

AP English Language and Composition

Ms. Jamie Vermaat – Haddonfield Memorial High School



Course Description:

“An AP English Language and Composition course cultivates the reading and writing skills that students need for **college success and for intellectually responsible civic engagement. The course guides students in becoming curious, critical, and responsive readers of diverse texts, and becoming flexible, reflective writers of texts addressed to diverse audiences for diverse purposes.** The reading and writing students do in the course should deepen and expand their understanding of how written language functions rhetorically: to communicate writers’ intentions and elicit readers’ responses in particular situations. The course cultivates the rhetorical understanding and use of written language by directing students’ attention to writer/reader interactions in their reading and writing of various formal and informal genres (e.g., memos, letters, advertisements, political satires, personal narratives, scientific arguments, cultural critiques, research reports).

“Reading and writing activities in the course also deepen students’ knowledge and control of formal conventions of written language (e.g. vocabulary, diction, syntax, spelling, punctuation, paragraphing, genre). The course helps students understand that formal conventions of the English language in its many written and spoken dialects are historically, culturally, and socially produced; that the use of these conventions may intentionally or unintentionally contribute to the effectiveness of ineffectiveness of a piece of writing in a particular rhetorical context; and that a particular set of language conventions defines Standard Written English, the preferred dialect for academic discourse” (The College Board, *AP English Language and Composition Course Description*, 2014, p. 4)

“What is learnt in this manner from the works of others becomes really our own, sinks deep, and is never forgotten; nay, it is by seizing on this clue that we proceed forward, and get further and further in enlarging the principles and improving the practice of our art.” ~ Sir Joshua Reynolds, *Discourses on Art*, p. 161

Students are expected to develop the following skills throughout the year:

- “Analyze and interpret samples of purposeful writing, identifying and explaining an author’s use of rhetorical strategies”
- “Analyze images and other multimodal texts for rhetorical features”
- “Use effective rhetorical strategies and techniques when composing”
- “Write for a variety of purposes”
- “Respond to different writing tasks according to their unique rhetorical and composition demands, and translate that rhetorical assessment into a plan for writing”
- “Create and sustain original arguments based on information synthesized from readings, research, and/or personal observation and experience”
- “Evaluate and incorporate sources into researched arguments”
- “Demonstrate understanding of the conventions of citing primary and secondary sources”

- “Gain control over various reading and writing processes, with careful attention to inquiry (research), rhetorical analysis and synthesis of sources, drafting, revising/rereading, editing, and review”
- “Converse and write reflectively about personal processes of composition”
- “Demonstrate understanding and control of Standard Written English as well as stylistic maturity in their own writing”
- “Revise a work to make it suitable for a different audience”
(The College Board *AP English Course Description*, 2014. p. 8-9)

What I Will Do For You :

- **Introduce you to a variety of literature!** We’ll be diving into essays, memoirs, articles, and novels from the 15th century up until 2018. I hope that you’ll have a greater understanding of what makes those works so powerful, & and I also hope that you will be able to analyze any text that you may come across long after the AP test is over.
- **Listen to you** when you have questions, concerns, or are confused. Most people learn best when they ask questions about what they are learning. So if there is something you are curious about, please ask!
- **Prepare you** for the AP test, for college, and well beyond—your reading, analytical, and writing skills will all be sharpened in this course. I hope that you will take these skills with you as you continue to grow as thinkers and writers.
- **Create a comfortable and supportive learning environment.** I hope that each student feels comfortable participating in class, and I will do my best to make sure sensitive topics are handled gracefully and that students treat each other with respect.
- **Challenge you.** Yes, this is an AP course, which means there will be more reading, more discussion, and more writing than you have ever had in the past. I’ll be trying to get you to do your BEST with each assignment and with each class. I understand we can’t all do our best every day or on every essay, but my goal is for you to TRY your best, to work hard, and to learn as much as you can about the literature or skills we are studying.

What You Can Do For Yourself and the Class

- **Be Respectful**—to each other, to me, to the school as a whole. I hope that our class will have a friendly dynamic, which means everyone should feel comfortable participating and sharing his/her views. Choose your words carefully when you speak, especially when you disagree with someone; I do not tolerate offensive language, or any indication of prejudice.
- **Engage!** Everyone is expected to participate in class. You learn most by engaging in discussion, and your peers can learn so much from you. Kindly pay attention to whoever is speaking and make sure you are taking notes...more on this later!
- **Come Prepared.** Your “homework” assignments should be completed as assigned. In fact, I don’t like the term “homework” as no matter where you complete the assignment it is still in preparation for class. So I consider ALL assignments to be class-work. I check your work regularly. All of the work given to you has a purpose, so make sure you manage your time and invest your best in the learning process.
- **Be Organized.** Keep an agenda/assignment book to keep track of looming deadlines. You should also come to class on time and be seated (with materials on top of your desk) once the bell rings. We have 42 minutes every day to learn as much as we can...to discuss as much as we

can...to write as much as we can. Let's not sacrifice those minutes to side conversations, filling up water bottles, or running to our lockers because we're unprepared for class!

- **Do Your Own Work.** This should be obvious, but I know that technology...and exhaustion...and "friends" can make it all-to-easy to cheat. In addition, I also consider reading summaries instead of the whole text as not doing your own work. If you're assigned *Atonement* to read, read it. It's fine if you need help with analysis and seek guidance in a summary; however, the summary is NOT a substitute for the literature! I'll know when you haven't read, and you'll be missing out on the point of this class—to read and to enjoy watching how authors create their arguments and their worlds. As for Plagiarism you should read the handbook for the HMHS policy. I consider all plagiarism – be it a word, a line of poetry, or an entire paper – to be serious, and I will take the appropriate action to ensure the rights of the original writer are restored and that the student performs his OWN work. If you are concerned about an assignment, please see me. I am here to encourage your thinking and your writing, but can only do so if what you submit is an honest reflection of your abilities.

Grading System:

Essays 55% Most essays will be submitted as rough drafts and then peer-edited, self-edited, or reviewed by me. Students will then revise and resubmit for a final, graded draft. Students are expected to submit rough drafts along with the final drafts to demonstrate increased understanding of and confidence in rhetorical skills. These essays will be the foundation of students' writing portfolios. In addition, students will also write in-class essays based on literature and topics discussed throughout a unit.

Quizzes & Tests 30% Most tests will consist of multiple-choice questions based on those on the AP Language and Composition exam. On some tests, students will be given a passage we have read or studied in class and will need to answer questions related to rhetorical devices, style, vocabulary, and interpretation. In-class essay tests from previous AP exams may also be administered. Formal oral presentations will be included in this category. Quizzes will vary according to content (literature-based analysis/comprehension, grammar and mechanics, etc) and will be briefer than tests. Quizzes may be announced or unannounced

Homework & Classwork 15% Beginning with the Summer Reading assignment, students will have a variety of homework assignments, which will include the following kinds of writing:

- Informal Responses (2-3 paragraph responses of assigned/required readings)
- Rhetorical analyses (2-3 paragraph analysis & evaluation of student-selected non-fiction article in a magazine or newspaper, or a political cartoon, advertisement, work of art, or even television program/film, etc.)
- Argument/Persuasion pieces on a student-selected or teacher-assigned topic.
- Brief in-class writing prompts
- Review worksheets -- including grammar work, terminology review, drafts, peer-editing evaluations, text annotations, oral presentation preparation, etc.
- Brief presentations and group-work assignments

English Department Lateness Policy:

***All homework should be submitted the day it is due. If a teacher allows, students may turn in homework one day late for half credit. No homework will be accepted if it is more than one day late. Special considerations may be made for students with extended absences.

***Major assignments will be given a due date on which a student is expected to turn an assignment in to receive full credit. Assignments handed in after the due date will be penalized one letter grade per day from the earned score. Special considerations may be made for students with extended absences or students who speak to the teacher in advance of the due date. Teachers may give some assignments a deadline (the last day a student may submit an assignment for partial or full credit).

Course Planner -- Assignments may be added or modified during the school year.

First Quarter: Course Orientation and Perspective: Description, Narration, Exemplification, Definition, and Building Foundations in Rhetoric (September -Mid-November)

Readings:

East of Eden & Journal of a Novel by John Steinbeck (Summer Reading)

“The Summer Day” by Mary Oliver

“Digging” by Seamus Heaney

“Adam’s Curse” by W. B. Yeats

Chapter 1 of Annie Dillard’s *The Writing Life*

“Entropy” by K. C. Cole

“Liking Is for Cowards, Go for What Hurts” by Jonathan Franzen

“Good Readers and Good Writers” by Vladimir Nabokov

Pnin by Vladimir Nabokov

Art Analysis project (excerpts from Vance Packard’s *The Hidden Persuaders*)

Chapters 1 & 2 of *The Writer’s Harbrace Handbook* (“The Rhetorical Situation” & “Reading Rhetorically”)

Chapter 3 of *The Writer’s Harbrace Handbook* (“Planning and Drafting Essays”) pages 36-56

Chapter 5 & 14 of *Everything’s an Argument* (“Thinking Rhetorically” & “Visual Arguments”)

Viewing:

Clips from Simon Schama’s *The Power of Art*, from Frontline’s *The Persuaders*

Any content-related videos, commercials, photographs, or artwork.

Assessments:

Quizzes: Reading quizzes to check for understanding

Quizzes: Grammar and Style (from review of Grammar rules and peer-editing samples)

Test: Definitions of and application of Rhetorical Modes and Devices (Cause and Effect, Symbolism, Amphibole, etc.)

Compositions: Rough and Final drafts (also a Peer-Edited Draft) based on the following prompts:

- Analysis Response based on a passage from within *East of Eden*
- Argument Response based on themes and essential questions within *East of Eden*
- Definition Essay: Using the discussion of the word “Timshel” in *East of Eden*, students will select a word that has great meaning to them and then craft a definition essay.
- *East of Eden* Character-Based Creative Project (small groups)

- Pnin In-Class Essay
- Brief character sketches
- Art Analysis Comparison-Contrast

**Second Quarter: Gaining Perspectives of Others (Family and Relationships):
Comparison-Contrast, Division-Classification, Causal Analysis, Process Analysis,
Argumentation-Persuasion
(Mid-November- End of January)**

Readings:

Atonement by Ian McEwan

Dubliners by James Joyce

“For Women Mostly” (1950s Anonymous UPenn OP-ED Division-Classification piece)

“Your New Computer” by Bill Bryson

“In Memory of W. B. Yeats” by W. H. Auden

Winston Churchill’s Dunkirk speech

Chapters 1-4, 6-10 of *Everything’s an Argument* (specific pages will be assigned, not the entire chapter)

Viewing:

Content-related media materials, including photographs, video clips, and artwork (varies each year)

Assessments:

Quizzes: Reading quizzes to check for understanding

Quizzes: Grammar and Style (from review of Grammar rules and peer-editing samples)

Test: In-Class comparative analysis of two texts – Objective Questions and a synthesis essay

Compositions: Rough and Final drafts (also a Peer-Edited Draft) based on the following prompts:

- Argument Essay (based on *Atonement*)
- Process Analysis Essay: select a process that students understand well and then describe it to the uninitiated
- Division-Classification Essay: select a topic and divide and classify its components (as either a dominant or supportive technique for writing)
- *Atonement* Debate
- *Dubliners* Essay
- *Dubliners* Creative Project

Third Quarter: Political Perspectives and Power (February – mid-April)

Readings:

Selections from *The Prince* and *Discourses* by Machiavelli

Utopia Sir Thomas More

The Declaration of Independence

A Vindication of the Rights of Women by Mary Wollstonecraft

Declaration of Sentiments and Resolutions by Elizabeth Cady Stanton

Copper Union, 1st & 2nd Inaugural Addresses by Abraham Lincoln

“I Have a Dream” by Martin Luther King, Jr

“Where Do We Go From Here: Community or Chaos” by Martin Luther King, Jr.

A Handmaid’s Tale by Margaret Atwood

Independent Selections from media for Journalism & Bias Project
Chapter 17 from *Everything's an Argument* (Fallacies in Argument)

Viewing:

Political Debates (Historical & Current), Current political cartoons , State of the Union Address

Assessments:

Quizzes: Reading quizzes to check for understanding

Quizzes: Grammar and Style (from review of Grammar rules and peer-editing samples) and logical fallacies

Tests: Sample questions from the AP Exam (both objective and written)

Compositions: Rough and Final drafts (also a Peer-Edited Draft) based on the following prompts:

- Comparison/Contrast of Declarations
- I Do Declare Assignment—students use Jefferson’s rhetorical structure and argument to craft their own Declarations
- Lincoln Essay: Modified from previous AP Exam question
- Rhetorical Analysis of Journalism. Students may “adopt” a specific columnist or they may “adopt” an issue that they track over a month. They will complete a rhetorical analysis review worksheet for each article & then write an essay that evaluates bias in the media
- *The Handmaid’s Tale*: 3 Separate in-class assessments while we read this novel. One based on the first few chapters will be analysis-based; the second is an argument, and the third combines rhetorical analysis and argumentation.

Fourth Quarter: Broadening Perspectives in the World & in Writing (Mid-April –Mid-June)

Readings:

“Why I Write” by George Orwell

“Does a Literary Cannon Matter?”

“Revisiting the Cannon Wars”

Why Read (excerpts) from Mark Edmundson

“The Lonely, Good Company of Books” by Richard Rodriguez

Articles regarding curriculum, reading & writing

Viewing:

TED talks to prepare for final presentation

Assessments:

Quizzes: Reading quizzes to check for understanding

Quizzes: Grammar and Style (from review of Grammar rules and peer-editing samples)

Tests: Sample questions from the AP Exam (both objective and essay)

Major Assignments:

- Literary Cannon Argument Essay (based on previous AP Prompt)
- Why I Write Narrative – based on Orwell’s
- Publisher’s Proposal & Author Presentation