OE020: AP English Language and Composition

Course Description

AP English Language and Composition is a two-semester seminar course designed to explore the analysis and writing of a variety of rhetorical modes of discourse: summary, description, process analysis, extended definition, causal analysis, and especially argumentation. Other concepts covered include figurative language, tone, critical reading, prewriting tactics, subject refinement and thesis development, diction and clarity, paragraph unity, revision, ethos, pathos, and logos, visual rhetoric, the informed use of research materials, and structuring arguments. This course teaches students how to write extended pieces in which their ideas and their rhetorical goals guide the organization of their writing.

Writing Assignments

Students are asked to write a variety of both short and long essays, answer reading questions, and complete sentence level exercises. They will also write a series of timed essays that are designed to prepare them for the AP exam.

Writing Workshops

Revision and peer response are integral to the course. For each major essay, students engage in peer critique during the class writing workshops. These workshops help students to become good readers of others’ work and to become more skilled at critiquing their own writing. The workshops give students a real audience—their peers—which helps them to move beyond simply writing for a teacher or for a grade. By sharing their work, students learn how an audience shapes their rhetorical strategies and choices.

Course Objectives

By the end of this course, students will be able to:

- Define and understand rhetorical analysis and how it differs from content analysis
- Understand the role of audience and purpose in nonfiction texts
- Recognize both explicit and implicit arguments in texts
- Critically analyze nonfiction modes of discourse in both short and extended texts
- Analyze the use of figurative language, diction, and tone
- Refine a topic into a clear thesis supported with analysis and evidence
- Write unified and developed paragraphs
- Write clear sentences with a variety of sentence structures guided by rhetorical purpose
- Be metacognitive about their writing processes
- Give constructive criticism on their classmates’ writing
- Edit and revise their writing at a deep, rather than surface, level
- Write a variety of nonfiction essays based on rhetorical goals
- Write essays under timed conditions
- Conduct research
- Understand visual rhetoric
- Synthesize and evaluate sources
Required Texts

Ways of Reading: An Anthology for Writers, 9th Ed.
Bartholomae, David and Anthony Petrosky.

Boorstin, Daniel J.

MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers, 7th Ed.
Gibaldi, Joseph.

War Is a Force That Gives Us Meaning.
Hedges, Chris.

Henry V.
Shakespeare, William.

Vocabulary Workshop: Level G.
Shostak, Jerome.

The Complete MAUS: A Survivor’s Tale.
Spiegelman, Art.

Style: Lessons in Clarity and Grace, 10th Ed.
Williams, Joseph M.

Note that a book or two may be added in the second semester. In addition, there will be a number of shorter readings provided to students electronically throughout the course.

Sample Homework Assignments

• Read the speeches by Exeter to the French king in which he outlines Henry’s claim to the French throne and the French king’s options (pp. 192-95 in Shakespeare’s King Henry V). Mark it up. Write one paragraph in which you focus on all the elements in Exeter’s speech that emphasize the justice of Henry’s claim. Then write one paragraph in which you focus on all the elements in Exeter’s speech that threaten violence. Finally, write a paragraph in which you argue which tactic is dominant, put in the context of your position on Henry’s character in the play. Is he fundamentally a king motivated by justice or by greed for power? Or something else?

• In 1-2 pages, make a claim about the significance of either the moth in Virginia Woolf’s “The Death of the Moth” or the mark on the wall in her essay “The Mark on the Wall.” What does it stand for? How does Woolf use this image to think through her ideas and/or make her point? In a final paragraph, address how the word “image” applies to Boorstin, Vinge, Woolf, and their texts (different as they are); you may wish to address this issue through the concept of perception, though you need not do so.

Sample Essay Assignment

• This unit will culminate in writing a 5-page definition essay that asks you to define a term in an argumentative way. In other words, you will combine what you know about forming an argument and what you know about the definition essay in order to write your own definition/argument. The best responses to this prompt will be socially and/or culturally and intellectually relevant. What terms are being shaken and changed in recent years, months, weeks, or days? What terms are worth looking at? You decide, and do some research to back up your assertions.