

Advanced Placement English

Language and Composition

SY: 2009-10 **Instructor:** Mr. David Clausen
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Dear Students and Parents/Sponsors of students of Advanced Placement English,

This letter is to give you a brief overview of the Advanced Placement English class. It is not designed to answer all questions. This letter will delineate the basic expectations for this course and the basic requirements. Should you have more questions or desire a conference, please contact me at SAHS: DSN 738-5261; CIV 797-3667; david.clausen@pac.dodea.edu

An Advanced Placement Course

The content: An ‘advanced placement’ course, regardless of the content area, is structured to give the student a university academic challenge while still in high school. The subject matter is challenging; it is demanding. An AP course will take more time for the student in preparation for each class. The student must be ready to accept this unique and sometimes stressful challenge.

The weighted grading: An AP course is also a ‘weighted’ course; this directly affects the student’s GPA, sometimes favorably and sometimes unfavorably. If a student makes a **C** in an AP course, that **C** has a weighted value, translating more or less as a **B** in a non-weighted course. And the expectations are higher as well. While a student might generally make **A**’s and **B**’s in a non-advance placement subject area, s/he may make only **C**’s in an AP course. But the student has the benefit of the weighted grade, and the benefit of receiving a university-level academic challenge.

The AP test: In the spring of the school year, the student **must** take the Advance Placement test; it, too, is very challenging. The exam consists of 50-60 multiple choice items and three difficult essays. If the student scores well, s/he should receive automatic college credit (tuition free), as long as the chosen institution accepts the AP test.

Top 5 reasons **NOT** to take an AP course:

1. Because my friends are
2. Because it’s cool
3. Because it fits my schedule
4. Because I think it means: Advanced Procrastination
5. Because the letters AP sound catchy

Top 5 reasons **FOR** taking an AP course:

1. I like/want the academic challenge
2. I enjoy thinking deep, profound thoughts, and expressing them in competent prose
3. I enjoy/accept the extra workload
4. I like to read and write (especially for AP English courses)
5. I like challenging reading, critical thinking, and revising essays

This Advanced Placement English Language and Composition course

This AP course will focus on the study of written language, looking at specific rhetorical devices and techniques that writers use to be successful. The student will write many different types of essays, cultivate his/her own voice, develop his/her own writing process and style, adjust to different audiences, evaluate professional essayists' compositions and respond to classmates' writing. The student will read, discuss, and write compositions in the various modes of exposition: narrative, expository, persuasive, etc. The student will be asked to make copies of his/her essays (NOT to be confused with copying someone else's paper) and then sit with peers to discuss the paper's strengths and weaknesses. Revision will be a big part of the class. And the student will write in-class essays as well as out-of-class. **An essay done at lunchtime or on the bus will not suffice. Poorly planned essays will earn F's.**

The AP Challenge: By signing up for this class, which is **not** a required English course, the student has accepted the AP challenge. With that come higher expectations and higher demands on the student's time. It is not a place for procrastination. It is not a place for missed deadlines. **It is not a place for whining.** It is not a place for the student who cannot manage time when being pulled in many directions by extracurricular events. I am glad that these students have accepted the challenge. The AP Eng Lang class is a place for, in the words of former APer Jonathan Yi (now at the Air Force Academy): **Work, Labor, Struggle, Strife.** I hope they maintain the performance, the diligence and the quality of work necessary.

Academic Integrity: As in any age, some students are tempted to 'cheat.' There are more forms of cheating than just looking on a neighbor's paper or 'borrowing' someone's homework. It is 'cheating' to jump on the internet once a literary piece has been assigned, go to SparkNotes.com (or any other cheat site), download the necessary summaries and commentaries, and then offer those thoughts as your own in an analysis essay. **The student must have some academic integrity.** The student has willingly accepted the AP Challenge. The student should want to think for him/herself. The student (and the teacher) is aware that there are all kinds of available 'help/cheat' sites out there--but it is incumbent on the student to develop his or her own ethical code of academic right and wrong. Above all, the student should understand that s/he should want to think for her/himself, not to be the mental pawn of some Internet chessboard.

DoDDS standards

Here is a sampling of some dominant standards in the AP class; for the full standards, go to: www.odedodea.edu/instruction/curriculum.htm

Reading:

Student will read a variety of materials at various complexity levels working to demonstrate comprehension and interpretation of the text as a whole.

Writing:

Writing will be taught as a process from prewriting (Inspiration 6, for example), rough drafts, peer editing, rewriting to the polished drafts; a variety of writing modes will be used as well as writing to different audiences.

Speaking, Listening and Viewing:

The functions of these areas include gathering and sharing information; persuading others; expressing and understanding ideas; coordinating activities with others; and selecting and critically analyzing messages.

Conventions, Grammar and Usage of the English Language:

These standards involve the appropriate application of conventions and grammar in both written and spoken formats.

Literature:

The student will respond to various modes of literature (from essays to novels and others) using interpretive, critical, and evaluative processes.

SAHS CSI GOALS, ESSENCES, INTERVENTIONS: The AP class will support the school CSI goals as described in the parent-student handbook.

COURSE COMPONENTS

Textbooks: The Riverside Reader, Patterns of Exposition 13, The Practical Stylist with Readings, The New American Rhetoric, Vocabulary Workshop (Level F)

Materials Needed: Two folders (in-class portfolio and one for out-of-class materials)
100 3x5 note cards (to begin with)(various colors would help)
one spiral notebook for in class journal writing (8x10 size)
School Planner

The Riverside Reader will be the fulcrum of our study. It is arranged by modes of compositions (narration, persuasion, process analysis, etc.); the AP writer will also be writing one of each type. In the other three texts, the student will read various professional writers from Art Buchwald to Alice Walker to George Orwell to Lewis Thomas to augment the work done in The Riverside Reader: style, sentence structure, diction and more will be covered to help the AP writer develop and improve his/her writing.

Essays and Writing and the Writing Process: For the many essays you will write, you will practice the PROCESS of writing: Prewriting, writing, rewriting, editing, to get to the POLISHED draft, but never the FINAL draft—a ‘final’ draft in writing does not exist. And for every writing assigned, **a prewriting is REQUIRED.**

Essay Style Guidelines: Typed, size 12 font, Times New Roman, Double-spaced, one inch margin (left and right), page numbers, and in the upper right hand corner single spaced: student name, due date, class name/period.

The Literary I-Search Paper: One of the delightfully challenging parts of this course is the opportunity for the student to embark on a literary search of a favorite author (or an author chosen at random if the student has no favorites). This year-long I-Search project consists of the following parts: choosing an author of literary merit, finding four books by that author, finding an auto/biography by/about the author, finding literary criticism of the author’s works, writing 30 note cards for each book read, writing six ‘mini-papers,’ and writing one ‘major’ paper (pulling all parts together).

If the searcher is unable to find four books by the same author, it is also possible to combine authors based on common subjects/themes in their books: e.g., Orwell, Huxley, and Bradbury could be combined for the subject of anti/utopian literature; or Angelou, Twain, and Gaines could be combined for a search on racism.

NOTE: This is called an ‘I’-Search, not an Internet-search (the I does not stand for Internet), not a Sparksnote.com search, etc. The searcher does the work ☺.

Journals: We will be involved in near-daily journal writing. The journal will largely be a practice arena for the student in the writing world. Entries will vary from free writing to controlled topics to response writing. Journals will generally be kept in the classroom with class time allotted for writing. They are an important part of the practice part of writing. Just as a musician or an athlete must practice before the public performance, so must a writer write.

Dialectical Journaling: Along with the in-class journal writing, the student will also do responses to reading through dialectical journaling.

Vocabulary: The course will use a developmental vocabulary program called Vocabulary Workshop (the student will have the option of buying the book for \$8.00 or writing the answers in a separate notebook). This program studies sets of words in many different situations: in context, as synonyms and antonyms and in analogies. This study will help the student's own vocabulary growth as well as help on that section of the SAT test.

Blackboard: During the year, the student will have to login to Blackboard to review assignments, find new postings, participate in discussions, and more.

SAT Practice: We will do near daily SAT practice for the verbal section of the SAT. This practice (both for the multiple choice and the essay sections) will help the student prepare for the SAT, and in part for the AP, and the skills studied/practiced, are directly transferable to each student's own writing.

L.A. Law: "An essay with many textual flaws should not be scored higher than a 2." So reads the rubric for scoring the essays on the AP exam--hence, the need to work on language skills. One of the ways that we will work on language mechanics, the proverbial nuts and bolts of the writing process, is through L. A. Law (language arts laws--also known in some circles as Daily Oral Language). It requires looking at five sentences a day, sentences that have grammatical or usage problems, correcting them and then being tested on them. Of course, the student is then to apply these rules to his/her own writing--transference is the key (also aiding practice for the SAT).

Portfolios and Conferencing: The student will keep a writing portfolio, a file of all his/her writings, both the successes and the failures. We will meet periodically for conferencing on the student's writing, to evaluate the strengths, weaknesses and growth of the student's prose. Parents are, of course, encouraged to make appointments with me to conference about the student's writing (or any other matters) as well.

Cogitating: ‘Cogitating’ is a fancy word for thinking. All too often, students take a passive role in their education, a role where they only read and accept or listen and accept or watch and accept. Throughout this course, you will be asked to critically appraise material you read and write. You will read some material, essays specifically, that may not titillate your cranial gray matter—but you must read on and cogitate. You must also cogitate about your own writing—do not be satisfied with the rough draft. Cogitate about how to make that already good paper better.

Homework: Yes, homework fans, you will receive a healthy amount of homework for this class. While it is not the ‘pile it higher and deeper’ concept, it may at times seem that way. But by taking the AP Challenge, you have accepted all parts of the course (have I mentioned the ‘No Whining’ component of the course? Consider it mentioned).

Grading Policy: All assignments will be worth points, scored on the 100-90%=A, 89-80%=B, etc., according to the DoDDS grading policy. Major compositions will normally be worth 100 points, quizzes and other graded areas worth fewer. The student cannot afford to not do an essay or turn papers in late (see ‘late paper policy below’). Students will be given a sheet describing the traits of writing for an **A** paper, a **B** paper, etc.

The **graded components** consist of these breakdowns:

- writing, 50%;
- vocabulary 20%;
- LA LAW quizzes, 10%;
- miscellaneous quizzes 10%;
- homework/participation assignments 10%.

Late paper policy: Because there will be many papers written, and because we will use response groups (which will require the students to bring copies of their essays to class), it is vital that the student have these compositions in class and on time. Hence, the ‘late paper policy’ is simple; assignments not ready at the necessary time will suffer an automatic grade drop. Thus, an **A** paper will drop to a **B**, etc. And if the paper is not ready on the next day, it will be a zero. Hence, we will operate on a one-day late paper policy; after one day, it is too late. Enough time will always be given for the assignments to be prepared. The student must be a good planner and organizer. **Procrastination kills.**

The late paper policy applies only to essays; **for any other assignments, there is no late policy—they become zeros.** And assignments have to be ready **at the beginning of class.** **Procrastination kills.**

Blaming Technology and Plan B: Technology is not an excuse. If you fail to have an assignment on time, blaming technology is not accepted. You need to have always a Plan B, a ‘What if’ plan: backing up files, saving them to various locations, printing when possible, emailing them to your Gagle (and other accounts as backup), printing somewhere in school BEFORE class time, etc.

NOTE: All policies are subject to change, for the instructor can be a very capricious individual, but always with good reason.

Please list **five books you read this summer** (with authors' names, if possible):

Our AP Challenge Motto I: Think! . . . for yourself!
As the Bard says, "To thine own self be true!"

Please list **five of the best books** you have ever read:

What is **the book you first remember reading and really enjoying** (from whatever era):

List **five of your favorite words** (based on their sound, not their meaning)

Our AP Challenge motto II:
If the writer sweats, the reader doesn't have to.
Welcome to AP English . . . and get ready to sweat . . .

I have read and understand the requirements of the AP Language course. I am willing to 'be all I can be,' and 'do all I can do.'

Student signature _____ Parent signature _____

