**AP English Language & Composition**

**2025-2026**

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**Course Description and Objectives:**

The AP English Language course provides students with the opportunity to read rigorous texts from various eras and in different genres, analyzing the big ideas of rhetorical situation, claims/evidence, reasoning/organization, and style. Students use given texts to reach the goal of effective writing and analysis: they will read and annotate texts from a critical perspective in order to craft well-reasoned essays and personal reflections in response. The course is structured both thematically and chronologically, based on district requirements and College Board’s unit guide. The over-arching theme for the course is that of power.

**Textbook:**

Ideas and Argument by Williamson, Zell, and Davis. Additional readings come from such varied sources as Project Gutenberg, current events, national publications, and any other resources that seems likely to provide for rigor, depth, and high interest.

**Big Ideas**

­\*Rhetorical Situation: Individuals write within a particular situation and make strategic writing choices based on that situation.

\*Claims and Evidence: Writers make claims about subjects, rely on evidence that supports the reasoning that justifies the claim, and often acknowledge or respond to other, possibly opposing, arguments.

\*Reasoning and Organization: Writers guide understanding of a text’s lines of reasoning and claims through that text’s organization and integration of evidence.

\*Style: The rhetorical situation informs the strategic stylistic choices that writers make.

**Unit/Concept Names**

**Unit 1: Communicating an Idea**

Big Ideas: Rhetorical Situation; Claims and Evidence

Skills: 1.A, 3.A, 4.A

In Unit 1, students are laying a foundation for the work throughout the year. Accordingly, they will begin with a number of foundational texts, including those listed at the bottom of this section. Students will identify, reflect on, and write about rhetorical situation in a variety of activities.

**Activities:**

Before listening to Malala Yousafzai’s speech to the United Nations, students will research some of the unfamiliar allusions, such as these: Mohammed al-Jinnah, Bacha Khan, the partition of India, the role of Gandhi and nonviolence in that partition, and other items. After reporting to the class, students will listen to and follow the transcript of Malala’s speech to the United Nations. As a class, they will brainstorm the elements of the rhetorical situation in the speech, particularly noting exigence and audience, both explicit and implied (Skill 1.A). They will also pinpoint elements of claim, evidence, and commentary (Skill 3.A). The class will generate a rubric, listing items to be included in the paragraphs they will write. Students will then divide into groups; each group member will contribute a paragraph on one element of the rhetorical situation, using claim, evidence, commentary in the paragraph (Skill 4.A). As a final step, students will exchange paragraphs and peer edit for elements specified on the rubric. After peer editing, students will revise paragraphs. Groups will submit their finished product to the class for comment.

**Unit 2: Appealing to an Audience**

Big Ideas: Rhetorical Situation; Claims and Evidence

Skills: 1.B, 2.B, 3.A, 3.B, 4.A, 4.B

In Unit 2, students extend their skills in identifying and writing claim, evidence, and commentary (Skills 3.A, 4.A). They are introduced to the ideas of the logical appeals and begin working with explaining the “so what” of the appeals in their paragraphs (Skill 2.B). Students also begin to identify and describe the overarching thesis of an argument, relating that thesis to the argument’s structure (Skill 3.B), before writing thesis statements that require proof or defense, and which may preview the argument’s structure (Skill 4.B).

**Activities:**

1. Students read “Arm Wrestling with My Father” by Brad Manning and “Gender in the Classroom” by Deborah Tannen. Student groups use markers to identify claim, evidence, and commentary in each selection (Skill 3.A). After completing group work, students share their findings with the rest of the class; they use these two segments as the basis for discussing identity. Students consider how the writers drive the organization and structure of each argument (Skill 3.B).
2. After reading several selections on identity, students divide into groups. Each group discusses and lists the elements of the rhetorical situation in one selection, as well as the primary and secondary audiences, writing their findings on the text (Skill 1.B). Groups then trade articles; they use different colored markers to identify and mark claim, evidence, and commentary in a selected paragraph from that article (Skill 3.A). Groups trade articles again; this time, they locate the thesis statement, making a judgment as to whether that statement previews the article’s structure (Skill 3.B). As a class, students discuss their findings on each article. Students then choose one of the articles to use as the basis for writing. First, students think about their impressions of the article and its implications. They then write a reaction to the article that follows these steps:

A. Write a thesis statement that makes a claim about the content of the article, previewing the structure if possible (Skill 4.B).

B. Write a paragraph that demonstrates an understanding of the audience’s beliefs, values or needs (Skill 2.B) by utilizing claim, evidence, and commentary (Skill 4.A).

**Unit 3: Understanding Context**

Big Ideas: Claims and Evidence; Reasoning and Organization

Skills: 3.A, 4.A, 5.A, 6.A, 5.C, 6.C

In Unit Three, students delve into the intricacies of argument. The big idea of reasoning and organization can be especially challenging because students must examine and understand how a line of reasoning develops in writing.

**Activities:**

1. Students read and annotate “The Case for Working with Your Hands” by Matthew Crawford, marking the text for claim, evidence, and commentary (Skill 3.A). They then write and compare claims made by Crawford within the text, making a bullet-point list of evidence to support at least three claims (Skill 3.A). Students prepare a chart or short video that describes Crawford’s line of reasoning in the article; they explain how the line of reasoning supports his argument’s overarching thesis, as well as the method of development used to create the argument (Skills 5.A, 5.C). Students then write a thesis statement and a paragraph using claim, evidence, commentary in which they describe the effect of Crawford’s arguments (Skill 4.A).
2. Students read and listen to President Roosevelt’s Fireside Chat #4, “On Economic Progress.” They then read “Dear Mrs. Roosevelt: Cries for Help from Depression Youth” by Robert Cohen. This text is a springboard for classroom discussion about the economic concerns that impacted teens during the 1930s versus the economic realities that impact high school students today. After discussing the economic issues faced during the Depression, they research one current economic issue faced by youth today. Students must find a minimum of four sources; one must be an interview and one must be a visual source. After completing their research and analyzing the source information, students write an argument that develops a position on the role that state and local governments should play in eliminating negative economic factors for U.S. teenagers. The essay includes a clear thesis and the development of a line of reasoning and commentary to support the reasoning (Skill 6.A). Students choose an appropriate method of development in which to present their argument, depending on the information gathered (Skills 4.A, 6.C). The argument must also synthesize at least three of the sources, including the visual.

**Unit 4: Analyzing Purpose**

Big Ideas: Rhetorical Situation; Claims and Evidence; Reasoning and Organization

Skills: 1.A, 2.A, 3.B, 4.B, 5.C, 6.C

**Activities:**

1. Students read “The Serpents of Paradise” from Desert Solitaire, annotating for rhetorical situation, anthropomorphism, allusions, and diction choices (Skill 1.A). Students also read Henry David Thoreau’s “Where I Lived and What I Lived For,” annotating for the same categories. Students then choose one of these pieces as the subject of study. They identify and describe the overarching thesis, as well as the use of claim, evidence, commentary. Using Toulmin as a model, they write an analytical thesis statement that requires proof and previews the structure of the argument (Skills 3.B, 4.B). Students then write an introduction and conclusion to an essay on one of these pieces, paying particular attention to the method of development used by the author or speaker (Skills 2.A, 5.C).
2. Students read a variety of texts that focus on how nature impacts individuals. Then, students conduct interviews with classmates about how nature impacts and informs their own experience. They share their findings with the class. After sharing, each student writes a Toulmin-type thesis statement that creates an original argument about nature. Class members vote on the three best thesis statements; they may then adopt one of the three statements for use in their own writing, or they may use their own statement. Students decide on the rhetorical situation underlying their essay and make choices that demonstrate an understanding of their audience’s values or needs. Students then choose a method of development in which to present their findings, write an introduction to support the thesis statement, and develop at least four paragraphs to address argument and counterargument. The essay closes with a well-crafted conclusion (Skills 2.A, 4.B, 6.C).

**Unit 5: Creating Coherence**

Big Ideas: Reasoning and Organization

Style Skills: 5.A, 5.B, 6.A, 6.B, 7.A, 8.A

In this unit, the big idea of style can be especially challenging because students must determine how the rhetorical situation informs the strategic stylistic choices that writers make.

**Activities:**

1. Students brainstorm everything they know about ethics in relationship to categories of professional and personal experience (e.g., education, business, technology, medicine). They read Pinker’s “Is the World Getting Better or Worse? A Look at the Numbers.” In groups, students analyze the line of reasoning and explain whether the reasoning supports the overarching thesis of the argument (Skill 5.A). They explain how the organization of the text creates unity and coherence, supporting the argument’s reasoning (Skill 5.B). They mark the essay for use of word choice, comparisons, and syntax, explaining how these items contribute to tone and/or style (Skill 7.A). Then, students conduct online research on the topic of ethics in today’s world, narrowing their topics to a specific problem that requires a solution. They write an argument paper that synthesizes a minimum of three sources, one of which much be a visual. Students should follow these steps: outline the articles for claim, evidence, commentary and thesis; create a thesis statement that allows them to develop a position on their chosen topic; write an introduction using the thesis statement; develop a line of reasoning and commentary; use transitional elements to guide the reader through the line of reasoning; and strategically use words, comparisons, and syntax to convey a specific tone or style. All sources must be properly documented (Skills 6.A, 6.B, 8.A)
2. During the writing of the synthesis research papers, students discuss outlines with peers and brainstorm arguments and counterarguments, conference individually with the teacher after completion of the first draft, edit for language and syntactical choices, rewrite incorporating feedback, and publish a final product (Skill 8.A). After completing the process, students write a reflection on the task, addressing their understanding of the metacognitive process.

**Unit 6: Establishing and Evaluating Credibility**

Big Ideas: Claims and Evidence

Style Skills: 3.A, 3.B, 4.A, 4.B, 7.A, 8.A

**Activities:**

1. Students choose one selection from this list: “School” by Kyoko Mori; “Shanghai Schools’ Approach Pushes Students to Top of Tests” by David Barboza; “I Know Why the Caged Bird Cannot Read” by Francine Prose. Students annotate the selection for claim, evidence, commentary (Skill 3.A). They note the overarching theme of the selection, as well as the indications showing the argument’s structure (Skill 3.B). They outline the use of word choice, comparisons, and syntax to discover the relationship between these elements and the style or tone of the piece (Skill 7.A). Students then write an analysis of that selection. They write a thesis statement requiring proof and previewing the structure of the argument (Skill 4.B). Then, they write two to four paragraphs that utilize claim, evidence, commentary to analyze the style and organization of the selection (Skill 4.A). As they write, students use strategically chosen words, comparisons, and syntax to convey a specific tone or style; they may choose to echo or imitate the style or tone of the original piece (Skill 8.A).
2. Students will read “Me Talk Pretty One Day” by David Sedaris and “Superman and Me” by Sherman Alexie. They write a comparison/contrast essay that addresses the style, diction choices, organization, comparisons, and syntax used by each author (Skill 7.A). In their own writing, they use strategically chosen words, comparison, and syntax to convey their own tone or style to the argument (Skill 8.A).

**Unit 7: Comparing Perspectives**

Big Ideas: Rhetorical Situation; Claims and Evidence

Style Skills: 1.A, 2.A, 3.C, 4.C, 7.B, 7.C, 8.B, 8.C

**Activities:**

1. Students read “Use It or Lose It: Why Language Changes Over Time” by Nikhil Swaminathan. They then view the TED Talk, “How Language Shapes the Way We Think” by Lera Boroditsky. In groups, they consider the rhetorical situation for both the essay and the TED Talk (Skill 1.A); and explain the manner in which both authors qualify their claims, using modifiers, counterarguments, and alternate perspectives (Skill 3.C). They then discuss and explain the authors’ uses of independent and dependent clauses to show relationships between and among ideas (Skill 7.B), as well as the contribution made by grammar and mechanics to the clarity and effectiveness of each argument (Skill 7.C).
2. Students react to “Use It or Lose It: Why Language Changes Over Time” by Nikhil Swaminathan or “How Language Shapes the Way We Think” by Lera Boroditsky by writing a claim about one of the selections. They write a cogent introduction to an essay in which they make a claim and then qualify it, using modifiers, counterarguments, or alternate perspectives. The sentences in their essay should clearly convey their ideas and arguments; they use the established conventions of grammar and mechanics to communicate clearly and effectively (Skills 2.A, 4.C, 8.B, 8.C).

**Unit 8: Explaining Complexities**

Big Ideas: Rhetorical Situation

Style Skills: 1.B, 2.B, 7.A, 7.B, 8.A, 8.B

**Activities:**

1. Students view the two Hogarth paintings: “Marriage a la Mode: The Marriage Contract” and “Marriage a la Mode: The Toilette.” They deconstruct the painting, utilizing their knowledge of rhetorical situation to deduce the elements of the rhetorical triangle, as well as anything else they can glean from the paintings, considering the paintings as visual arguments (Skill 1.B). They then read Thackery’s selection describing the paintings from English Humorists of the 18th Century. Again, students consider the rhetorical situation; then, they explain Thackery’s word choice, comparisons, and syntax to create tone or style, as well as explaining how the author creates, combines, and places independent and dependent clauses to show relationships (Skills 7.A, 7.B). Finally, students choose a school-appropriate painting to use as the basis for their own description and analysis. They will write an essay defining the rhetorical situation and analyzing the visual and its message; they strategically use words, comparisons, and syntax to convey tone or style (in imitation of Thackery) and write sentences that clearly convey ideas and arguments (Skills 8.A, 8.B)

**Unit 9: Joining the Conversation**

Big Ideas: Claims and Evidence

Skills: 3.C, 4.C

**Activities:**

1. Students view the cartoon, “The 12th Player in Every Football Game” and then read “Can Science Solve Football’s Concussion Crisis?” by Ryan Blasen and “What Happens to the Brain During a Concussion?” by Richard Smayda. They explain the ways that Blasen and Smayda qualify their claims through modifiers, counterarguments, and alternate perspectives (Skills 3.C).
2. Students choose a controversial topic from the field of sports, possibly including pay inequity between the genders, paying college athletes, young people and injuries, or any other topic that interests them. They then choose two articles they find on the internet; the articles should present two sides of the chosen controversy. They create a thesis statement and outline an essay; they choose one paragraph to write, in which they qualify their claim using modifiers, counterarguments, or alternate perspectives (Skill 4.C).

**Evaluation (Schoolwide Grading Policy)**

* *Minor Grades* = 60% (quizzes, labs, and graded assignments to assess certain standards in a unit of study)
* *Major Grade*s = 40% (unit tests, essays, research papers, project-based assignments, and culminating assessments to measure mastery of standards that comprise a unit of study)

**Modes of Communication**

**\*Infinite Campus**: shout points, email blasts, and grades

**\*Canvas**: announcements, inbox, grades, and comment feedback

**\*Remind Code**: @2526aplc