

AP English Language Syllabus

Course Overview

This class is a study of language in all forms. We begin with a discussion of the elements that an author uses to rhetorically manipulate an audience (tone, syntax, diction, imagery, symbolism, etc), we work to analyze what an authors purpose is and how to discern what audience they are targeting, and we use these close language studies to improve our own language through emulation and adaptation. In all cases the end goal is for a student to intelligently analyze and use rhetoric and rhetorical techniques to be able to comprehend and comment on any text they come in contact with.

Students must come into the class expecting an intensive writing experience. They will be required to complete in class timed essays, out of class revised and polished works, reflective writing, journaling, peer and self edits, research projects, and a hodgepodge of other written and spoken activities designed to increase their lexicon of rhetorical techniques.

This class is designed around the end goal of completing the AP English Language Test and mirroring the college experience of ENG 101. For this reason the instructor must always read the latest edition of the *AP English Course Description* and be sure to align the activities and projects of the course to the suggestions and alterations outlined or selected in its pages. Students are likewise allowed to read the suggestions contained within it and are sometimes prompted to read poignant overviews or suggestions from respected AP teachers and table leaders. In addition, as it is a college level course, all students enrolling are forewarned both of the immense workload that they will be taking on as well as the end-of-year expectation that they will take the AP English Language Exam.

Course Texts

The primary text for this course is *Subject Strategies: Ninth Edition* by Paul Eschholz and Alfred Rosa. This is supplemented by *50 Essays: A Portable Anthology* by Samuel Cohen (alongside the *Teaching Nonfiction in AP English* accompanying guide by Renee H. Shea and Lawrence Scanlon), The *APCD English Language* disk is used for in class group testing, and a collection of past AP free response and multiple choice questions are scattered and integrated into the course.

Our school also has access to *Infotrack*, and so our students make use of current periodicals. Additionally, I use texts that I have accumulated from various authors and publications.

Writing Expectations

- Students are expected to write many essays through the course of the year. All of the outside of class long term essays are expected to be revised and polished works. To this end some class time will be devoted to student-teacher and student-student conferences. Feedback also comes from written response to rough and final drafts turned into the instructor, evaluated, annotated, and returned to students. As our school devotes one period each day as a “Learning Lab,” during which I am available for questions, students in need of help are expected to see me as necessary.
- For all essay assignments students will receive a rubric. This rubric will express the central guidelines/goals of the activity. Students should use it as a guide to focus the majority of their energy. All rubrics will include elements about the strength of writing, and for this reason students should constantly seek to identify and improve personal structural and grammatical weaknesses.
- Essays that students receive back after grading will have notations made on them to help guide the students toward fixing problem areas and all students are encouraged to revise and resubmit essays. As an absolute minimum, students are expected to review these comments and use them as an additional strategy to improve language, structuring, and rhetorical skills. As the tasks become more complex and the expectations more demanding, students who fail to self-reflect during the course suffer academically.

Ongoing activities:

- ❖ The following items are done as mini-lessons in the course of our major units. As we have a block schedule (80 min. periods) at the school, class periods warrant the time to address these things through “warm up” or “cool down” activities. These things never receive single large unit activities, but are seen instead as being support for the skills of vocabulary enhancement, close reading and analysis, and on-demand writing and so are done as supplementary activities. **Please note that the following activities take place throughout the entirety of the year and are not discussed in individual specific depth in this syllabus.** As often as possible the multiple choice or free response questions are aligned with the subjects, forms, or thematic contents identified in the long term projects. The journals and vocabulary are always aligned with the units.

- **Journal Activities:** Students keep a journal as part of their notebook. In it they are asked to reflect upon difficulties and strengths in their own education, respond to free writing activities, and generally explore ideas that we are entertaining as a class. Generally journaling is used as a class opener or closer. **Some specific reference is made to journal prompts to provide a taste of the style and range of activities. All lessons contain these sorts of journal projects even when descriptions are not specifically provided in this curriculum.**
- **Multiple Choice Questions-** every two weeks we read and answer a sample multiple choice section. We discuss what types of information you need to focus on in the close reading of the prompt to fully understand the test and its implications as well as strategies to use while answering the questions. At times we do additional multiple choice oriented projects such as studying the types of questions, creating our own multiple choice questions as a class, and completing analysis of why correct answers are *the best* choices. **These are scattered through the year and the specific titles change. Often a companion book to 50 Essays is used to generate questions. Sometimes past questions are used. These do not follow the unit structures, though when possible essay styles or subjects will be aligned.**
- **Vocabulary-** As vocabulary is essential for the ability to understand and discuss rhetoric, we work with literary and rhetorical terminology, as well as vocabulary gathered during reading. During each lesson/unit, the class identifies unknown vocabulary being used in the textbook, in sample AP Test materials, and in Novels. We define, study, review, and test on this vocabulary in 10 minute class starters as well as seeing it used in context. **Though this is not described unit by unit (because it would be redundant to do so) students use this vocabulary in their writing (one must use rhetorical terminology to discuss rhetoric) and expand vocabulary knowledge through in context recognition.**
- **Free response prompts-** Every two weeks we will view a sample AP free response prompt. We either discuss the prompt as a class to identify what it is requesting and possible directions to go in the response, or else the class answers it as a practice timed task. **These are scattered through the year and the specific titles change. These do not follow the unit structures, though when possible essay styles or subjects will be aligned.**

Summer Assignment:

Before entering into the school year students are required to complete a summer assignment. This summer assignment is based on Annie Dillard's *An American Childhood* and William Zinnser's *On Writing Well*. Students are required to read Zinnser's suggestions on writing and then maintain a journal while reading the Dillard text. In their journal students are required to react to particularly effective or ineffective passages, and to try and keep in mind when Dillard is or is not following Zinnser's suggestions. Their journal is a place to record particularly strong rhetorical techniques and to react to the textbook with their own thoughts and opinions.

After completion of the texts and journals, students must write an expository paper that discusses why they think Dillard's book was or was not impressive, effective, or interesting. It is suggested that students attempt to explain what the purpose of the book was, who the target audience was, and any rhetorical techniques that caught their attention (especially imagery, diction, syntax, and tone). They are required to quote the texts and use specific examples as they explain their thoughts. By requiring these tasks I receive at least a basic understanding of what each student's analytical ability and rhetorical knowledge is at the beginning of the year.

Unit 1- Close Reading and Expository Writing

Focus Skills and Subjects:

As Close reading is a prerequisite to all rhetorical analysis and is the quickest way to emphasize skills that students might attempt in their own written work, reading and annotation strategies are the entry focus for the year. Our initial exploration of annotation focuses on recognizing subject, purpose, tone, authorial attitude, topic statements, and extraordinary statements. Students must recognize thesis statements, transitions, and other basic rhetorical strategies. There is also a basic overview of rhetorical strategies (narration, definition, exemplification) and a discussion of why/how these strategies work together.

Texts Read:

Thomas Friedman- "My Favorite Teacher"
Laurence Perrine- "Paradox"
Martin Luther King- "I have a Dream"
Sydney Harris- "A Jerk"
Large selection of sample student essays

Written Requirements:

During this unit the close reading skills become focused on rhetorical strategies and identification of the basic elements of an essay. Students recognize varieties of thesis paragraphs and statements and discuss why they might be placed and phrased as they are. After exploring the basics of rhetorical strategies, students attempt to use them toward writing their own expository essay. This paper is to be a minimum of 2 pages in length and should use the basic rhetorical elements in its creation. We use in class peer/teacher conferences focused on organization and transitioning skills as students draft the rough and final drafts of the paper.

When completed students must turn in their essay and a self analysis. They are to explain their purpose, audience, thesis, attitude, and any aspects they wish to qualify.

Journals

Alongside the skill of annotation and close reading, this unit begins prompting students for reflection through journaling activities that will continue over the course of the year. The purpose is to use outside information and personal reaction to contextualize the information in each essay.

Unit 2- Exemplification

Focus Skills and Subjects:

We discuss the different methods of exemplification (social, hypothetical, personal, etc) and the strengths and weaknesses of each. We explore the concepts of relevance and representation and why some examples do or do not meet these qualifications. We evaluate the effectiveness of some examples and discuss reasons why. We will discuss the concepts of audience and purpose and the ways that examples chosen and method of discussion influences various audiences, and how the purpose of writing needs to guide this manner of discussion. During this time period we also begin our discussions on the says/does form of analysis... analyzing essays both on the information communicated as well as the effect of that information.

Texts Read:

Natalie Goldberg- "Be Specific"
Mark Twain- "Conspicuous Opinions"
Deborah Tannen- "How to Give Orders Like a Man"
Leslie Marmon Silko- "Yellow Woman and a Beauty of the Spirit"
Alice Walker- "In Search of our Mother's Gardens"
Vicki Hearne- "What's Wrong With Animal Rights"

Written Requirements

Students write a short in class says/does styled analytical essay focusing on the basic rhetorical strategies of one of the essays read in class. This essay should focus on the use of detail and exemplification in the text in terms of both style and purpose.

Students write arguments essays that feature exemplification. These essays result from the Hearne essay, and require students to explain the failings of one public practice, law, or policy. This essay requires one teacher conference involving feedback on use of detail and structural elements.

Journals

Students are asked to mimic the different use of examples in our sample essays.

Unit 3- Description

Focus Skills and Subjects:

This unit focuses on the conveyance of imagery through sensory detail. This skill, of course, requires intensive discussion and activities involving diction and connotation. We also discuss imagery and do activities involving writing in class image pieces (sometimes in mimic of other's work) alongside our reading and analysis. Students are to recognize the ways that description can call attention to ideas as well as making things more vivid... the variance between subjective and objective description. As a class we discuss the effect of certain descriptions and phrasings on our own opinions of the issues in an essay. Without doubt the concept of mood and atmosphere will enter into the discussion.

Texts Read:

Edward Abbey- 'Ara vaipa Canyon
Gore Vidal- 'Lincoln Up Close"
Robert Ramirez- 'The Barrio"
Virginia Woolf- 'The Death of the Moth"
Plato- 'The Allegory of the Cave"

Written Requirements

Students must write a descriptive essay which uses sensory details to create a controlling tone; they must work to target a particular audience. Accompanying this assignment is a reflection on which the audience is the intended effect of the descriptions, and a discussion of the key language choices.

Journaling

In class we write small practice descriptions targeted at creating a dominant impression. We also react to the impressions created by essays/descriptions we read... especially with 'The Barrio."

Unit 4- Narration

Focus Skills and Subjects:

As we discuss narration we talk about how narration can be used to sway opinion on ideas... to garner sympathy, inspire anger, or improve ones ethical standing. Students discuss and recognize the effects of Point of View and how memories can be selectively chosen and highlighted. We have already discussed imagery and diction, so our writing focus is allowed to move through verb tenses, organizational patterns, and transitional techniques... more nuts and bolts concepts, but unendingly important. As much as we work on Narration for its own sake, we also work to view it as one of the strongest argument techniques available.

Texts Read:

Book- James Yates- 'Mississippi to Madrid"
Malcolm X- 'Coming to an Awareness of Language"
Annie Dillard- 'Getting Caught"
Langston Hughes- 'Salvation"
George Orwell- 'Shooting an Elephant"

Written Requirements

Students write a narrative that is based on an image... in parrot of Donald Murray's "The Stranger in the Photo is Me" (an activity based on one done by AP Coordinator John Brasil). The purpose is to select, detail, and structure the narrative to engage the emotions of the audience. These essays are to go through a round of peer conference and response.

Students also write an analysis paper of the book Mississippi to Madrid... discussing the ways that narration influences the tone, mood, and audience interaction with the piece.

Journals

Journal activities in this unit prompt students to write in an almost storytelling mode, attempting to target a tone through narration.

Unit 5- Argumentation

Focus Skills and Subjects:

This unit, in ways, will continue for the rest of the year. We begin discussions on different types of arguments (informational or exploratory, Action-Oriented, Reconciliatory, Subtle) and strategies of argument (refutations, logical fallacies, etc). We continue our discussions on purpose and audience and spend our time analyzing different essays with these discussions in mind. We also discuss Logos, Pathos, Ethos and methods of persuasion as we work with the essays... particularly with King's Letter."

Texts Read:

Niccolo Machiavelli- "The Morals Of the Prince"
Martin Luther King Jr. - Letter from a Birmingham Jail"
Robert Scheer- "Violence is Us"
Barbara Hattemer- "Cause and Violent Effect"
Image- "The Matrix"

Written Requirements

Students write an argument on a chosen subject. They must work in partners on the research and each student must prepare both sides of the argument. In class they will be randomly assigned a side (we literally flip a coin) and debate on a point-counterpoint system for 10 minutes. After completion of the debate they must select a side of the argument and write an essay on it (including refutations). This essay requires two drafts- one after a teacher conference and one based on outside reaction.

In class we write short analysis essays for our grouped arguments (one on media violence and one on the death penalty)

Journals

Students are asked to analyze past arguments they have had to determine what worked and what didn't in the arguments. They also react to in class essays (free expository writing)

Unit 7- Combining Strategies- Definition, Comparison, etc.

Focus Skills and Subjects:

This lesson is a run through strategies that might help with argument. Argument through definition is a foray into semantics. Argument through comparison is an important strategy for qualifying a thesis or working with complex factors (and becomes a key skill in synthesis essays). We also touch on essays using classification skills and look at process analysis (especially for organizational purposes). This unit gives us time to study concepts of diction in a much more focused way and it also helps students to understand the dangers of generalities and abstract communications (not that we don't love our figurative language). We revisit and explore our organizational techniques and begin to put together all of the pieces we have learned this year.

Texts Read:

Mark Twain "Two Ways of Seeing a River"
Anne Lamott "PoLARoids"
Lars Eighner "On Dumpster Diving"
Paul Roberts "How to Say Nothing in 500 Words"
Sojourner Truth "Ain't I a Woman"
Nancy Mairs "On Being a Cripple"

Written Requirements

This unit results in a twofold activity. First students must write an argument that combines multiple strategies of writing. They can choose organization pattern, rhetorical strategies, and overall subject, but they must write an argument of some kind. When completed, each student will be assigned a partner who will carefully read a copy of the essay and write a multi-page analysis of choices made and the effect of those choices. Students receive grades both on the analysis and on the argument.

Journals-

Most journals during this unit take the form of analytical responses to the day's essay.

Unit 7- Satire

Focus Skills and Subjects:

This unit focuses on satire and humorous writing, how to recognize it, and functional analysis of it. We look at horatian and juvenalian satire as well as satire in popular culture and discuss how the different methods affect audience.

Texts Read:

Jonathan Swift "A Modest Proposal"
Dave Barry "Lost in the Kitchen"
David Sedaris "Me Talk Pretty One Day"
Movie- *Monty Python and the Holy Grail* (with Shakespearian subtitles)

Written Requirements

Students write their own satirical pieces on any subject they own. Often they are invited to mimic a style that we have seen in our explorations. These essays receive a round of in-class peer conferences.

Journals

Students are asked to free-write short satirical clips to help them explore possible subjects.

Unit 8- Synthesis Essays (research and citation)

Focus Skills and Subjects:

This unit is longer than most and involves skills of finding, evaluating, and citing sources as well as methods for synthesizing writing. We use the MLA format as that is the accepted format for the school. We work on summarizing and paraphrasing, on direct quotation, and on integration of quotes. We write bibliographies/works cited pages. Students are informed of this project months in advance so that they might begin gathering primary and secondary sources.

Texts Read:

Students find and use journal/news articles and other non-fiction texts.

Students locate one lengthy non-fiction text

Students interview people or visit museums

Written Requirements

Students must write a lengthy (5 page) research based essay complete with a bibliography.

Students write in class synthesis essays.

Journals

Journals during this unit primarily focus on comparing and contrasting in class essays.

Unit 9- Analysis, Rhetoric, and Propaganda

Focus Skills and Subjects:

During this unit we work on analyzing visual and written propaganda. We discuss forms of propaganda and their effects. Where we might find propaganda in culture and various media and what its purpose is. We discuss methods of visual rhetoric such as dimension, color, and iconography.

Texts Read:

Prentice Hall “Language of the Politicians”
Out Foxed movie
Varied commercials and television clips.
WWII poster archives
Stephanie Ericsson- “The Ways We Lie”

Written Requirements

Students select one piece of visual/textual media and write an analysis over the persuasive/propaganda techniques at use in it.

Journals

Journal activities in this unit focus on free-write reactions to different persuasive sources.

Unit 10- Post Test Exposition and Performance

After the AP test students enter into a research project where they choose a subject, research it, write a speech on it and perform that speech for their peers.