

# Advanced Placement English Language and Composition South High School 2013-2014

## Course Goals

This course is designed to

- help you discover what you have to say and find effective ways to say it;
- move beyond where you are now as a writer, reader and critical thinker;
- understand writing as a process that involves thinking, drafting, revising and editing;
- facilitate the development of a mature prose style that includes a broad vocabulary and well-crafted sentences;
- develop your abilities to read, understand and evaluate all kinds of complex non-fiction texts;
- develop the organizational skills and work ethic necessary for complex academic work;
- build a learning community of active, engaged, and respectful life-long learners;
- foster your discussion skills;
- help you recognize the importance of feedback on your writing and learn to use this feedback from peers and your instructor to improve your writing;
- engage you as an active participant in your own learning;
- find real-world audiences for your writing;
- help you become a well-informed citizen who can engage in conversation, both written and oral, about social and moral issues;
- help you discover ways that writing can create change in the world.

## Elements of the Course

AP English Language and Composition was created by the College Board to introduce high school students to college level reading, writing and thinking. At the end of the year, you will take the AP exam, which may help you earn college credit. While we will spend time preparing specifically for the test, the course's *primary goal* is to engage you in reading, writing and thinking at a college level. The course will help you improve your writing skills AND help you become a more informed global citizen. In order to accomplish this, the course will include the following elements:

### Major Essays

These are the pillars of the course, and much of the reading and informal writing you do this year will be designed to help you with these major essays. Tentatively, these essays will include

- an advertising analysis
- a guided researched argument about Dakota Reparations
- a rhetorical analysis of contemporary and pre-20th century texts
- a poetry analysis
- a researched argument
- a personal narrative/creative non-fiction

This list may change as the year progresses in response to your interests and needs. For many of these papers, you'll have some choice in terms of the topics you focus on, though we will be researching one topic together as a class. As part of each of these assignments, we will explore every stage of the writing process—you will brainstorm ideas, gather information, create one or more rough drafts, receive feedback from me and from your classmates, and revise your writing.

### Weekly Writing

Each week, either on Friday or Monday, you will turn in a piece of writing to me. The nature of this writing will vary and will include summaries of readings, responses to readings, critiques of readings and practice AP test essays. In an effort to further prepare you for advanced college-level writing, you will be expected to use APA style and formatting in all weekly essays. You will self-evaluate these weekly pieces of writing and receive an evaluation from me. This weekly writing will help you focus on specific writing goals.

### Reading and Responding

At least once per week, and usually more, you will have an assigned reading—an article, an essay, an excerpt from a book, and you'll be asked to annotate these readings and respond to this reading in your reader's/writer's notebook. You will share these responses with classmates and use them in discussion. Challenge yourselves to seek and understand perspectives other than your own. These readings will usually relate to one of the major essays in some way. They will also serve to improve your reading skills and prepare you for the AP exam, which is focused on analyzing texts. In addition to the texts we read together as a class, you will be engaged in independent reading throughout the year. Each semester, you will read one non-fiction book and prepare a formal presentation analyzing the rhetorical strategies/language landscape used in your text.

### Online Component

The AP exam, as well as college academic life, requires you to be a well-informed, knowledgeable person. Also, in college and life beyond

college, you will be expected to use and navigate multiple Internet tools. We feel strongly about giving you a grounding in those tools. In addition, your engagement in these tools will help accomplish the two primary goals in the course, improving your reading and writing skills and becoming a more informed global citizen.

### Shared Inquiry Discussions

We will often follow up a reading assignment with a shared inquiry discussion in class. These discussions will be focused on critical questions about the reading and are designed to deepen your understanding of the reading. The learning community we develop will require your participation in this shared inquiry.

### Reader's/Writer's Notebook

You'll be doing a lot of informal writing inside and outside of class, and you'll need a composition notebook in which to do this writing. In addition to your at-home reading responses, you will do a writing warm-up in your notebook at the beginning of class every day, record daily vocabulary, and take notes during discussions and other class activities. You're also encouraged to use this notebook outside of class to brainstorm, record ideas about your writing, take notes on reading, and do any other kind of writing you'd like. The Readers/Writers notebook is what I call "The Great Synthesizer." In this notebook, you will: explore, discover, wrestle, respond, record and develop your writing muse. It is one of the most important tools for this class. These notebooks will become an archive of your creative thinking and will be an investment in your academic process. Use it as a reference when you write your essays. The Readers/Writers notebook is a primary vehicle in AP Language and Composition class for students to practice and embody a high level skill set for academic and critical literacy.

### Vocabulary and Rhetorical Terms

One of the goals of this course is to help you increase the breadth and depth of your vocabulary. Your knowledge of and ability to identify and use rhetorical and literary devices is essential to your success as a reader, writer, and critical thinker. You will be held accountable for your learning of this material throughout each grading period. Please note: this study will especially help you prepare for the AP exam.

### Test Preparation

While the whole course will help you gain skills you need for the AP exam, we will do some targeted test preparation several times per quarter. This will involve writing in-class essays, studying rhetorical terms, and taking practice multiple-choice exams.

### Style and Mechanics

In order to communicate effectively in writing, you need to be able to write clearly, passionately, and eloquently. We will spend some time in class focused on issues of grammar, spelling and sentence mechanics. Occasionally, I may give you some individualized grammar homework to help you work on particular problems that are cropping up in your writing.

### **Teaching Philosophy**

Even though I will occasionally deliver information to you, this course is not about my depositing knowledge into your empty, receptive minds. The knowledge and skills you build in this course will come from your active engagement with your own writing, with the texts we read, with other students, and with me. We will spend most of our class time in discussions, workshops and small-group activities. I hope we will get into lots of friendly arguments and challenge one another's views of particular texts and of the world in general.

In addition, it is important to understand that the work you do in this course is relevant beyond our classroom--I will try to find ways, during each assignment, for you to have a real-world audience and for your writing to have an impact on your community. I hope you will seek out these things as well--discussing your thinking and showing your writing to friends and family, speaking out about issues you explore in the class, and taking action based on what you learn.

### **Required Materials**

- 3-ring binder----2-inch or larger with loose leaf paper
- post-it-note tabs
- composition notebook--durable cover with permanently fastened sheets in a center sewn binding (not a wire-bound notebook)
- access to computer and Internet (at home, school, library and/or community center)
- flash drive (optional--you need some way of getting digital work between home and school)
- highlighter, pen/pencil

### **The AP Exam**

The AP Exam in English Language and Composition is offered in the spring of every year. You are required to take this exam as part of this course. If you score a 3 or higher, your college may give you college English credit. The exam tests your ability to read, analyze and synthesize texts. It does not test your knowledge about a certain set of texts. In other words, you do not need to have read a specific list

of books to do well on the test. The exam consists of a multiple choice section with questions about texts that are provided for you and three essay questions: a rhetorical analysis essay, a synthesis essay and an open question, which asks you to make an argument about a given topic. During the weeks just before the exam, the AP Language teachers will offer after-school study sessions, and we encourage you to participate in them.

## **Grades**

Grading for this class is going to look quite different from most of your other classes. Because I want us to be focused on improving your writing, reading and thinking, rather than accumulating points and getting a grade, I will not be using a point system or assigning grades on individual assignments, except for final drafts of major essays and practice AP exams; and as a student, you will take an active role in determining what counts as success in the course and in determining your own mid-term and semester grade.

This does not mean you will not be receiving feedback from me. In fact, you may get more feedback from me than you would in a more traditional grading system. I will comment extensively on rough drafts of your essays and will use a writing rubric to evaluate your final drafts. You simply will not be getting a number at the bottom of your assignments.

This also does not mean that your grade is a mystery and you'll get a nasty surprise at the end of the semester. I want you to feel free to talk to me at any time about how you're doing in the class, and, as I said above, you'll be taking an active role in determining your grade. Here's how it's going to work:

**Rubrics:** As a class, we will create a general rubric for the course that answers the question, "what does a successful performance in this course look like?" We will do this in the first week or two of the course. We will also create more specific rubrics for each essay—"what does an effective personal narrative (or researched argument or ad analysis) look like?" You will use these rubrics as a guide to help you assess your own writing progress. I will also use the rubric to evaluate and give you a grade on the final draft of each major essay.

**Portfolio:** You will keep a portfolio of your completed work in the classroom. This includes rough drafts with comments, final drafts with comments, and other written work, such as peer reviews of your classmates' writing and copies of readings with your annotations. This will give us a central place to look as we think about how you've progressed in the course. In addition, you will also be able to keep track of your reading responses in your reader's/writer's notebook, and this notebook will give an indication of your participation in in-class writing activities, as well.

**Self-evaluations:** On a weekly or bi-weekly basis, you will reflect on our class rubric and identify areas where you are succeeding and areas where you need to improve. At the middle and end of each quarter, you will write more extensive evaluations of your learning, and these will become the basis of our conversations in conferences. In addition, you will write self-assessments of your final essays and responses to my evaluations of those essays.

**Parent/Teacher/Student Conferences:** When it's time for parent conferences, I'd like you to attend and to lead the conference. Rather than focusing on a grade sheet, the conference will focus on your portfolio. You will share with your parents and me your own assessment of your progress in the course, and it will be an opportunity for you and your parents to ask questions of me, if you have them.

**Conferences: (Writing, Organization, Grading)** Before mid-term and final grades are due, I will have a short conference with you during class. You and I will both prepare for this conference by reviewing your portfolio and evaluating your work in the course using the rubrics we've developed as a class. You will be expected to come to this conference with your written self reflection. During the conference, we'll discuss our evaluations and try to come to consensus on a grade. If we don't agree on a grade, we will schedule a longer, after-school conference.

**Check-ins:** Any time you or your parents want to check in with me to discuss your progress in the course, I will be happy to do it via e-mail, phone or in person. The idea here is not to surprise you—I won't be keeping some kind of secret running tally of points. Rather, I want our focus to be on your reading, writing, and thinking skills, rather than your grade alone.

**On-line Portal:** You and your parents will still be able to look at the on-line portal for a record of assignments you've completed, assignments that are missing, and assignments that are late or incomplete. There won't be points attached to these assignments. Assignments will be assessed on the Portal using the standard A - F letter grade format.

Parents/Guardians are welcome to e-mail me for an update on your progress whenever they like.

**Letter Grades:** A=highly proficient exemplary work in all objectives

B=exceeds the standards in all objectives

C=proficient work/meets the standards all objectives  
D=less than proficient work/does not meet the standards in most objectives  
F=not proficient/minimal effort shown/does not meet the standards

**Codes:** I=assignment incomplete  
L=assignment late  
M=assignment missing

## **Policies**

### Late Work

Even though we have removed the economy of points from our grading system, that does not mean that deadlines are not important. The class is focused on the writing process, and you will not progress as a reader, writer, and thinker if you consistently miss deadlines. A late rough draft means no feedback from peers and from me. A reading assignment not done means you can't fully participate in the learning community, and the community loses your voice and begins to resent your lack of investment. Students who grow the most in this course as readers, writers and thinkers are diligent, hard workers who consistently invest in their own integrity as learners.

I will not accept late work unless you communicate with me ahead of the deadline. Late rough drafts will receive no feedback from me unless we have negotiated a revised due date ahead of time. If you are having a consistent problem with the work, please come talk to me and I will help you with strategies for time management. Obviously, things happen in our lives--the key is communicating with me about your experience with the work for the course.

Academic Honesty: I expect you to complete the work for this course to the best of your ability and with integrity. It is fine to discuss what you've read with a classmate before you write a reading response, or to ask a friend to read and comment on a draft of your essay (we'll actually be doing quite a bit of this in class). But academic dishonesty will not be tolerated. Academic dishonesty includes, among other things:

- copying someone else's reading response or essay;
- giving your own reading response or essay to someone else to copy;
- turning in material from the internet as if it were your own;
- including someone else's words or ideas in your essay without citing your sources;
- using notes on a test when they are not allowed.

We will be doing some group work in the course, but, unless I say otherwise, every assignment is to be your individual work. Any sort of academic dishonesty will result in a failing grade on that assignment and a call to parents or guardians and a referral to your administrator.

### What you can expect from me:

- I will treat you respectfully, as people who bring lots of knowledge, experiences, ideas and energy into the classroom.
- I will do my best to make class time engaging and interesting.
- I will design assignments that are challenging, and I will do everything I can to help you meet those challenges.
- I will be available to meet after or during school with any student who needs help.
- I will listen to you when you are having problems with the class.
- I will do my part to keep the classroom clean and orderly.
- I will respond to problems in the classroom quickly and fairly.

### What I expect from you:

- You will approach the activities and readings in the class with curiosity and a willingness to learn.
- You will contribute your ideas and interests to the class.
- You will attend class every day and arrive on time.
- During class time, you will be focused on the activities of the class, whether that means reading silently, participating in discussion, engaging in small group work, or listening to presentations from me or from your classmates.
- You will not work on homework for other classes or write notes during this class.
- Personal electronic devices should be turned off, unless I tell you they can be used for educational purposes.
- If you are having problems with me, with other students, or with the work for the class, you will talk to me about them.
- You will behave respectfully toward me and toward your classmates. This means listening to whoever is speaking, waiting your turn to speak, refraining from social conversations with those around you, avoiding behavior that disrupts the class, and completely refraining from verbal or physical harassment of others.
- You will not bring food or beverages into the classroom, and you will do your part to keep the classroom clean and orderly by

disposing of your garbage and recycling and keeping track of your belongings.