

Course Description

The AP English Language and Composition course is designed to engage students fully in the writing process so that students may write effectively for a variety of purposes throughout their academic, professional and personal lives. Students will participate in a variety of writing modes, including narrative, analytical, expository, and argumentative writing. Effective writing, particularly the analytical and argumentative writing that occurs in college courses, begins with effective reading; hence, the AP English Language and Composition course will teach students how to read primary and secondary source materials carefully. Students will learn how to read closely, understand and synthesize complex texts into their own writing, and cite those source materials correctly using Modern Language Association (MLA) conventions.

Students will begin the course exploring how they view the composition process, and then proceed to explore rhetorical strategies of writers from a variety of periods and cultures. As students read, they will build vocabulary, stylistic, and organizational skills in a variety of short and long writings. Engaging in the writing process, students will draft, revise, provide and receive feedback, reflect, redraft, edit, and eventually publish their works. Students will study various rhetorical devices and examine the effects of these devices as readers and writers. Students will also be exposed to a variety of visual media to help them synthesize and explore the meanings behind disparate images and text.

After exploring a variety of texts and analyzing the rhetorical, stylistic, and imaginative devices used in these texts, and developing a series of expository, analytical, and argumentative writings, students will demonstrate their fluency by taking the AP English Language and Composition examination in May.

Unit Information

Unit Name or Timeframe:

First Quarter (10 weeks): Introduction to Rhetoric and the Beginning of Close Reading

Content and/or Skills Taught:

Using *The Language of Composition* (Chapters 1 and 2), students begin the course immersing themselves in the language of rhetoric, attempting to recognize an author's use of rhetorical techniques. Students apply the analysis of rhetorical strategies to their summer assignment. The summer assignment was to read a selection of nonfiction texts, keep a reading / writing journal, and build a portfolio of editorials and editorial cartoons.

As students continue through *The Language of Composition* (Chapters 4, 5, and 6), we begin the process of annotating a rhetorical work, then contrast student findings from a major author's work with the memoirs of fellow students. This reflective practice continues as students draft and revise their memoirs based on the annotative notes of their classmates.

Selected essays include Francine Prose's *I Know Why the Caged Bird Cannot Read*; James Baldwin's *A Talk to Teachers*; David Broder's *A Model for High Schools*; Horace Mann's comment from *Report of the Massachusetts Board of Education*, on Education and Annie Dillard's *The Writing Life*; Christopher Mele's *Sick Parents Go to Work, Stay Home When Kids Are Ill*; Claudia O'Keefe's *The Traveling Bra Salesman's Lesson*; Barbara Ehrenreich's *Serving in Florida* on Work.

Major Assignments and/or Assessments: After reading essays on education and work, students collaborate to create a model for the perfect American high school. Students use research techniques to explore needs of the American teenager as contrasted with the needs of American business. Students write reflections of their and their classmates' work, creating arguments that support or refute assertions made in each other's models. Students should be able to identify elements of rhetorical style being addressed, specifically ethos, logos, and pathos, as well as signalling a specific audience applying a formal tone to their papers.

During writing conferences, students and I address their writing needs, and students revise and create publishable drafts of their papers. In preparing their final drafts, students must identify points of improvement, focusing on sentence structure, tone, and audience. Students must use MLA citation.

Second Quarter (10 weeks): Language, Gender, and the Effect of the Visual Medium

Moving through *The Language of Composition* (Chapters 9 and 7) students will explore themes of language and gender, the effects of writer's choices on these themes, and the cumulative effects of rhetorical devices on us as readers and writers. Students will focus on rhetorical strategies as they impact our society in both positive and negative ways, comparing these strategies with a series of paired readings. Readings include *Letters* by John and Abigail Adams, Paul Theroux's *Being a Man*, Mark Bauerlein and Sandra Stotsky's *Why Johnny Won't Read*, *AIDS has a Woman's Face* by Stephen Lewis, *Professions for Women* by Virginia Woolf. Other selections are *Aria*:

Memoir of a Bilingual Childhood by Richard Rodriguez, Daniel Okrent's *The War of Words: A Dispatch from the Front Lines*, various selections by William F. Buckley, Geoffrey Nunberg's *How Much Wallop Can a Simple Word Pack?* and various selections by William F. Buckley and Joan Didion.

Students are introduced to visual media during this quarter, applying rhetorical devices to visuals and relating to the effects that the bombardment of these visuals have on our decision-making. A thorough exploration of Synthesizing Sources from *The Language of Composition* in addition to *Writing with a Purpose's* Chapters 5 and 7 accompanies this unit.

In addition to the visual / writing journal students keep during this quarter, students will produce an analytical paper modeled after the synthesis essay. Students will respond to one prompt using a variety of sources: two essays, a set of charts and graphs, one political television advertisement and one commercial advertisement. Students will evaluate each medium in a rhetorical context, examining purpose, meaning, and effect. Using the MLA format, students must use parenthetical citation throughout the essay. During our writing conferences, students will be given an additional medium piece (a short essay or editorial cartoon) from which to choose and supplement their essay. Students must complete two pair-share revision workshops prior to creating their final publishable draft. Peer editors will focus on precision of argument, sentence variety and support, and clear identification of the rhetorical triangle.

Third Quarter (9 weeks): The Language of Politics and Power

During this quarter, students examine stylistic choices made by politicians and their writers, as well as those who criticize people in power. Works studied include Wole Soyinka's *Every Dictator's Nightmare*, Johnathan Swift's *A Modest Proposal*, Oliver Goldsmith's *National Prejudices*, two selections from Tim O'Brien's *The Things They Carried*, Chinua Achebe's *The Empire Fights Back*, and George Orwell's *Shooting an Elephant* and *A Hanging*. Video selections for this quarter include *Mr. Smith Goes to Washington*, *The Last King of Scotland* and episodes from *The West Wing*. Continuing the theme of power, students will study the major work for this quarter, James Goldman's *The Lion in Winter*. In addition to the readings, students will work extensively through *Writing with a Purpose's* Chapter 6, *Common Methods of Development*. Process analysis, classification, divided comparison, and causal analysis and argument will be studied.

Major Assignment / Major Assessment:

Students will create a series of writings that apply to the aspects of a political campaign: speeches, debate responses, platform-building, news-cycle messages, bumper stickers, buttons, and other slogans. Students will use writings that apply to ethos, logos, and pathos, as well as developing arguments that examine cause and effect, develop causal claims, and use warrants. Each piece submitted must be reviewed and revised within the campaign team. Analysis of rhetorical appeals will be emphasized, and continuous revision will take place until a specific, targeted platform theme is presented. Students will focus on syntax and diction throughout the revision process.

Fourth Quarter (9 Weeks): The Individual, the Community, and the Impact of Popular Culture

Throughout this quarter, students will cast a critical eye on themselves, their communities, and the outside world as seen through the filter of popular culture. Readings range from Martin Luther King Jr.'s *Letter from Birmingham Jail* and Lori Arviso Alvord's *Walking the Path between Worlds* to Jane Howard's *All Happy Clans Are Alike: In Search of the Good Family* and Henry David Thoreau's *Where I Lived, and What I Lived For*. Vine Deloria Jr.'s *We Talk, You Listen*, Mark Twain's *Corn-Pone Opinions*, *Dreaming America* by Danyel Smith, and Scott McCloud's graphic essay *Show and Tell* are also covered.

Major Assignment / Major Assessment:

The major assignments for this quarter include timed rhetorical analysis and free responses. Students will create a synthesis essay discussing their roles as individuals in either a diverse or uniform society, and participate on a collaborative writing assignment that comments on popular culture reflecting American values. Students will take the AP English Language and Composition examination during May. The AP English Language and Composition exam will substitute for the student's final examination.

Textbooks

Author: Shea, Renee H.
Second Author: Scanlon, Lawrence
Title: The Language of Composition: Reading, Writing and
Publisher: Bedford/St. Martin's
Published Date: 14 May, 2007

Author: Trimmer, Joseph
Title: The New Writing with a Purpose
Publisher: Houghton Mifflin Company
Published Date: 2004

Description: This book, with its extensive coverage of introductory college writing, will be used as a resource. Specific chapters that will be emphasized are Chapter 5, which deals with text design (we will focus on design as argument), Chapter 14, "Writing Strategies," and Chapter 15, "The Essay Examination." Part V, the Handbook of Grammar of Usage, will be reviewed by students.

Author: Lopate, Phillip
Title: The Art of the Personal Essay
Publisher: Anchor Books
Published Date: 1994

Description: Selected by Phillip Lopate, this anthology covers a broad range of topics and uses of rhetorical strategies, from analytical argument and use of ethos to epistolary essays and examples of humor.

Other Course Materials

Material Type: Audiovisual Materials

Description: These materials are comprised of a variety of political cartoons, messages, bumper stickers, and placards; in addition, commercial advertisements (both print and video) and other persuasive devices are used and discussed throughout the course.

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