

Advanced Placement Language and Composition
2011-2012

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“How do you write? You write, man, you write, that’s how.”

- *William Saroyan*

The purpose of this course is to help students “write effectively and confidently in their college courses across the curriculum and in their professional and personal lives.” (The College Board, *AP English Course Description*, May 2008, p. 6) The College Board also states, “An AP course in English language and composition engages students in becoming skilled readers of prose written in a variety of periods, disciplines, and rhetorical contexts and in becoming skilled writers who compose for a variety of purposes.”

That’s a lot of jargon but I want you to remember the goal I set for you in the summer reading letter – insightful, powerful, persuasive communication. As I said in that letter, I believe one becomes a better writer by writing a lot and reading a lot. We’ll do both of those in this course but don’t expect to come to class and discuss the theme of a book or the motivations of a character or how a book makes you feel. Do not confuse this class with literature; this class is about the language. Do you love literature? Fantastic – I love it too and I want you to continue to read it. However, in this class we won’t be looking at the elements of fiction or Shelley’s place in the canon. Instead, we will be looking at the words and writing the words and rewriting them to make them better and, if necessary, rewriting them again. It’s not that I’m a perfectionist. In fact I believe that most high school writing is never really finished; it just becomes due. But the irony is that I also believe we must never stop striving toward perfection. And how will we strive toward perfection? By writing, man, by writing.

This course will not be like any of the other English courses you have ever taken. Will it be harder? Yes. Is there more work? Yes. But will you like it better? Yes. I make that statement with confidence because we will analyze texts and images in ways that will change the way you think about communication. By taking this course you have my assurance that you will be a better writer by the end of the year. I will work my tail off to make that a given. This is, after all, a course devoted to writing better. But I also think you will leave this course never looking at a book, an article, a picture, a billboard, or a television show the same way again. Your perspectives will evolve and your mind will grow. You will, as our big idea states, learn to analyze, criticize, and create effective argument.

Worth noting...

- 1. Saturday Study Sessions:** You must attend three Saturday study sessions this year. These are designed to help familiarize you with the AP exam and also to help you score that 4 or 5 that will be so valuable to you. The locations are yet to be determined, but the dates of these Saturday sessions are October 15th, January 21st, and March 24th. Your attendance is mandatory – it will count for a grade and the company that runs them pays you to earn a qualifying score, but only if you attend the Saturday sessions. They run from 7:45am to 2:00pm and lunch is provided. I'll provide more details as the dates near.
- 2. Workshop/Peer Criticism:** I consider everything you write to be public domain. That means that you should not be surprised to come to class and see photocopies of your work resting on every desk. I will probably use your writing in class more than any teacher you have ever had and some days we may end up spending the entire class talking about your paper. Be not afraid, though, as I will provide specific guidelines for such peer workshops so that when we analyze your writing you will leave the class a better writer. If you are not comfortable with the class reading it, don't write it.
- 3. Deadlines:** If you need an extension, ask at least two days before the assignment is due. I have never declined a student's request for an extension (except at the end of quarter when I had to have grades in by a certain date) but know that you are still responsible for all the other work during your extended time. If you don't ask and you hand something in late, expect me to deduct 25% a day for two days, at which point I will give you a zero.
- 4. Tutoring:** I tutor every day after school and I'm here by 6:30am at the latest almost every day. Please do not hesitate to come with any questions, big or small. I love talking about your work and you will never inconvenience me by asking for my help. Feel free to come by and chat about whatever is on your mind or to work in a quiet environment. This room is as much yours as it is mine.
- 5. Comments:** I have many more students this year than I ever have. This means that I will not be able to write as many comments your drafts and final products as I would like to. Therefore, I will use detailed rubrics. If you have questions about your work or want to know why I scored you a certain way, come to tutoring. Sometimes you will notice that I underline a sentence. This just means that, for some reason, I like what you wrote. Sometimes I just don't have the time to tell you *why* I like something so I just tell you *that* I like something. If you see something underlined and you don't know why I like it, feel free to ask me why.
- 6. Bathroom:** If you have to go, go. Don't ask my permission; just get up and go silently at a time that is appropriate. I know you know that our time together is short, that every minute counts, and I trust that you will only go to the bathroom when your needs are *interfering with you ability to learn*. Such is the definition of a bathroom emergency in AP Language and Composition. By the way, if you get caught with a phone in the bathroom during our class time, I will never let you leave again.

Grades

Grades are based and weighed on the following:

Tests/Quizzes

20%

- including, but not limited to, reading quizzes, multiple choice practice, and in-class timed essays

Homework/Class Work

20%

- including, but not limited to, reading responses and nightly writing assignments, daily participation and attitude.

Major Assessments

60%

-including major papers, projects, presentations

Please note that the distribution above will account for 80% of your final grade. There will also be a **mid-term test** (resembling the AP test) counting for 7% and a **final paper/project** counting for 13% of your final grade.

The AP Exam:

All students in this course will take the AP Language and Composition exam. The AP Language and Composition exam date is **Wednesday, May 16th**. The exam is about 3 hours long and consists of a multiple choice section and three essays. The multiple choice section (worth 45% of the total exam score) contains about 55 questions based on reading passages. A score on the multiple-choice section is based on the number of questions answered correctly. The essays section requires students to write three essays: a synthesis essay, a rhetorical analysis, and an argument essay. Essays are scored on a 0-9 scale and account for 55% of the total exam score.

Many colleges offer credit for AP scores of 3, 4, and 5 and some colleges may exempt qualified students from freshman writing courses.

5 – extremely well qualified

4 – well qualified

3 – qualified

2 – possibly qualified

1 – no recommendation

Cost of exam: \$87*

*Attendance at Saturday sessions will help offset this cost and students who qualify financially are given a reduced rate.

CLASS RULES

Please refer to the BCCS Student Handbook for any additional policies.

- 1. Follow along when we read:** We will read out loud in this class...a lot. If we are reading something as a class and I call on you to read, please pick up exactly where we are.
- 2. Never say "I don't know":** Your job here is to be smart and learn. If you don't know the answer to a question I ask you and you say, "I don't know," and stop there, you're being ignorant and there is no excuse for such ignorance, just as there is no excuse for not trying. Now, there will be times when you don't know something, which is fine. But when you don't know something you should say, "I'm not sure but here's what I'm thinking..." or "I don't know, but can you come back to me in a minute? I need a little more time." Ignorant disengagement is not an option.
- 3. Be on time:** Okay, I know this is already a school rule, but not every teacher follows it. In this class, you must be in this room working on the do now when the bell rings. If you are not, I will give you a demerit. If there is a line in the bathroom, come tell me, get started on your do now, let me check your work, and then I'll let you go to the bathroom if I think it is a good time to go. If you come into class one second late and tell me you are late because there was a line in the bathroom I will tell you that you should have held it and to give me your demerit sheet.
- 4. Do not save seats:** I do not have a seating plan. We sit on a first-come, first-served basis in this class. However, if you try to save a seat, I will implement a seating plan for the next class. Also, I hold veto power and I can put someone in the desk I want. I always have a good reason for doing so.
- 5. Clean around your desk before leaving:** Do not leave anything on, under, or near your desk. It is important to be responsible for your trash no matter whether you are in a movie theatre, food court, or this class room. The "someone else will do it" attitude is lazy, rude, and indicative of someone who will always rely on others too much.
- 6. If someone drops something, pick it up:** Even if the dropper is closer to the object, it is polite to make the gesture of bending down to retrieve the item. Small acts such as this make our school a better place for you to learn.
- 7. Make eye contact:** When someone is speaking, keep your eyes on that person at all times. If someone makes a comment, turn and face that person. When you are speaking, keep your head up and make eye contact with those to whom you are speaking. Making eye contact exudes professionalism, interest, competence, and confidence.
- 8. Address people by their names:** During discussions, respect other students' comments and be sure to address people by their first names, not by pronouns. Statements such as, "I agree with Sara because..." or "Sara made me realize that..." or "I disagree with Sara because..." prove that you are listening and not just waiting for your turn to talk. Too often we disregard the comments of others and we don't set the atmosphere

wherein we can speak freely, without fear of being wrong. We need to set that atmosphere in this class and we will do so by using first names.

9. **If someone asks you a question in a conversation, ask a question in return:** Most adults can't even do this. But when someone expresses interest in you, it is polite to express interest in the other person. For example, when I ask you, "How was your weekend?" an appropriate response would be, "Good – we went to my aunt's house on the beach and I saw a movie with so-and-so. How was your weekend?" Trust me – by virtue of simply expressing interest in other people, people will like you and want to do things for you. It could be the difference between getting a job or a date and not.
10. **Write in blue, black, or pencil:** When handwriting assignments, write in blue or black pen or in pencil. I will not grade anything you write in any other color. Yes, sparkly pink cursive looks pretty, but it's not professional.
11. **Accept the fact that you will make mistakes:** Learn from them and move on. You and I will both make mistakes this year. It's okay; we're humans. I will apologize and move on when I make them and I want you to do the same. Heck, you might not even have to apologize; just do your best to not to make the mistake again.
12. **Don't take it personally:** Don't be surprised if you answer a question in class and I respond with, "No, you're wrong." I do you no favors by saying a bunch of fluff such as, "Interesting, I see where you're coming from," or "I *guess* you could argue that." If you're flat-out wrong, I'll tell you so. And it's okay to be wrong. I'm wrong all the time. The key is to acknowledge that you missed something and to find out how to turn your wrong into a right. Just don't take it personally when I confront you about being wrong. I do it because I care about your future.
13. **Ask me why we are doing something:** I consider it your duty to ask me why we are doing something. I will do everything in my power to never give you work for the sake of giving you work. If you think something is busy work, please tell me. I won't take offence and if I can't articulate the value in an assignment, I won't make you do it.
14. **See the real-world connections:** This goes along with "ask me why" because you need to see how your work applies to the real world if you are going to be invested in it. For example, if think you might ever want to apply for a job your cover letter and resume are essentially a thesis statement supported by evidence. If you plan on voting in an election, the ability to recognize fallacies of argument might guide your political hand. If you seek out such connections in this course, you will get more out of it.
15. **No matter what, always be honest:** I will never, ever lie to you. I expect the same level of honesty from you. If you lie you allow yourself to become a slave to what other people think of you. If you live your life the right way you never have to lie. Even if you have done something wrong, it is best to admit it to me. I will respect your honesty and I will oftentimes forgo disciplinary measures due to your honesty. There is almost nothing you can do that will make me stop caring for and loving you. However, lying is one of those things. If you lie and I catch you in the lie (even a tiny lie), it is going to take a long time for me to trust you again. Tell me the truth – you'll always get it from me.

