

ADVANCED PLACEMENT LANGUAGE AND COMPOSITION

Adapted in part from the *AP English Course Description* published by the College Board.

INTRODUCTION

The foundation for a successful undergraduate experience is proficiency in the written and spoken word. Students need language to grasp and express effectively feelings and ideas. To succeed in college, undergraduates should be able to write and speak with clarity, and to read and listen with comprehension. Language and thought are inextricably connected and as undergraduates develop their linguistic skills, they hone the quality of their thinking and become intellectually and socially empowered.

--Ernest L. Bower, President of the Carnegie
Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching

We all use language daily. We read newspapers, posters, letters, and books, and we also write notes, letters, job applications, and grocery lists, among other things. These kinds of activities constitute a kind of conversation and they allow us to communicate with others, through reading and writing, involved in the same conversations. And yet, in school we find that we are asked to do different kinds of reading and different kinds of writing. We are asked to read a range of textbooks, course syllabi, novels, poems, plays, articles, and histories. We are also asked to write essays on exams, research papers, term papers, and expository essays. But we are not only asked to read and write pieces that we might never read and write if we were not in school, we are also asked to read and write in different ways. That is, we are asked to think about the ways we read, to understand what we read on more than one level, and to write pieces through which we express complicated understandings and ideas. Thus, in college the subject matter of our conversations shifts, as well as the way in which we begin to "speak" in those conversations. In this course, we will focus on the kinds of reading and writing tasks that students are asked to do in college, to hone our skills as readers and to increase our proficiency as writers and to acquire the skills that enable us to take part in the conversation of the university.

To carry this out, we will read a variety of pieces from a range of genres and disciplines. Our goal in reading these pieces will be to increase our understanding of the way that different writers raise and address questions, of the forms they use to speak to particular audiences, and of the patterns that characterize both academic and non-academic writing. At the same time, we will read these texts as a way of beginning to learn the forms of writing that we must do in college-level work. In our writing, we will work to make our own writing clear, specific, and coherent, and we will work to improve our ability to ask and address appropriate questions.

GOALS

With its emphasis on nonfiction, AP English Language and Composition immerses students in "real-life" texts as readers and as writers. By encountering these texts, students learn to value their own *voice*, as well as the voice of others. (Brassil in *Teacher's Guide*)

The primary purpose of this class is to prepare you for college and career by helping you to develop critical reading and writing skills, to help you raise awareness of your own composing processes: explore ideas, reconsider strategies, and revise your work. Toward this end, we will emphasize the

expository, analytical, and argumentative writing that forms the basis of academic and professional communication, as well as the personal and reflective writing that fosters the development of writing facility in any context. In doing this, this class will also prepare you for the AP exam in May.

Because this class is a rhetoric course, the focus is on the methods and devices of language, especially those used to persuade. Although most reading will be non-fiction, we will at times consider fiction, poetry, and drama. We will also emphasize writing from sources, that is, using outside sources as a basis for building arguments in our writing and in this way, enter into conversations with other writers and thinkers.

The intense concentration on language use in the course will enhance your ability to use grammatical conventions appropriately and to develop stylistic maturity in your prose. Stylistic development is nurtured by emphasizing the following:

- 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.

Upon completing the AP English Language and Composition course, then, students should be able to:

- Analyze and interpret samples of good writing, identifying and explaining an author's use of rhetorical strategies and techniques
- Apply effective strategies and techniques in their own writing
- Create and sustain arguments based on readings, research, and/or personal experience
- Write for a variety of purposes
- Produce expository, analytical, and argumentative compositions that introduce a complex central idea and develop it with appropriate evidence drawn from primary and/or secondary sources, cogent explanations, and clear transitions
- Demonstrate understanding and mastery of standard written English as well as stylistic maturity in their own writings
- Demonstrate understanding of the conventions of citing primary and secondary sources (MLA)
- Move effectively through the stages of the writing process, with careful attention to inquiry and research, drafting, revising, editing, and review;
- Write thoughtfully about their own process of composition
- Revise a work to make it suitable for a different audience
- Analyze image as text
- Evaluate and incorporate reference documents into researched papers

THE AP EXAM

The three-hour AP English Language and Composition exam gives students the opportunity to demonstrate their mastery of the skills abilities. It employs multiple-choice questions to test the students' skills in analyzing the rhetoric of prose passages. In addition, some questions will refer to documentation and citation of sources.

Students are also asked to write several essays that demonstrate the writing skills. The prompt and stimulus for one of the three mandatory essay questions will highlight synthesis skills: students will read a number of related sources and respond to a prompt that requires them to cite a certain number of the sources in support of an argument or analysis. Although the skills tested in the exam remain essentially the same, there may be some variation in format of the essay questions from year to year.

Ordinarily, the exam consists of 60 minutes for multiple-choice questions followed by 120 minutes for 3 essay questions (40 minutes each) + an additional 15-minute reading period to accommodate the added reading of the synthesis question materials. Performance on the essay section of the exam counts for 55 percent of the total grade; performance on the multiple-choice section, 45 percent.

Beginning with the May 2011 AP Exam administration, total scores on the multiple-choice section will be based on the number of questions answered correctly. Points will no longer be deducted for incorrect answers and, as always, no points will be awarded for unanswered questions.

COURSE STRUCTURE

Class time will be spent:

- Reading (sometimes as a "read aloud").
- Discussing writing, reading, and/or assignments
- Raising questions, posing problems, interpreting what you have read, challenging each other, and developing insights about the reading/writing.
- Reviewing writing strategies, applications, and/or element with a significant emphasis on how writers consciously use rhetorical strategies and literary devices to create powerful and effective texts.
- Practicing various approaches to writing:
 - Writing to explore: informal, personal narrative writing; explorative, descriptive story telling
 - Writing to understand: informal, exploratory writing designed to help students discover what they think; typically focused on the reading in progress
 - Writing to explain: expository, analytical essays focused on textual details to develop an extended explanation or interpretation of the meanings of a literary text
 - Writing to evaluate: analytical, argumentative essays focused on textual details to make and explain judgments about a work's artistry and quality, and its social and cultural values.
- Developing research skills: the ability to evaluate, use, and cite primary and secondary sources; as well as the analysis and synthesis of ideas from an array of sources.
- Participating in writing workshops, writing conferences, peer review, or sentence work sessions.
- Receiving ongoing feedback on writing to assist with the development of key writing skills.
- Honing test-taking skills: timed writing and passage analysis (multiple choice).

COURSE TEXTS

Supplied by NPA:

AP English Writing Reminders, including readings (essays, articles, and chapters) and reference materials (glossaries, histories, explanations, instructions, etc.).

Composition Program, Department of English, Northern Arizona University. *A Sense of Place: Physical, Natural, and Cultural Environments*. 2nd ed. New York: Forbes, 1999.

McCuen, Jo Ray and Anthony Winkler. *Readings for Writers*. 8th ed. Fort Worth: Harcourt Brace College Publishers, 1995.

Supplied by students either via the internet or library or through purchase:

Assorted essays, articles, stories, and/or novels. Reading assignments will be announced orally, on the homework board, or online on my webpage. Students are encouraged to purchase their own copies of novels for annotation purposes. Use of an e-reader (iPad, Kindle, Nook, etc.) is fine. A very small number of copies are available in my lending library. However, any student needing assistance in obtaining books should see me.

Recommended: Hacker, Diana. *A Pocket Style Manual*. 6th ed. Boston: Bedford/St. Martin's, 2011.

Reading List: Texts of similar AP merit may be substituted at the discretion of the teacher.

Summer Reading: Focus on Memoirs

- *The Glass Castle*, Jeanette Walls
- *The Things They Carried*, Tim O'Brien
- Student choice, memoir

Fall Reading

- *Tortilla Curtain*, T. C. Boyle
- "Nickel and Dimed," Barbara Ehrenreich (journal article supplied)
- *Animal Farm*, George Orwell
- *Lord of the Flies*, William Golding
- *The Importance of Being Ernest*, Oscar Wilde (supplied)
- "A Modest Proposal," Jonathan Swift (supplied)
- Assorted essays, chapters, and articles

Spring Reading

- *The Awakening*, Kate Chopin
- Student choice (focus: nature or the environment)
- *Animal, Vegetable, Miracle*, Barbara Kingsolver
- Student choice (focus: food system)
- Readings from *A Sense of Place* (including excerpts from Rachel Carson's *Silent Spring* and John McPhee's *Encounters with the Archdruid*, plus essays by Annie Dillard, Barry Lopez, Aldo Leopold, David Brower, and others.
- *Brave New World*, Aldous Huxley
- Assorted essays, chapters, and articles

RESPONDING IN WRITING

Response Statements

- **Personal Response:** ~10 minute exploratory freewrite after completion of every reading (to be done at home as homework and submitted). This should be a reflective engagement with the text—and not just skating across the surface.
- **Focused Response:** an in-class writing in response to a quotation, a pointed question, or through the lens of a literary theory. These responses will serve as a catalyst for discussion and as a check on reading comprehension.
- **Oral Response:** discussion focused on the text either in pairs, small groups, or as a whole class.



Timed Writings. Throughout the school year, students will write in response to either a passage or a free response prompt (Practice AP Exam). Like all essays in this class, these essays are graded using the AP rubric.

Argument Analysis is the analysis or breaking down of a writer's argument, checking for thoroughness and validity.

Synthesis writing is essentially research writing, requiring students to gather, analyze and ultimately to synthesize or combine sources.

ADDITIONAL EXPECTATIONS

Vocabulary.

- Most words come from an SAT vocabulary word list; however, words in context will be checked in the dictionary and/or other reference books, as well as on-line sources.
- Weekly vocabulary worksheet + cumulative Friday quiz serve as assessments.
- Students are also rewarded for finding (and defining) vocabulary words in their reading and using vocabulary words (as appropriate) in their writing.

AP Model Exams. Throughout the year we will examine past AP exams and look at actual student responses. You will take in-class essay tests using past prompts. In addition, you will practice making and taking the multiple-choice section of the exam. My hope is that by May you will be extremely familiar with the AP rubric, the multiple-choice portion of the exam, and will know the characteristics of a high scoring essay.

Revisions: You will have the opportunity to revise selected essays (at least three per quarter) over the course of each semester. These revisions must be submitted within 2 weeks of the return date (stamped on your essay). A primary focus in this class is improving your analytical skills, particularly in writing—revising is an essential practice toward reaching that goal. You will receive timely feedback on each assessed writing assignment toward assisting you identify both areas of power (strengths) and areas in need of improvement.

Class-time will also be used to review patterns of problems (building varied sentences, using effective diction, creating logical organization, incorporating specific detail and support, finding your voice, and mastering punctuation and other rhetorical details). The revised—and presumably improved—grade will replace the earlier grade.

Class Participation. This is a college prep class. Consequently, I expect you to prepare for each class by reading the assigned work *alertly, curiously, and critically* --- that is, in a way that generates meaningful questions and ideas about the reading that you then bring to class and make a part of our daily discussion. The first purpose of the class is *not* for you to learn my interpretations of literature but for you to practice your own. So, you must come ready to practice: i.e. poems should be read three or four times, difficult passages in novels at least twice, and unfamiliar words looked up in a dictionary.

GRADING

I am much more concerned with ATTITUDE than APTITUDE. Being "brilliant" alone is not enough; I expect you to get the most out of yourself, and I expect you to succeed. My grading of your work will reflect this view. You will be assessed in a variety of ways, from daily homework to major tests, formal essays, timed essays, vocabulary work and class participation. All work is weighted proportionately to its importance or significance and /or the work and effort it requires of you. Writing assignments and exams will be valued the highest.

AP Scoring Model: General

Top Scores 9-8 (90-95)	These are well-organized and well written essays. With apt and specific references to the passage, they analyze the prompt in depth and with appropriate support. While not without flaws, these papers demonstrate an understanding of the text and a consistent control over the elements of effective composition. These writers read with perception and express their ideas with clarity and skill.
Upper Scores 7-6 (80-85)	These essays are less incisive, developed, or aptly supported than papers in the highest ranges. They deal accurately with the prompt, but they are less effective or thorough than the 8-9 essays. These essays demonstrate the writer's ability to express ideas clearly but with less maturity and control than the better papers. Generally, essay scored a 7 present a more developed analysis and more consistent command of the elements of effective exposition than essays scored 6.
Middle Score 5 (75)	Customarily, these essays are superficial. The writing is adequate to convey the writer's thoughts, but these essays are typically ordinary, not as well conceived, organized or developed as upper-level papers. Often, they reveal simplistic thinking and/or immature writing.
Lower Scores 4-3 (65-70)	These lower-half essays may reflect an incomplete understanding of the passage and fail to respond adequately to part or parts of the question. The discussion may be inaccurate or unclear, and misguided or undeveloped; these essays may paraphrase rather than analyze. The treatment is likely to be meager and unconvincing. Generally, the writing demonstrates weak control of such elements as diction, organization, syntax or grammar. These essays typically contain recurrent stylistic flaws and lack persuasive evidence from the text. Any essay that does not address the prompt can receive no higher than a 4.
Lowest Scores 2-1 (55-60)	These essays compound the weaknesses of the papers in the 3-4 range. They seriously misread the passage or fail to respond to the question. Frequently, they are unacceptably brief. Often poorly written on several counts, these essays may contain many distracting errors in grammar and mechanics. Although some attempt may have been made to answer the question, the writer's views typically are presented with little clarity, organization, coherence, or supporting evidence.

Format For Written Work. Take-home essays and other writing assignments (unless otherwise specified) should be typed. Documents must be typed in an easy-to-read font (12 point), printed in black ink, and titled, the margins no larger than one inch. On all work, the heading—name, date, period, course name—must be in the upper left hand corner of the first page. On handwritten notes or other assignments, I expect neat, legible handwriting or printing in black or dark blue ink only.

If I cannot read your writing, it is your problem and not mine. Be forewarned—I take the formal appearance of your papers quite seriously. I expect you to strictly adhere to MLA guidelines.

RULES TO LIVE BY

Academic Integrity

Academic integrity is a personal choice. It is taking responsibility for your own work; it is being individually accountable; and it means honesty in your academic work. In other words, we expect you to make choices that reflect integrity and responsible behavior.

Academic integrity applies to both written work and oral presentations. Examples of academic dishonesty include, but are not limited to, the following: the willful giving or receiving of an unauthorized text, unfair, dishonest, or unscrupulous advantage in academic work over other students using fraud, duress, deception, theft, trickery, talking, signs, gestures, copying, or any other methodology.

Plagiarism:

- Submitting or presenting another person's work as your own without proper documentation, including downloaded information from the Internet. For example, direct copying and pasting from the internet (or anywhere else) requires quotation marks (indicating that you are using the ideas and words of others), as well as accurate and complete citation information.
- Using another student's material.

Cheating:

- Giving or receiving information during a test, quiz, and/or class work assignment without teacher authorization.
- Using hand signals, gestures, and the like during tests or quizzes to obtain/give information.
- Using or having access to unauthorized materials during a test or quiz.
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A student who engages in academic dishonesty can expect to receive an "0" for the assignment. The student may also be placed on academic and/or disciplinary probation.

Attendance: Regular attendance is required. You can't learn if you are not here.

Behavior. RESPECT, RESPONSE, RESPONSIBILITY are the three rules that set the tone in our community of learners. We will respect ourselves, each other, and the facility; we will respond thoughtfully (not react without thinking) to each other, and we will accept responsibility for our own actions.

Pay Attention. *Listen* when I am giving instructions. If you ask me a question I have "just" answered, you can expect an extra writing assignment. The punishment is not the writing part (because we love to write); the punishment is that the assignment is homework (and no one likes homework, especially extra homework).

Personal Needs

- Potty breaks, hydration needs, and pencil sharpening may occur before class (preferred) and on your work time—and NEVER on my teaching time.
- Snacking and drinking water bottles may occur during class provided you do not leave a mess. If this privilege is abused, it will be suspended.

Technology

- iPods (MP3s, CD players, etc.). Use is acceptable during writing work sessions, as long as only you can hear your music, you don't share headphones or ear buds, and you are listening to music (not comedy, etc.). Use is not acceptable during other types of class sessions, especially during lessons. NO MOVIES—NO GAMES!
- Cell Phones: Use (without permission) is NEVER acceptable in this classroom. This includes texting. Use it and lose it—no warnings, no exceptions.

Other Distractions

This is English class. Therefore, you may NEVER work on assignments for other classes during my class. If you do, you will lose it. Permanently. Not kidding.

Timeliness

- Please arrive to class on time and settle into daily work as soon as the bell rings.
- Please submit all work/papers on time (at the start of class). Late work will receive a 10% reduction/day for an essay that is passed in after the due date.
- Assignments will not be considered late if the absence is excused. However, for planned absences (vacations and athletics, for example), you are expected to turn in work prior to your departure.
- Students who are not prepared for class—that is, missing *Writing Reminders*, textbooks, notebooks, paper, writing implements, assignments—will be consequenced. NO LOCKER VISITS TO RETRIEVE FORGOTTEN STUFF.
- Students experiencing technological difficulties (my computer crashed, printer is out of ink, dog ate my flashdrive, etc.) must write their assignments by hand and submit a note from a parent/guardian describing the problem. Students with ongoing technological difficulties should discuss alternatives with me.

Please note: I reserve the right to make changes as I see fit throughout the school year.