

AP Language and Composition

Hazen High School

Zucker and Wallace

Course Year: 2022-23

1) Course Purpose

In two years, you will begin leading a life outside the structures and the vicissitudes of high school. The supports you have had (teachers calmly explaining “the meaning” of texts, well-meaning adults telling you that you should read more, well-read people handing out endless book and media recommendations) will be replaced by the freedom to think, write, read, and feel for your own.

We are here to give you the tools to do so successfully.

The purpose of this course, at its core, is to teach you how to interact thoughtfully and analytically with the world around you. Shakespeare once said (through one of his mouthpiece characters) that all the world's a stage--he should have said instead that all the world is a text, and you are all the readers. Over the span of this course, you will read college-level, complex texts from a variety of time periods and writers.

Though not every piece we read will necessarily set fire to the gunpowder of your thoughts, you will need to come into this class with the expectation that you will have thoughts (explosive or forced!), that you will express them, and that you will develop them not just for a grade, but because you are worthy of having thoughts. Once we set about cultivating those thoughts, pushing them to fruition through class discussion and writing (oh, the writing!), you will be able to harvest (or so goes the hope!) arguments and beliefs of your own that are truly yours--you will have read about the subject matter; you will have tested your thoughts against your classmates'; you will have written sophisticatedly about your arguments and, as a result, have come to a deeper understanding of your own thoughts and beliefs.

Or, to put it more concretely:

2) Course Objectives

By the end of this course, you will be able to do the following:

- Read complex texts that challenge you with their arguments and level of text sophistication
 - These texts will come from a variety of time periods with a variety of purposes
 - Oh yeah--text doesn't always mean a piece of prose (though it often will for this course); texts include everything from your childhood photos to advertisements to memes to political speeches to lovingly crafted personal essays.
 - This means that you will also need to learn how to read scientific and/or academic texts, specifically ones that include things like

footnotes, endnotes, and citations. The ghost of MLA will never cease to haunt you.

- Identify who is speaking through a text and what they are doing. You will also be analyzing how they are accomplishing that task and why they even bother to do so (and hopefully, why we--as a class--are investigating their work in the first place). This is rhetorical analysis, and you will master it.
- Break apart arguments--truly. Smash them down to their constituent parts. See what the pieces of an argument are and how they fit together and why someone troubled to fit them together in that particular fashion.
 - You will not read only one text on a single subject; you will read and analyze several that can be brought into conversation with each other. You will need to synthesize these in order to form your own cohesive and cogent arguments.
- Start to become a writer. We mean this.
 - You will write in a variety of fashions with a variety of purposes, learning from those texts we study in class to develop strength in your own writer's voice.
 - This means you will be writing formally and informally.
 - This means that you will be writing personal narratives, formal analytical essays, argumentative pieces, and things of an expository nature.
 - You will always keep in mind that a writer does much of his or her work through the writing process, not through 1:00 AM rough drafts that are turned in abashedly the very minute they are due. None of you are Jack Kerouac (I checked the attendance rosters), so none of you are going to turn in a brilliant scroll that will turn into a piece of the American canon. You will be expected to draft pieces, sit them aside, think about them, and then rework them (and not just for grammatical errors). You will be asked to join a writing community of your peers and share your work with them, as horrifying as that can be.
- Develop a more mature and sophisticated vocabulary. You will learn how to describe a writer's tone or diction in more exciting ways than just "sad," "mad," or "bad." You will cut straight through bland ambiguity to startling specificity because you will have spent the time looking at (and learning to love) words, words, words.
- Read everything.

3) What You Will Read

AP Language and Composition is a college-level class. That means several things for you.

1. The texts will not be easy. They will, however, be meaningful.
2. ...If you--personally--invest the time, effort, and thought into making them so.
3. The subject matter may be challenging for its own reasons. There may come times (or rather, texts) when the subject matter is more adult; you are expected to approach it in an adult manner.

Your expectation will always be to come to class having read and thought about the text we are set to be discussing. (And, if you were paying attention earlier in the syllabus, you know that you are expected to have an opinion about the text as well!) Questions will be welcome, always. “Welcome” is probably not a strong enough word--enthusiastically hoped for might come closer. None of us will have “mastered” a text by the time of discussion; there will always be more topics to explore, more nuances to chase down, and those are things we can only do by entering into a discussion with one another.

Without further ado, here is a sampling of what you will be practicing your text-dissection skills on:

First Unit:

How does the life we lead relate to the stories we tell? How does the self relate to the writer’s voice? How do our words and voice define who we are? Why write in the first place?

“The Fourth State of Matter” by Jo Ann Beard

“Notes of a Native Son” by James Baldwin

“305 Marguerite Cartwright Avenue” by Chimamanda Adichie

“The Brown Study” by Richard Rodriguez

“To Speak is to Blunder” by Yiyun Li

Second Unit:

Debate and Argumentation

Research a hot button issue and be prepared to debate the issue and be judged by your peers (and your teacher).

Third Unit:

Advertisements

How does Madison Avenue manipulate us into buying their products? How can you create an enticing piece of visual rhetoric which convinces your audience that they want (nay, NEED) your product?

Fourth Unit:

Art?

Exit Through the Gift Shop by Banksy

“Notes on Camp” by Susan Sontag

“It is and It isn’t” by Damon Young

“Glory” by bell hooks

“On Seeing England for the First Time” by Jamaica Kincaid

“Shakespeare’s Sister” by Virginia Woolf

Pieces by Maya Lin

Fifth Unit: Research paper!

Sixth Unit: How does humor function?

“Consider the Lobster” by David Foster Wallace

“A Modest Proposal” by Jonathon Swift

“Good Souls” by Dorothy Parker

“Justin Bieber Would Like to Reintroduce Himself” by Caity Weaver

“Laugh, Kookabura” by David Sedaris

The Onion

Seventh Unit: What makes a good life? How do you lead a good life in a world that is not?

“Almond Trees” by Albert Camus

“Death of the Moth” by Virginia Woolf

Excerpt from “Souls of Black Folk” by WEB Dubois

“Letter from a Birmingham Jail” by Martin Luther King

“On Morality” by Joan Didion

“Notes On Nationalism” by George Orwell

Test Prep

After the test: College Research Unit

4) What You Will Write

You will be writing (at least) an essay per unit in this class, one that involves your understanding of at least one of the texts we have read over the course of the unit. Here are a few things that we will be focusing on in some way or another over the course of the year:

- The writing process. You will be expected to practice this on your own (as stated previously), but there will be built in time throughout the year on certain major essays for workshopping your writing. If you’ve not encountered that terminology before, that means that you will be receiving teacher feedback as a part of the reworking process. You will submit multiple drafts.

- Reading and incorporating and citing (correctly!) academic sources so that you are prepared for college.
- Understanding how your writing is assessed. We will be using a rubric inspired by the AP Language and Composition rubric for many tasks in the classroom, one that promotes sophisticated, engaged, and original thought rather than mere rote recitation. You will need to start thinking of your writing in the same way.

Additional Pieces of the Course

- You will be tasked with reading a longform nonfiction text of your choosing each trimester. The text you choose must be one that has some sort of sophistication and must be approved by your AP Lang teacher. That doesn't mean that the text needs to be musty or stodgy; far from it. Humor is something that you need to understand as an AP Lang student and reading sophisticated-yet-funny nonfiction will serve you well. You will have associated projects that go along with these nonfiction works. These will be discussed near the beginning of the quarter.
- You will be journaling at the beginning of class most days. This will help you become more at ease with writing and thinking--and combining the two with some degree of facility. You will need to have some sort of notebook or something to handwrite these journals in.
- Vocabulary! You will also be working with vocabulary extensively throughout the year, and you will need some sort of notebook (be it large or small) separate from your other class notes to keep track of your new vocabulary. We will discuss this more near the beginning of the year.

Wait. What about the test?

You may have forgotten about the AP exam in May (for just a moment as you were carefully reading this syllabus), but we certainly haven't. Here's the setup: You will have one hour to read approximately 5 passages and answer 45 multiple choice questions. You will then have 2 hours and fifteen minutes to read several passages and write three essays (one synthesis, one rhetorical analysis, and one argument). But don't worry; this class will prepare you for that.

You should expect at least three timed writes a trimester. This means you, a previous AP Lang Free Response prompt, some sheets of paper, a blue/black pen, and a debilitating load of anxiety will have 40 minutes to write an essay. With your powers combined (and lots of practice), you will be able to do so--hopefully with less anxiety. On the weeks that we aren't practicing by writing timed writes, you will be practicing assessing them: yours, your classmates', unknowing students' who had their essays snatched as samples in prior years (directly from the College Board!).

We will also have multiple choice practice tests, though not as often. You may at some point even craft your own multiple-choice questions for your peers in order to stymie and strengthen them.

But, the best practice for all components of the test is to read. Read widely and discerningly.

Late work policy

Given the nature of the class, things are due when they are due. You will not have hundreds of small assignments to bury your grade under; instead, your grade will focus more closely on the things we truly care about (for the most part)--your ability to convey your understanding of texts and ideas through mature, thoughtful prose. You are expected to have readings read (and thought about, etc.) by the time you walk into class. Your learning is truly yours--failure to do things as they are assigned so will hamper your ability to do well in the class and on the exam. This class should serve as a wake up for college--only you are responsible for your grade and--more importantly--for your learning. As always with life, though, if extenuating circumstances spring up, please talk to us. As far as you know, we are human beings with human feelings and will be able to work around actual catastrophes. (Extensions and so forth are at the discretion of the teacher. No exceptions.) Also, I do not accept ANY late work during the last two weeks of the trimester.

Grading:

Assessments (50%)

Unit essays, major pieces of writing, large projects

Timed Writes (20%)

Formative pieces of writing practice for the exam.

Assignments (10%)

Notes, annotations, any formative collected work

Discussions (10%)

Structured Socratic seminars

Participation (10%)

This will be a self-grade based on one-on-one conferences and feedback from your teacher.

Regarding Academic Honesty:

I follow the Hazen Handbook school-wide policy regarding plagiarism.

- For a first instance, the student will receive a reduced grade (with no opportunity to make it up), a phone call home, and a discipline referral.
- For a second instance, the student will receive an automatic F for the trimester.

Please note that this is a school-wide policy and will be enforced even if each instance of plagiarism occurs in different classes in different trimesters.