

# English Language and Composition

2012-2013

## **Brief Description of Course**

Students in this introductory college-level course read and carefully analyze a broad and challenging range of nonfiction prose selections, deepening their awareness of rhetoric and how language works. Through close reading and frequent writing, students develop their ability to work with language and text with a greater awareness of purpose and strategy, while strengthening their own composing abilities. Course readings feature expository, analytical, personal, and argumentative texts from a variety of authors and historical contexts. Students examine and work with essays, letters, speeches, images, and imaginative literature. Featured authors .... Summer reading and writing are required. Students prepare for the AP® English Language and Composition Exam and may be granted advanced placement, college credit, or both as a result of satisfactory performance.

Central course textbooks include *The Language of Composition* by Shea, Scanlon & Aufses.

## **Resources below:**

Course reading and writing activities should help students gain textual power, making them more alert to an author's purpose, the needs of an audience, the demands of the subject, and the resources of language: syntax, word choice, and tone. By early May of the school year, students will have nearly completed a course in close reading and purposeful writing. The critical skills that students learn to appreciate through close and continued analysis of a wide variety of nonfiction texts can serve them in their own writing as they grow increasingly aware of these skills and their pertinent uses. During the course, a wide variety of texts (prose and image based) and writing tasks provide the focus for an energetic study of language, rhetoric, and argument.

As this is a college-level course, performance expectations are appropriately high, and the workload is challenging. Students are expected to commit to a minimum of five hours of course work per week outside of class. Often, this work involves long-term writing and reading assignments, so effective time management is important. Because of the demanding curriculum, students must bring to the course sufficient command of mechanical conventions and an ability to read and discuss prose.

## **Course Planner**

1<sup>st</sup> Quarter:     **Rhetorical Awareness and the Art and Craft of Analysis**

The course opens with an immediate follow-up on a summer assignment, which consists of reading two memoirs, *An American Childhood* by Annie Dillard and *The Road from Coorain* by Jill Ker Conway and keeping a reading response journal. They consider rhetorical context – purpose, audience and strategies- as they focus on close reading. They begin annotating, accounting for purpose and context, and recognizing strategies and tactics.

**Major Paper #1:** Students will compose an essay comparing and contrasting rhetorical purpose and language in both memoirs. This paper involves the writing process, steps of prewriting, journals, peer editing of rough draft, teacher editing of rough draft, final draft with option of revision if needed.

Focus on rhetorical purpose and language continues as students study the key elements of rhetoric, the rhetorical triangle, and appeals to ethos, logos and pathos.

Emphasis on close reading and analysis continues with prose selections drawn from personal essays in *The Language of Composition*.

**Major Paper #2:** After reading and annotating E.B. White’s “Once More to the Lake”, the students will demonstrate their ability to recognize author’s choices when using generalization and specific, illustrative detail in their own personal essays. This paper involves the writing process, steps of prewriting, journals, peer editing of rough draft, teacher editing of rough draft, final draft with option of revision if needed.

As the first quarter draws to a close, students complete their first timed essay. The chosen topic is drawn from AP Released Exam free-response questions that high-light personal essays.

2<sup>nd</sup> Quarter:     **Audience and Purpose and Strategies of Argument**

During the second quarter, students encounter clusters of essays that are generally related by subject but are markedly different in purpose and strategies. Students write a pair of major papers analyzing the rhetorical differences seen in two such clusters.

**Major Paper #3:** Students produce a major rhetorical analysis paper by comparing and contrasting two passages describing the same event, the finish of the 1938 Pimlico Special. One passage is an excerpt from *Seabiscuit* by Laura Hillendbrand and sports writer Grantland Rice’s report at the time of the race describing the finish of the Pimlico Special. This paper involves the writing process, steps of prewriting, journals, peer editing of rough draft, teacher editing of rough draft, final draft with option of revision if needed.

**Major Paper #4:** With an awareness of rhetoric, appeals, and argument in the background, students read Shakespeare’s *Macbeth*. During the unit, students work in small groups, becoming experts on of the several key scenes. Then they get to apply their knowledge of rhetoric to a pivotal scene. They write an essay in which they analyze the rhetoric of both Macbeth’s and Lady Macbeth’s arguments in Act 1, Scene 7, and explain why Macbeth is persuaded by his wife to murder King Duncan. They are asked to consider such elements as the use of appeals, choice of details, and audience. In this way they apply their appreciation of the language of the play and their understanding of rhetoric and appeals in an evaluation of argument. Students must carefully consider and thoughtfully discuss two related excerpts taken from the scene. Accordingly, I ask students to arrive at required writing conferences ready to discuss the organizational features of their papers. After their papers have been completed, students view Roman Polanski’s film version of *Macbeth* and explore how its visual elements correspond with the language of the play and its themes. This paper involves the writing process, steps of prewriting, journals, peer editing of rough draft, teacher editing of rough draft, final draft with option of revision if needed.

### 3<sup>rd</sup> Quarter:     **The Resources of Language as a Means to Effective Communication**

During third quarter, students will engage in a study of style as it applies to language. Topics will include diction, parallel structure, syntax and satire. In addition to print documents, students will also be expected to analyze images as text.

**Major Paper #5:** Some believe that the Internet is improving writing skills because everyone, especially younger people, spends so much time e-mailing, instant messaging, blogging, and chatting in forums. The very fact that young people are writing so frequently is bound to increase comfort level and may lead to the development of a creative style, they claim. Others argue that such activity only degrades writing skills because the language used is so informal, often a series of abbreviations and the communication is usually a rapid-fire response rather than a sustained discussion. Write an essay explaining whether you think that writing online (in whatever form that might take) take a positive or negative impact on a person's writing. Feel free to use your own experience in your discussion. This paper involves the writing process, steps of prewriting, journals, peer editing of rough draft, teacher editing of rough draft, final draft with option of revision if needed.

**Major Paper #6:** Students will choose from a selection of writing samples to analyze the effectiveness of the writer's style (diction, figurative language, sentence structure) to communicate theme and tone. Then, students will choose a print image (art, photography, animation, etc.) that reflects the writer's style and illustrate how that image connects to the chosen text. This paper involves the writing process, steps of prewriting, journals, peer editing of rough draft, teacher editing of rough draft, final draft with option of revision if needed.

### 4<sup>th</sup> Quarter:     **Synthesizing Sources and Focused Preparation for AP Exam**

During the 4<sup>th</sup> quarter, students will examine the theme of Science vs Nature by analyzing various sources, including *Frankenstein* by Mary Shelley, "Rime of the Ancient Mariner" by Samuel Taylor Coleridge, "The White Heron" Sarah Orne Jewett, "Against Nature" by Joyce Carol Oates "The Clan of One-Breasted Women" by Terri Tempest Williams & "Silent Spring" by Rachel Carson.

**Major Paper #7:** Using specific documents on community service requirements in high schools (pulled from *The Language of Composition*), write an essay explaining whether you believe that high schools in general, or your particular school or district, should make community service mandatory. Incorporate references to, or quotations from a minimum of three of these sources in your essay. This paper involves the writing process, steps of prewriting, journals, peer editing of rough draft, teacher editing of rough draft, final draft with option of revision if needed.

**Major Paper #8:** As a culminating assignment for the year, students will be asked to move beyond what has been read and discussed in class by writing a researched argument paper that will ask students to draw upon their own researched sources. The goal is to not only consider personal experience, but also undertake purposeful research of their own to develop, articulate, and support their own position in response to a passage that offers a debatable look at our responsibility to nature.

In addition, students are required to carefully consider, through a wide range of researched sources, varied but viable viewpoints on nature and related issues prior to assuming their own stances. There will be a process by which they share their deliberations over their research in classroom-based study groups, participate in one on one conference with the instructor, and continue to receive support and collect feedback during the entire writing process. The final paper will show a sharpened awareness of rhetorical skills, MLA documentation, and careful research that ultimately supports and illuminates students' own arguments. This paper involves the writing process, steps of prewriting, journals, peer editing of rough draft, teacher editing of rough draft, final draft with option of revision if needed.

After the AP exam in May, students will engage in a study of critical theory to help prepare them for the AP Literature and Composition course that they will take during their senior year.

### Student Evaluation

Students are evaluated on the basis of major papers, homework, quality and character of class participation and involvement, and AP-style writing prompts. Major papers will account for a majority of each quarter grade, with formative assessments throughout each quarter composing another large portion of the overall quarter average. Student performance and progress will be assessed based on in-class task commitment, homework, and daily preparation. Emphasis will be placed on enabling students to become more comfortable with self-assessment as the year progresses.