

AP ENGLISH LITERATURE & COMPOSITION

Brief Description of Course

English 146 is designed and offered as an advanced placement course with the dual aim of meeting the standards of the College Board and the guidelines suggested by the University of Connecticut. The central thematic focus of the literature we will study concerns the development of individual identity within the larger social context. The course requires students, independently and with others, to critically read, respond to, interpret, analyze, synthesize and evaluate a wide variety of challenging texts and become familiar with a variety of voices. As they engage in the process of writing with and against the text in question, each student will be expected to construct a reading that makes the text meaningful and in the process develop a voice of his or her own.

Literature: We will read and reread world literature (British, American, Greek, French, German) from antiquity to present day, including plays, novels, short stories, poetry and essays. We will also view films. Staying current with the reading is essential because it informs our discussions and your journal entries and essays.

Journal: You are required to keep a journal and write in it three times per week. You will be asked to respond with a focus to the readings and ideas discussed in class. Journals are collected and graded twice per semester and if handwritten, must be legible. Entries are typically two pages in length.

Drafts and Essays: All drafts and essays must be word-processed using MLA format and will vary in length from three to seven pages. Stylistic development is facilitated through the drafting and revision process with particular emphasis on: a wide-ranging vocabulary used appropriately and effectively; a variety of sentence structures including appropriate use of subordination and coordination; a logical organization enhanced by specific techniques to increase coherence, such as repetition, transitions, and emphasis; a balance of generalization and specific illustrative detail including integration of quotations, and an effective use of rhetoric, including controlling tone, establishing and maintaining voice, and achieving appropriate emphasis through diction and sentence structure. You can expect instruction and feedback on writing assignments, both before and after revision.

Vocabulary and Grammar: Vocabulary study will come from the literature. Grammar exercises will be prescriptive to address weaknesses manifested in student essays and journals.

Assessment: Verbal participation: 20% Writing: 60% (drafts, essays, timed in-class responses) Journals: 20%

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AP Literature and Composition Exam: Though the AP College Board exam is optional and offered in May, everyday instruction will naturally support preparation for it. Additionally, we will analyze model questions and student essays and you can expect instruction for the objective section. Even if you opt out of the exam, these activities will hone your writing and critical thinking skills.

Unit Information

Units are arranged by genre.

Poetry (2 weeks)

We begin with an assignment that requires students to develop the specialized lexicon necessary to speak and write about poetry. Next, students learn to utilize a series of questions aimed to reveal a poem's effects and meanings. Questions include (but are not limited to):

Who is the speaker? Who is being addressed? How is the theme presented? Do allusions enrich the meaning? How do the diction and figurative language reveal meaning? How does structure enhance meaning? Is there a particular critical approach that seems especially appropriate to this poem?

Particular emphasis is placed on moving from discussion to annotation to formal, written explication through the frequent use of poem pairs.

The poem pair essay (formal explication) requires students to identify the central axis shared by the poems as well as significant differences.

Sample pairs: "Those Winter Sundays" and "My Papa's Waltz" "Dulce et Decorum Est" and "The Death of a Soldier", "Constantly Risking Absurdity" and "Ars Poetica", "Woman Work" and "Portrait" , "My Mistress' Eyes" and "Shall I Compare Thee to a Summer's Day?".

Drama/Film (4.5 weeks)

We begin with an assignment that requires students to develop the specialized lexicon necessary to speak and write about drama and film.

To incorporate the course's overarching theme, we begin with Sophocles' *Antigone* and Anouilh's *Antigone* to underscore the universality of the conflict between the individual and society. Subsequent works may include *Hamlet*, *Macbeth*, and *Death of a Salesman* to further explore thematic concerns and provide prompts for interpretive/analytical discussions and essays. For example, one of many journal prompts for *Macbeth* is to analyze how the titular character evolves in his quest for the power of the kingship. An essay prompt for *Hamlet* requires students to analyze and critique Kenneth Branagh's exploitation of humor in his film version of the play.

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Novels/Film (4.5 weeks)

We begin with an assignment that requires students to develop the specialized lexicon necessary to speak and write about novels to augment what they've already learned about film. Works are selected for their treatment of alienation and isolation, whether self-imposed or imposed by society. *Heart of Darkness* and *Apocalypse Now* are compared for thematic similarities in spite of differences in historical setting. The prompt for their essay requires students to argue how effectively Coppola has exploited Conrad's novel in his attempt to portray the American experience in Vietnam.

A second major assignment requires students to read *The Stranger* and view *Being There* and draw parallels between Meursault and Chance, the two protagonists, particularly with regard to the ways in which they are judged by their respective societies.

Short Stories (2 weeks)

The continued thematic focus of the course determines works read and analyzed in both in-class and out of class essays. The unit affords students the opportunity to sample a wide variety of writers concerned with identity formation. Essential questions addressed through student writing assignments focus on topics such as: the constraints unique to the short story form, characterization, use of dialogue, narrative point of view, historical context, symbolism, imagery and tone. Students will explore these techniques through a series of journal entries intended to deepen understanding of the relationship between these elements and the author's purpose. Representative authors include:

Jean Paul Sartre, Flannery O'Connor, Tim O'Brien, Howard Nemerov, Katherine Brush, Katherine Anne Porter, and James Baldwin.

Essays (2 weeks)

The conceptual framework of the essay unit follows the progression from the more concrete elements of descriptive and narrative non-fiction to the more abstract elements in explanatory and, ultimately, argumentative writing. Instruction begins with the distinction between concrete and abstract diction such as emphasis on sensory detail in descriptive writing and proceeds to the challenge of developing a solid thesis statement and marshalling relevant specifics in support of that thesis in an argumentative essay. The early stage of the unit utilizes exercises designed to reveal character or a sense of place through careful selection of sensory detail. The latter stage emphasizes explanatory techniques such as defining, dividing, illustrating, analyzing a process, comparing and contrasting, analogizing and showing causes and effects. Ultimately, students learn the synthesis of description, narration, and explanation in the service of argument. Particular emphasis is placed on the writer's control of tone when studying argument. An example of a culminating essay comes from Camus' *The Stranger*: students are asked to formulate a thesis statement which addresses Meursault's motivation in shooting the Arab at the climax of Part One. Camus' use of sensory detail and his careful unfolding of the sequence of events leading to the shooting offer students a plethora of supporting details from which to choose.

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Senior Critique (Increments of instruction totaling two weeks, spread over approximately one month)

The senior critique is a five to seven page literary analysis of a play or novel from an approved list (culled from the titles enumerated in past AP English Literature and Composition Exams, Question #3). The paper should primarily reflect the student's own critical interpretation of the work which is articulated in a carefully phrased and well positioned thesis. While research of literary criticism is required, citation from outside sources is secondary to detail from the novel or play itself in advancing the analysis. Students are required to make and explain judgments about the work's aesthetic dimensions and enduring social and cultural value as they write to evaluate.

AP Literature and Composition Exam (1 week)

Through extensive use of released College Board materials, timed responses to both objective questions and free-response prompts, students prepare for the rigors of the AP Literature and Composition examination. While this is an intensive one-week review, instruction throughout the semester has focused on the skills necessary for success on the exam. Instruction focuses on strategies for handling the objective section as well as a review of the criteria AP Exam readers use to score student essays which culminates in a simulation of the scoring process.

Content and/or Skills Taught:

As they engage in the process of writing with and against the text in question, each student will be expected to construct a reading that makes the text meaningful and in the process develop a "voice" of his or her own. This is accomplished through both formal, extended analyses and timed, in-class responses. Formal analyses are given written feedback prior to revision and following completion of the assignment.

The course stresses the importance of intellectual inquiry, critical reading, and incisive writing. Oral and group participation are integral. In order to develop and encourage independence of thought, mature habits of thinking and fluency, students are required to keep a cumulative journal in which they react with a focus to the readings and ideas discussed in class.