AP® English Language and Composition
Mingus Union High School

Instructor

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Course Description

The AP English Language and Composition course focuses on the development and revision of evidence-based analytic and argumentative writing, the rhetorical analysis of nonfiction texts, and the decisions writers make as they compose and revise. Students evaluate, synthesize, and cite research to support their arguments. Additionally, they read and analyze rhetorical elements and their effects in nonfiction texts—including images as forms of text—from a range of disciplines and historical periods.

Big Ideas and Enduring Understandings

The big ideas serve as the foundation of the AP English Language and Composition course and enable students to create meaningful connections among course concepts. They are threads that run throughout the course, and revisiting them and applying them in a variety of contexts helps students to develop deeper conceptual understanding. Below are the big ideas of the course, along with the enduring understanding associated with each one:

- RHETORICAL SITUATION (RHS) Enduring Understanding RHS-1: Individuals write within a particular situation and make strategic writing choices based on that situation.
- CLAIMS AND EVIDENCE (CLE) Enduring Understanding CLE-1: Writers make claims about subjects, rely on evidence that supports the reasoning that justifies the claim, and often acknowledge or respond to other, possibly opposing, arguments.
- REASONING AND ORGANIZATION (REO) Enduring Understanding REO-1: Writers guide understanding of a text's lines of reasoning and claims through that text's organization and integration of evidence.
- STYLE (STL) Enduring Understanding STL-1: The rhetorical situation informs the strategic stylistic choices that writers make.

AP English Language and Composition curricular requirements:

- The course is structured by unit, theme, genre, or other organizational approach that provides opportunities to engage with the big ideas throughout the course: Rhetorical Situation, Claims and Evidence, Reasoning and Organization, and Style.
- The course requires readings with an emphasis on nonfiction readings (e.g., essays, journalism, political writing, science writing, nature writing, autobiographies/biographies, diaries, history, criticism) that are selected to give students opportunities to identify and explain an author's use of rhetorical strategies and techniques.
- The course provides opportunities for students to develop the skills in following skill categories:
    - Skill Category 1—Rhetorical Situation (Reading): Explain how writers' choices reflect the components of the rhetorical situation
    - Skill Category 2—Rhetorical Situation (Writing): Make strategic choices in a text to address a rhetorical situation
    - Skill Category 3—Claims and Evidence (Reading): Identify and describe the claims and evidence of an argument
    - Skill Category 4—Claims and Evidence (Writing): Analyze evidence in order to develop and refine claims

  - Skill Category 5—Reasoning and Organization (Reading): Describe the reasoning, organization, and development of an argument
  - Skill Category 6—Reasoning and Organization (Writing): Use organization and commentary to illuminate the line of reasoning in an argument
  - Skill Category 7—Style (Reading): Explain how writers' stylistic choices contribute to the purpose of an argument
  - Skill Category 8—Style (Writing): Select words and use elements of composition to advance an argument
- The course provides opportunities for students to write argumentative essays synthesizing material from a variety of sources.
- The course provides opportunities for students to write essays analyzing authors' rhetorical choices.
- The course provides opportunities for students to write essays that proceed through multiple stages or drafts, including opportunities for conferring and collaborating with the teacher and/or peers.

AP Exam

2020 Exam Date: Wednesday, May 13th @ 8:00 AM

The AP English Language and Composition Exam assesses student understanding of the skills and essential knowledge outlined in the course framework. The exam is 3 hours and 15 minutes long and includes 45 multiple-choice questions and 3 free-response questions. The details of the exam, including exam weighting and timing, can be found below:

Section 1: Multiple Choice
45 Questions | 1 Hour | 45% of Exam Score

Includes 5 sets of questions.

- 23–25 Reading questions that ask students to read and analyze nonfiction texts.
- 20–22 Writing questions, a new type of question, that ask students to "read like a writer" and consider revisions to stimulus texts.

Section 2: Free Response (Essay)
3 Free-Response Questions | 2 Hours 15 Minutes (includes a 15-minute reading period) | 55% of Exam Score

Students write essays that respond to 3 free-response prompts from the following categories (suggested 40 minutes per essay):

- **Synthesis Question** (6 points): After reading 6–7 texts about a topic (including visual and quantitative sources), students will compose an argument that combines and cites at least 3 of the sources to support their thesis.
- **Rhetorical Analysis** (6 points): Students will read a nonfiction text and analyze how the writer's language choices contribute to the intended meaning and purpose of the text.
- **Argument** (6 points): Students will create an evidence-based argument that responds to a given topic.

The exam assesses the following four big ideas for the course, as detailed below:

1. Rhetorical Situation
2. Claims and Evidence
3. Reasoning and Organization
4. Style

Course Content: 10 Units

The course skills are organized within nine units that scaffold student development of the analysis and composition skills required for college credit. For each unit, the teacher selects a theme or topic and then chooses texts, typically short nonfiction pieces, that enable students to practice and develop the reading and writing skills for that unit.

Each unit culminates in a Personal Progress Check made up of 1) a free-response question and scoring rubric for the teacher to administer in class or online and 2) online multiple-choice questions that provide each student with personalized feedback and the teacher with a class summary of skills for which students are on track for college credit and skills for which focus and practice are needed.

FALL SEMESTER

UNIT 1 OVERVIEW

Topic/Theme: —Rhetorical Analysis I

Timeline: Weeks 1-3 (approx.) **Duration: 3 weeks (approx.)**

Texts/Readings:

Too often, students are rushed into writing full essays without having honed the skills of crafting a claim and defending it with textual evidence. Students will benefit from frequent practice during this unit writing paragraphs that include a claim that demands proof or defense and the textual evidence that furnishes that proof or defense.

One of the greatest initial challenges for students in composition classes is developing claims that require defense with textual evidence, rather than mere statements of fact that require no defense. By keeping the writing tasks in this unit focused on paragraphs rather than full essays, the likelihood of students receiving specific, consistent, and sustained feedback on the quality of the claims they are developing vastly increases.

Until students can read closely for evidence and then use that cluster of evidence to construct a claim that requires defending, it will be difficult for students to develop full essays with thesis statements and clear lines of reasoning. Each day, students should practice assembling evidence and developing claims, starting with one paragraph that includes a claim with evidence and then generating several claims about a subject, each communicated in its own paragraph with supporting evidence.

UNIT 2 OVERVIEW

Topic/Theme: —Argument I

Timeline: Weeks 4-6 (approx.) **Duration: 3 weeks (approx.)**

Texts/Readings:

In this unit, students will continue to develop proficiency in recognizing claims and evidence in other writers' arguments, while emulating such models in their own paragraphs. In addition, they will begin identifying the ways effective writers appeal to and persuade their audiences, while practicing such appeals in their own paragraphs. During this unit, students should build a collection of claims and evidence about a topic or issue so that they can move beyond individual paragraphs to derive a thesis statement from the patterns they see within their collection.

UNIT 3 OVERVIEW

Topic/Theme: —Synthesis I

Timeline: Weeks 7-9 (approx.) **Duration: 3 weeks (approx.)**

Texts/Readings:

Students should continue to see themselves as evidence collectors, continually assembling and reviewing a range of evidence to identify overarching patterns that can be used to craft a thesis statement. But in this unit, students should focus on improving the ways they explain and connect evidence and claims to establish a clear line of reasoning through their essay. Students will also become familiar with several traditional methods of development that writers have used for centuries to advance their arguments.

UNIT 4 OVERVIEW

Topic/Theme: —Rhetorical Analysis II

Timeline: Weeks 10-12 (approx.) **Duration: 3 weeks (approx.)**

Texts/Readings:

Students should enter this unit having learned to evaluate evidence to develop a thesis statement and organize an argument. Now the focus is on improving the quality, interest, and power of the argument by crafting introductions and conclusions that demonstrate a real understanding of the rhetorical situation. In addition, students will practice a few additional methods of development.

UNIT 5 OVERVIEW

Topic/Theme: —Argument II

Timeline: Weeks 13-15 (approx.) **Duration: 3 weeks (approx.)**

Texts/Readings:

The first four units focused on the fundamentals of analyzing and writing arguments. This unit examines ways to strengthen the coherence of an argument and should also help students become much more attuned to the effects of specific words and phrases in others' arguments.

UNIT 6 OVERVIEW

Topic/Theme: —Synthesis II

Timeline: Weeks 16-18 (approx.) **Duration: 3 weeks (approx.)**

Texts/Readings:

This unit asks students to recognize and account for biases and limitations within the evidence they are utilizing in an argument. Students should develop an initial thesis statement and line of reasoning based on a pool of evidence that is fairly consistent, and then the teacher should introduce contradictory evidence that requires the students to revise their thesis statements to account for it. Accordingly, teachers should be especially thoughtful in sequencing the readings and evidence base for the topic of this unit. This unit also continues to examine the subtle and significant impact of specific words and phrases, with students analyzing how connotations of particular words convey an author's attitude or feeling about a subject.

SPRING SEMESTER

UNIT 7 OVERVIEW

Topic/Theme: —Rhetorical Analysis III

Timeline: Weeks 19-22 (approx.) **Duration: 4 weeks (approx.)**

Texts/Readings:

In this unit, students should continue to practice revising claims (and sometimes the overarching thesis statement) to account for nuance, complexity, and contradictions in their sources. By the end of this unit, students should be highly facile consumers of evidence, able to determine quickly whether a new piece of evidence supports, refutes, or qualifies their claims, and then able to use modifiers to revise claims accordingly.

This unit also includes an understanding of how punctuation and design contribute to a writer's purpose. However, grammar and mechanics are not the focus of this course. Students should be able to write complete sentences before beginning the AP class, and through frequent reading and analysis of others' arguments and by emulating such models in their own writing, students' proficiency in written English will increase during the course. When students write essays within the AP Exam, small grammatical errors typical of unrevised writing in a timed environment will not negatively impact the score. Performance is only hurt by grammatical errors that are so prevalent and significant as to interfere with communication.

UNIT 8 OVERVIEW

Topic/Theme: —Argument III

Timeline: Weeks 23-26 (approx.) **Duration: 4 weeks (approx.)**

Texts/Readings:

To provide teachers with time to focus on skills their students have not yet mastered, this penultimate unit only includes a small number of additional essential knowledge statements. AP teachers should utilize information they have gained from the Personal Progress Checks (PPCs) to identify the skills where their students most need additional instruction and practice, and focus the remaining class periods accordingly. Teachers can use the AP Question Bank to create additional practice on the skills the PPCs identified as students' greatest needs for further focus.

UNIT 9 OVERVIEW

Topic/Theme: —Synthesis III

Timeline: Weeks 27-30 (approx.) **Duration: 4 weeks (approx.)**

Texts/Readings:

To provide teachers with time to focus on skills their students have not yet mastered, this final unit only includes a small number of additional essential knowledge statements. AP teachers should utilize information they have gained from the Personal Progress Checks (PPCs) to identify the skills where their students most need additional instruction and practice, and focus the remaining class periods accordingly. Teachers can use the AP Question Bank to create additional practice on the skills the PPCs identified as students' greatest needs for further focus.

UNIT 10 OVERVIEW

Topic/Theme: Memoir

Timeline: Weeks 31-34 (approx.) **Duration: 4 weeks (approx.)**

Texts/Readings: *When Breath Becomes Air* by Paul Kalanithi

Argumentation

While the AP English Language and Composition course should offer students several opportunities to write in a variety of modes of discourse, teachers should allow a significant amount of time to foster student understanding of the intricacies of argumentation through critical thinking experiences that allow students to:

- Read and analyze different kinds of arguments (definitional arguments, arguments of evaluation, causal arguments, proposals).
- Examine different structures of argumentative writing (classical argument, Rogerian argument, Toulmin argument) that help move an argument forward.
- Analyze the unique rhetorical features of arguments that demonstrate how language performs social action that accomplishes particular purposes or intents. Such features include appeals (e.g., ethos, pathos, logos), structural choices (e.g., inductive vs. deductive reasoning, author's purpose), and argumentative moves (e.g., concession, rebuttal).
- Examine the appropriateness of using different kinds of evidence to support a claim. Such evidence could include anecdotes and observations, facts and statistics from experts in a variety of fields of study, arguments of respected authorities, other outside sources, or personal experience.
- Assess the critical role of audience in writing an effective argument. Students need to learn to challenge their own assertions and to provide substantial evidence to explain and justify a position to an often skeptical audience.
- Effectively synthesize information and perspectives from research sources to enter an intellectual conversation and develop one's own position on the topic.
- Develop the habit of thinking about argument as a way to participate in a conversation of an unresolved question, instead of engaging the issue as an adversary.

The goal is for students to construct a clear, rhetorically sound argument that supports an assertion with convincing evidence, using a structure that advances the argument logically and persuasively.

Synthesis

The rhetorical analysis of multiple sources in the inquiry process we know as research presents the same demands as the rhetorical analysis of a single speech, letter, or essay, with one large exception: the development of a much fuller context. While the analysis of a single text in isolation certainly benefits from an understanding of the context in which it was composed and published or delivered, the analysis of multiple sources in concert with one another broadens the context, provided that these sources represent different, often opposing, stakeholders in a given situation.

The synthesis process may serve various purposes. For example, synthesis may lead to an evaluation of a particular decision, or it may generate an argument for one of several possible options. Alternatively, synthesis may produce not an argument or a judgment but a more comprehensive understanding of the question or problem. This explanatory (or Rogerian) use of synthesis yields a deeper appreciation of the complexity of the topic under examination. Students performing this type of synthesis may conclude by considering the factors, perspectives, investments, and so forth that underlie discussions of a controversial topic. Because synthesis serves a multitude of purposes, synthesis tasks in the AP English Language and Composition course may assume a variety of forms, such as submitting a proposal, developing an original definition, or creating an appropriate plan.

How students approach synthesis depends largely on their ability to read texts rhetorically. By fully understanding relationships among writers, audiences, and purposes, students will recognize writers of the sources they consult as participants in conversations about specific questions. Additionally, students will discover that by attending to a variety of viewpoints and arguments they develop a critical and informed understanding of the controversy and gain the authority to enter the conversation themselves. Students will find that the sources they consult may agree with one another on some points but not on others; that they may represent different perspectives, values, and assumptions; and that they may support or supplement one another or call one another's positions into question.

There are three distinct manifestations of synthesis:

- **Source-based synthesis**: Body paragraphs feature sources in conversation with one another. Sources agree with, disagree with, or qualify each other, and such an approach toward synthesis is recognizable for both writers and readers. Typically, these sources align based upon content or position. §
- **Conceptual synthesis**: Students determine the key factors, concepts, or categories of a particular issue. They may see, for example, that one source is representative of a Keynesian approach toward economics, or that another source represents a more conservative or liberal approach toward a topic. Typically, such writers have had prior experience in the process of rhetorical invention.
- **Synthesis of voice**: Writers have adopted the vernacular and cadence of those involved with the existing conversation.

The following are suggested steps for engaging students in the synthesis process.

Step 1: Authentic Inquiry

Synthesis of sources should be a process of authentic inquiry motivated by questions for which readers genuinely want answers, not by desire to affirm preexisting positions. While it is entirely possible, and perhaps even worthwhile, for readers to commence research with some inclination or predisposition about a given topic, successful synthesis means proceeding with an open mind and finding an array of sources that satisfactorily broadens the context of one's research question. Part of authentic inquiry is an understanding of rhetorical invention, or the processes by which students—while they are thinking and reading— determine how the issues they are examining can be viewed from multiple perspectives.

What students experience in responding to the synthesis question on the AP English Language and Composition exam is not authentic inquiry; the source materials that accompany the prompt may be seen as products of authentic inquiry representing multiple perspectives that students must consider and weigh against one another—or synthesize—in order to compose a response that is informed by the sources and situated in the conversation they represent. To promote authentic inquiry in the AP English Language and Composition classroom, teachers should offer students the experience of creating authentic original questions, searching for answers, and developing informed responses to these questions. Students should have the experience of entering into unfamiliar conversations: Transformative research encourages students to change or develop their positions, while transactional research merely affirms the opinions that students already hold.

Step 2: Linking the Sources

In source-informed argument, the predominant (though by no means only) mode of college writing, effective synthesis begins with understanding others' positions, views, or arguments. Students should comprehend the major claims in the texts they consult, understand how these claims are substantiated, and identify how they might appeal to intended or unintended audiences. Students then need to know how to develop their own original arguments by acknowledging and responding to the claims they've encountered in their sources. Students should be careful to avoid misattributing claims or oversimplifying an argument. Such an approach reflects a superficial reading of the sources or a refusal to consider points of view that conflict with a writer's preconceived position.

Step 3: The Source-Informed Argument

Strong arguments developed through synthesis of multiple sources generally exhibit the following qualities:

- **Sophistication of thought**: Sometimes referred to as complexity, sophistication means looking at multiple perspectives, arguments and counterarguments, and broader implications of particular events or decisions. Implications of arguments or positions are important for students to consider, as they often rely upon hypothetical examples abstracted from the real world of cause and effect; the challenge for students is to present implications as concretely as possible, based upon available evidence.
- **Effectiveness (development) of argument:** The completeness of an argument's development enhances its persuasiveness. Such development may mean an in-depth analysis of a few sources or a broad review of a wide range of sources.
- **Unity/coherence**: Coherent, or unified, arguments—with or without sources—develop logically; the writer's own position emerges from a thoughtful consideration of the sources. An important marker of coherence is the use of idea-based transitions, often topic sentences of body paragraphs that move the argument forward in ways alluded to in "sophistication of thought." Another marker of coherence is the careful selection of the sources that "speak to one another." A coherent approach to synthesis requires students to consider the conversation among sources rather than regarding individual sources in isolation.

MINGUS & CLASSROOM POLICIES

Electronic Devices

All electronic devices (cell phones, mp3 players, etc.) are to be turned off and put away while school is in session; before school, during lunch, and after school are the only times students are permitted to use them. Confiscated electronic devices are given to the front office where they must be picked up by a parent or guardian. Unless I tell you to take out cell phones, keep them out of sight.

Subject Matter

This course uses a college level textbook. There are essays in this book that contain mature subject matter that is not found in a high school textbook. While the editors' viewpoints may differ from your own, I expect you to treat the subject matter with respect.

Plagiarism

Plagiarism: Includes, but is not limited to, the use of paraphrase or direct quotation of the published or unpublished work of another person without full and clear acknowledgment. It also includes the unacknowledged use of materials prepared by another person or agency engaged in the selling of term papers or other academic materials. Information gathered from the Internet and not properly identified is also considered plagiarism.

The first time you are "caught" with an essay that is not completely yours, you will receive an "F" on that assignment and will not be allowed to make up that grade.

Students caught plagiarizing twice, will be held to the YC and Mingus Codes of Student Conduct. Remember, if you can "Google" it— so can I.

Preparation

Come to each class prepared to write, to talk about readings, to share your drafts with others, and to revise what you have already written. This means you must work steadily both in class and on your own. You will find that sometimes you must work on more than one assignment at the same time. Therefore, you must try to develop good time management skills and avoid procrastination.

Make Up Work

Excused Absence = 1 day / day absent

Unexcused Absence = no credit for missed work

For most class assignments you will have one day for each day you were absent to complete the work, except in cases in which FIRM DUE DATES have been established, such as large projects, in and out of class essays, peer editing days...

Late Work

I will accept late work that is turned in one day after the due date. You will receive half credit for all late work. I will not accept any work that is more than one day late.

PARENT/GUARDIAN CONTACT INFORMATION

Check those that apply

_____Father ______________________________

Work or Cell #______________________

email______________________________

_____Mother ______________________________

Work or Cell #______________________

email______________________________

_____Other ______________________________

Work or Cell #______________________

email______________________________

SIGNATURES

By signing below, you are acknowledging that you have read and understand the rules, guidelines, expectations, and procedures outlined in the class syllabus.

_________________________________ ___________
Student Signature date

_________________________________ ___________
Parent Signature date

Chromebook Rules

1. Chromebooks stay in the classroom and are for school use only.

2. Only use your Chromebook in the classroom when instructed to use it.

3. Know your goal/objective when using the Chromebook.

4. "Lower the lid" when the teacher/presenter is talking.

5. **Only use as instructed.**

- Only use your Chromebook in the classroom, at your own desk.
- Do not change settings or download anything unless instructed to do so.
- No emailing (unless you are emailing your teacher an assignment).
- Do not access any social media sites or sites that aren't permitted on school computers.

6. **Take care of your Chromebook.**

- Always have a clean/clear desk-top.
- Water bottles must stay on the floor.
- No food or drinks (besides water) allowed in the classroom.

7. **Transition responsibly with your Chromebook.**

- Chromebook must be kept flat on your own desk at all times once taken out.
- Plug in your Chromebook when you return it to the cart.

Behavior Consequences

1st Offense: one week without Chromebook

2nd Offense: two weeks without Chromebook

3rd Offense: three weeks without Chromebook

4th Offense OR ANY serious offense: No more use of Chromebook