



AP ENGLISH LANGUAGE & COMPOSITION SYLLABUS

An advanced placement course

Abstract

This document is an adaptation of E. Specter's Syllabus, prepared by Yasmin Ginton, an English Language and Literature teacher at C.V. Bethel High school in Nassau, The Bahamas. It contains the overall AP English Language and Composition syllabus for the year 2018-2019.

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AP English Language and Composition Syllabus

Course Overview

According to the *AP English Course Description*, the purpose of AP English Language and Composition is to “enable students to read complex texts with understanding and to write prose...to communicate effectively with mature readers” (The College Board 2010). This course is organized in accordance with those guidelines. Through close readings and focused written assignments, students will become aware of rhetorical strategies and the purposeful use of language. As this awareness grows, students will be capable of incorporating those strategies into their writing to cultivate personal writing styles. Students will also develop the skills needed to analyse visuals (photographs, paintings, sculptures, political cartoons, advertisements, etc.) with the same critical lens used on traditional print texts. Expectations for students are appropriately high for a college introductory level course, and the work required of them is challenging.

Course Planner

The course is organized thematically (see syllabus) to provide students access to a broad range of primarily nonfiction texts. The readings for this course is inclusive of multiple writers of African and Caribbean ancestry so that students, who are mainly of African descent, can forge connections with the perspective present in the text and to aid them in and to encourage the relevance of representation in the classroom.

Teaching Strategies

Journals: Students will be required to maintain a dedicated AP Language/Composition journal. The journal will serve two main purposes:

1. **Maintain daily warm-up assignments to strengthen an understanding of voice.** Students will receive a different quote from a well-known work of fiction or nonfiction and craft short paragraphs that address a specific issue of diction, detail, imagery, syntax, or tone.
2. **Serve as a dialectical journal to use with class readings.** As students will not be able to physically annotate their textbooks, a double entry journal will allow students a way to record their conversations with a particular essay. Modelling will be provided to help students set up and maintain their journals.

Vocabulary: One of the curricular requirements is to help students develop “a wide-ranging vocabulary used appropriate and effectively” (The College Board 2010). Students will be provided a range of vocabulary divided into two categories. The first consists of course terminology (for example, *the names of specific rhetorical strategies*). The second category consists of high level diction, words that can (for lack of a better term) be called “*SAT vocabulary*.” Both course terms and high level diction will be taught systematically via direct instruction, with the understanding that students should be able to incorporate rhetorical strategies and high level diction into their writing as they develop individual styles.

Timed Writing: Throughout the year, *students will complete timed essay questions from past exams. Students will be graded on the 9-point rubric used for the actual exam.* This will familiarize students with the expectations of the AP exam in May, building both skills and confidence. In the first semester, students may be provided opportunities to rewrite timed essays after writing conferences with the teacher regarding feedback on the original essay. The purpose of a rewrite opportunity is to encourage students to examine essay feedback and improve writing skills.

Student Writing: For each unit, *there will be one major essay, which will require students to show evidence of appropriate drafting, revision, and rewriting.* Rough drafts will go through peer edits and self-review before submission to the teacher. Teacher feedback on essays will be provided in a way that allows students to revise prior completing the final product. *All papers will be graded with a focus on helping students develop the following skills:*

- A wide-ranging vocabulary used appropriately and effectively
- A variety of sentence structures, including appropriate use of subordination and coordination
- Logical organization, enhanced by specific techniques to increase coherence, such as repetition, transitions, and emphasis
- A balance of generalization and specific, illustrative detail
- An effective use of rhetoric, including controlling tone, establishing and maintaining voice, and achieving appropriate emphasis through diction and sentence structure (*AP English Course Description* The College Board 2010).

Style and Mechanics: A strong grasp of language is a necessity for success in the AP Language and Composition course. In preparation for the course, students read Strunk and White’s *The Elements of Style* over the summer. Together, students and teacher will identify individual areas of weakness and make small goals toward overall improvement. Students will receive instruction in core areas of purposeful, grammatically correct language (phrase usage, parallel structure, appropriate tone and diction, varied sentence structure, and logical organization).

Specific Strategies: Students will receive direct instruction in two strategies designed to help them analyze print and visual texts. Students will use these strategies in whole class, small group, and individual settings.

1. **SOAPStone:** This strategy provides students with a foundation for analyzing a text in greater detail. The strategy is available to students via the College Board workshop “Pre-AP: Strategies in English -- Writing Tactics Using SOAPStone:”
 - Speaker
 - Occasion
 - Audience
 - Purpose
 - Subject
 - Tone

2. **OPTIC:** Like SOAPStone, this strategy provides students with a foundation for analyzing a visual text (This strategy first came to my attention as described in the Second Sample Syllabus available through AP Central).
 - **Overview:** write down what the visual appears to be about
 - **Parts:** focus on the parts of the visual. Write down any details that seem important
 - **Title:** highlight the words of the title (if available)
 - **Interrelationships:** uses the title and the parts to detect the interrelationships in the graphic
 - **Conclusion:** draw a conclusion about the visual. What does it mean? Summarize its message

Required Texts

Shea, Renee H., Lawrence Scanlon, and Robin Dissin Autses. *The Language of Composition*. Boston: Bedford/St. Martin's, 2008.

Goldthwaite, M., Bizup, J., Brereton, J., Fernald, A. and Peterson, L. (n.d.). *The Norton Reader*. 14th ed. W.W. Norton, 2016.

Student Evaluation

Student grades are based on points accumulated in a weighted category system.

- Formative 50%
- Summative 40%
- HW for Completion 10%

Formative grades consist of work evaluated for learning completed within a particular unit. Formative assignments generally consist of most in-class assessments:

- Quizzes
- Journal Records
- Essay drafts graded by the teacher
- Multiple choice practice questions
- Free Response Practice Questions

Students are allowed to reassess formative assignments at the teacher's discretion with appropriate opportunities for reteaching and conferences.

Summative assignments are the cumulative assignments of a unit:

- unit tests
- final essays

Generally, these assignments cannot be reassessed. For some written assignments, the teacher will provide opportunities to rewrite final essays after a conference regarding the assignment and feedback.

HW for Completion includes assignments (typically homework) assigned and graded only for completion. The goal of these assignments is to reinforce the work done in class.

The typical A-B-C-D-E grading system applies, with student and teacher conferencing throughout the marking period. Ability is regularly assessed with the teacher grading and providing feedback on student work such as rough and final drafts, homework, journals, tests, quizzes, etc.

Course Syllabus

Quarter One

INTRODUCTION: Introduction to Rhetoric and Close Reading

- **Reading:**
 - *Chapter 1 of The Language Composition*
 - *Chapter 2 of The Language Composition*
 - **Jody Heyman**, *We can Afford to Give Parents a Break*
 - **John F. Kennedy**, *Inaugural Address*
- **Viewing:**
 - Political cartoons from periodicals chosen by students with teacher approval.
- **Writing:**
 - **Short Response:** Using the OPTIC strategy, analyse a political cartoon and its appeals to logos, pathos and ethos.
 - Short Response: Discuss the patterns of development Jody Heyman uses in her essay “We Can Afford to Give Parents a Break”
 - Major Essay: After talking with the text using your dialectical journal, write an essay analysing the rhetorical strategies John F. Kennedy uses in his Inaugural Address.

UNIT I: History and Politics: What is the relationship between the citizen and the state?

- **Reading:**
 - **Thomas Jefferson**, *The Declaration of Independence*
 - **George Orwell**, *Shooting an Elephant*
 - **Niccolo Machiavelli**, *The Morals of the Prince*
 - **Jonathan Swift**, *A Modest Proposal*
- **Viewing:**
 - The horse America Throwing his Master (1779; political artion; Library of Congress)
 - Film: “12 Years a Slave”
 - Current local political cartoons
- **Writing:**
 - **Compare/Contrast:** Compare Machiavelli’s view of human nature to that implied by Thomas Jefferson in the final version of the Declaration of Independence. How does each writer’s view correspond to his view of the relationship between leaders and the people?
 - **Major Essay:** Analyse the way Swift uses language to develop his position. Consider diction, voice, pacing, and other rhetorical features

Unit II Civil Rights and Responsibilities: What are the rights and responsibilities of the citizen?

- **Reading:**
 - **Chris Hedges**, *The Destruction of Culture*
 - **Wole Soyinka**, *Every Dictator's Nightmare*
 - **Martin Luther King, Jr**, *Letter from a Birmingham Jail*
 - **Henry David Thoreau**, *On the Duty of Civil Disobedience*

- **Viewing:**
 - **Jeff Widener**, *Tank Man*, Associated Press, June 5, 1989
 - *Purple Rain Protest*, cover of *Die Suid-Afrikaan* magazine (available online from Time Magazine)
 - *TED Talks: How To put the power of law in people's hands*

- **Writing:**
 - **Compare /Contrast** Thoreau's "Civil Disobedience" with King's "Letter from a Birmingham Jail" by focusing on one of the following: purpose, definition of a just law, or figurative language.
 - **Major Essay:** Using the following quote, explain 1) why you find it compelling or 2) on what grounds you would challenge it. Cite evidence from your own experience or reading to support your position on the idea that "freedom is never voluntarily given by the oppressor; it must be demanded by the oppressed."

Quarter Two

Unit III Education: To what extent do our schools serve the goals of a true education?

- **Reading:**
 - **Kyoko Mori**, *School*
 - **Frederick Douglass**, *Learning to Read and Write*
 - **Malcolm X**: *Learning to Read*
 - **Ralph Waldo Emerson**, *From Education*
- **Viewing:**
 - **Norman Rockwell**, *The Spirit of Education*
 - TED Talks: Education Death Valley
 - TED Talks: Do Schools kill Creativity
 - Ted Talks: Superman and ME
- **Writing:**
 - **Compare/contrast:** Identify and analyse the parallels between the ways Douglass and Malcolm X learn to read.
 - **Major Essay:** Defend or refute the following statement from Ralph Waldo Emerson: “Every young man is born with some determination in his nature, and is a potential genius.” Cite evidence from your experiences and reading to support your position.

Unit IV Gender: What is the impact of the gender role that society creates and enforces?

- **Reading:**
 - **Elizabeth Cady Stanton** *Declaration of Sentiments and Resolution*
 - **Sojourner Truth** *Aren't I a Woman?*
 - **Stephen Jay Gould** *Women's Brains*
 - **Paul Theroux** *Being a Man*
 - **Deborah Tannen** *There is no Unmarked Woman*
 - **Chimanda Ngozi Adichie** *We should all be feminists*
- **Viewing:**
 - Advertisements from popular magazines and newspapers collected by students to be analysed in conjunction with Theroux and Tannen
 - TED Talks: Why Gender Equality is good for everyone – Men included.
- **Writing:**
 - **In-class Response:** Work in groups to collect and analyse advertisements from magazines and newspapers. Discuss when men and women are shown in stereotyped roles and when they are shown breaking those stereotypes. Which stereotypes are more common in these ads—stereotypes about men or about women? Individually, write a report that discusses what the ads show about American values, beliefs, and attitudes toward gender roles.

- **Major Essay:** Analyse the different styles used by Sojourner Truth and Elizabeth Cady Stanton in their arguments for women’s rights. Explain how each is effective in arguing for women’s rights.

Unit V Race, Culture, and Language: How do race, culture, and language reveal who we are?

- **Reading:**
 - **Judith Ortiz Colfer** *The Myth of the Latina Woman: I Just Met a Girl Named Maria*
 - **Brent Staples** *Just Walk on By: Black Men and Public Space*
 - **Amy Tan** *Mother Tongue*
 - **Bharati Mukherjee** *Two Ways to Belong in America*
 - **Richard Rodriguez** *Aria: Memoir of a Bilingual Childhood*
- **Viewing:**
 - TED Talks: *For Argument’s Sake*
 - TED Talks: What my religion really says about women
 - TED Talks: Change our culture change our world
- **Writing:**
 - **Major Essay:** In a 1994 interview, Rodriguez makes the following comment about multiculturalism: Multiculturalism, as it is expressed in the platitudes of the American campus, is not multiculturalism. It is an idea about culture that has a specific genesis, a specific history, and a specific politics. What people mean by multiculturalism is different hues of themselves. They don’t mean Islamic fundamentalists or skinheads. They mean other brown and black students who share opinions like theirs. It isn’t diversity. It’s a pretense of diversity.” Do you agree with Rodriguez that “multicultural centers” or “multicultural curriculum” or other similar projects are not truly diverse? Defend or refute Rodriguez’s quote about multiculturalism using examples from your experiences and the readings. Cite sources appropriately.

Final Exam for Semester One

Quarter Three

Unit VI The Rhetoric of Community: What is the relationship of the individual to the community?

- *Reading:*
 - **Jonathan Edwards**, *Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God*
 - **Nathaniel Hawthorne** *The Scarlet Letter*
 - **Kei Miller** *The white women and the language of bees*

- *Viewing:*
 - The Life of Pi
 - TED Talks: How to revive a neighbourhood: with imagination, beauty and art

- *Writing:*
 - Major Essay:
 - Write an essay analysing the strategies Hawthorne uses to reveal character in Chapter 9.
 - Compare/contrast the strategies Edwards and Hawthorne use to deliver his message about guilt
 - **Creative:** Write a personal letter from one character to another, imitating Hawthorne's style
 - **Creative:** Using Jonathan Edward's sermon as a model, write a letter to the editor of the newspaper to deter your audience from doing something

The Research Paper

- Research a prominent cultural or controversial issue
- Engage in independent research with a variety of sources (journals, databases, interviews, online sources, visuals, documentaries, online sources, books, etc.)
- Create an original, arguable thesis
- Cite all direct and indirect sources according to MLA guidelines
- Incorporate and synthesize research to develop a persuasive, coherent position
- Create a Works Cited page using MLA format

Quarter Four

Unit VII Rhetoric of Nature Writing: What is our responsibility toward nature?

- **Reading:**
 - **E.B. White**, *Once More to the Lake*
 - **Virginia Woolf**, *The Death of the Moth*
 - **Rachel Carson**, *Silent Spring* (Ch. 1 & 2)
 - **Henry David Thoreau**, *Where I Lived, and What I Lived For*
- **Viewing:**
 - Environmental advertisements (thedailygreen.com, webecoist.com)
 - Advertisements from gas/oil companies (Ex: BP Oil spill cleanup)
 - TED: How We're saving one of earth's last wild places
- **Writing:**
 - **Compare/contrast:** Both Woolf's "The Death of the Moth" and E.B. White's "Once More to the Lake" deal with nature and contemplate death. How are their descriptions and the themes they develop from those descriptions different?
 - **Creative:** Imitate E.B. White's descriptive style and retell a significant moment from your past.
 - **Major Essay:** Write an essay that explains how pathos/logos/ethos function in two visual texts from conflicting organizations (environmental agency vs. oil company).

Unit VIII Rhetoric of Pop Culture: To what extent does pop culture reflect our society's values?

- **Reading:**
 - **David Denby** *High School Confidential: Notes on Teen Movies*
 - **Steven Johnson**, *Watching TV Makes Your Smarter*
 - **Julia Scott**, *He Doesn't Like to Watch*
 - **George Gerbner and Todd Gitlin**, *Is Media Violence Free Speech*
- **Viewing:**
 - **Anthony DiVivo**, *TV Turnoff Week* (detail from a poster)
- **Writing:**
 - **Synthesis:** Reference at least three of the sources (Johnson, Scott, Gerbner and Gitlin, and DiVivo). Explain whether you view television as beneficial or detrimental to society. Cite sources appropriately.

- **Major Essay:** Write an analysis of a teen-movie character who seems to transcend the genre as Denby defines it. Does that character's uniqueness challenge or support Denby's theories about why "geeks rule" in teen movies **OR** Using Denby's descriptions of stock teen-movie characters, analyze characters in popular television shows. Consider whether they are faithful to the types he identifies.

AP Exam: Wednesday, May 16

No final completion task for students who take the AP exam

