OE021: AP English Literature and Composition

Course Description
This yearlong seminar course surveys works of literature written in English between 1600 and the present. To make such a survey possible, the course focuses on literature from the “traditional axis” between England and the United States, though a key link with literature written in English from the Caribbean will be explored to set forth contemporary post-colonial perspectives. Each text will be subjected to complex, thorough close reading as well as an analysis of its links to other texts and traditions, enabling students to understand each work as an intricate and contextualized piece of literature. We will be studying and reviewing theories of literature and literary-critical terminology throughout the year, which will lead to applications in papers and exams. At the year’s end, students will have a strong sense not simply of what “literature” and literary history are understood to be, but also of what it might mean for them to make their own unique contributions to this understanding. The extra-literary objective of the course is to enjoy reading in and writing about a variety of literature through a diversity of critical frameworks—e.g., historical, formal, theoretical, and biographical.

Above all, mastery of high-level critical writing will be stressed throughout the year. Students will have ample time, with instruction, to consider, draft, and re-compose major writing assignments. Assignments will include studies of literary terms; response papers that make connections between widely divergent works or between theory and fiction; and longer-term, highly involved critical essays that are ushered through multiple stages. In anticipation of the A.P. exam in the Spring, a few essays will be timed to allow for practice in writing under pressure.

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

• Demonstrate familiarity with representative texts and movements from across the history of literature written in English since the 17th century, and be able to articulate their own understanding of trends within that history.

• Demonstrate general familiarity with advanced literary-critical approaches to texts, and a fluency in expressing their ideas at that level.

• Draft critical essays that demonstrate an ability to draw original insights from formal close reading, to focus those insights into a precise thesis, and to argue for that thesis using structures and prose styles that reflect a unique critical voice.

• Significantly improve these essays through multiple drafts, incorporating Instructor and peer feedback at the stylistic, argumentative, and conceptual level in a selective, organic fashion.

• Demonstrate mastery of readings in class discussion, respect topics and limitations in class discussion, and work actively to develop collaborative ideas and support the development of other students’ ideas.

• Approach the A.P. English exam with confidence
Course Texts

Required textbooks:
Please refer to the ELL textbook listings at the Stanford book store for the required edition of each textbook.
William Shakespeare, *The Tempest*
Mark Twain, *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*
Zora Neale Hurston, *Their Eyes Were Watching God*
Virginia Woolf, *The Mrs. Dalloway Reader*
Virginia Woolf, *A Room of One’s Own*
Lawrence Sterne, *Tristram Shandy*
Joyce Carol Oates, ed., *The Essential Emily Dickinson*
Thomas Pynchon, *The Crying of Lot 49*
Frank Lentricchia, *Critical Terms for Literary Study*
MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers, 7th edition

These materials will be supplemented by electronic ‘handouts’ throughout the course, all of which will be made available on the course’s eCollege website.

AP English Literature Sample Assignment

Sample Essay:
For this paper, you will identify and make an argument about a specific poetic strategy that two of the poems by Browning, Walcott, or Brathwaite picks up from Shakespeare's Caliban (whether directly or indirectly) and develops. Close reading of the newer poem(s) will supply your primary evidence. I also ask that you make use of one of the theoretical approaches in the "Critical Terms" chapter, ideally in a way that extends it in new ways (or perhaps resists it.)