the topic of Language. Readings connecting to Language will include Amy Tan’s “Mother Tongue,” George Orwell’s “Politics and the English Language,” Walt Whitman’s “Slang in America,” Steven Pinker’s “Words Don’t Mean what They Mean,” and Naomi Shihab Nye’s “For Mohammed Zeid of Gaza, Age 15” and “Why I Could Not Accept Your Invitation.”

**Major Paper #8:** Students will write a synthesis on the topic of American Politics and the English Language explaining whether they believe that efforts to eliminate sexism, racism, and violence in language are effective or whether such efforts simply mask these issues. The reading and writing must be completed in one class period (50 minutes).

After the exam, students will watch the film *V for Vendetta* analyzing rhetoric. Students will watch and read the text of V’s speeches, discussing the use of appeals and how the grammatical structure of the speech impacts the overall meaning and effectiveness.

**Major Paper #9:** Students will select a topic from *The Language of Composition* course reader (Gender, Sports, Popular Culture, the Environment, or Politics). They will read and analyze the Central and Classic essay for their topic and then, in small groups, choose two written and at least one visual text to read. Students will research and select two additional written texts and one additional visual text that connect to their topic using proper MLA citation. Each student will individually create a prompt- analysis, argument, or synthesis- from their reading of these texts. Each student will submit their prompt and readings to be assessed. Each student will also be responding to his or her created prompt as one of two essay questions on the final exam.

**Final Exam:**

At the end of the fourth quarter and second semester, students take a 90-minute exam featuring two AP free-response questions from released exams—one argument, and the other as a self-created response question which could be analysis, argument, or synthesis in nature.