

2010-11

# AP Language

*"He wanted paper and something to write with, some way to sustain a thought, to place it in the world." --Don DeLillo*

Mr. Pogreba

Room 14



## general expectations

AP Language is a course open to juniors for English III credit and to seniors for elective credit. Beginning this year, it will receive credit for English and will prepare students for the AP Language and Composition exam, which offers college credit for passing students.

This is my second year teaching the course as a regular every day class, but I have taught the class for two years as an elective, no-credit night course.

The course will be focused on the study of argumentation, rhetoric, and analysis. We'll spend a great deal of our time analyzing and evaluating interesting non-fiction, though the course will also cover the occasional fiction piece. We will also study the key points of American literature.

This will be a very different experience from your normal English class.



**"What can you do against the lunatic who is more intelligent than yourself, who gives your arguments a fair hearing and then simply persists in his lunacy?"**

**--George Orwell**

## As a College Level Course

Courses taken in preparation for the AP examination are intended to be taught as if they were replacements for college level course. To that end, this course will be quite challenging, requiring strict adherence to deadlines, intellectual engagement, and rigorous preparation. I expect to be able to treat you as the kind of student who is

ready and willing to embrace a challenging course. In return, you will have more freedom to explore your own ideas and interests than in a traditional class.

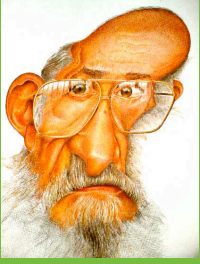
## Effort is Essential

Our focus this year will be on well-written pieces that reflect revision and care. The good news is that much of our reading will be shorter pieces, most of the writing will be focused pieces of no more than 2 pages, and assignments will have long deadlines and time to complete the work.

In return, I expect you to spend ample time thinking about and engaging with the texts and writing assignments. I promise never to waste your time with busy work designed to fill time; in return, I hope that you can promise to do your best with each assignment.

Ultimately, my expectations are straightforward: each student should make his or her best effort to grow in the class as both a writer and thinker. My greatest frustration as a teacher is when students impose limits on themselves, either because of fear or an unwillingness to take a risk.

## PHILOSOPHY OF EDUCATION



Education must be about the free flow of ideas in a community of learners and teachers. I find a system of rigid hierarchy, with students as the passive recipients of knowledge, to be an ineffective, if not

counter-productive, technique of instruction. As Yeats wrote, "Education is not the filling of a pail, but the lighting of a fire." Yeats, like Paulo Freire, inspires my core philosophical belief about education, that simply providing knowledge without the tools to critically examine one's self and one's world does not fully develop the capacity of students to achieve all they are capable of. My ultimate goal for my students is a simple one. I hope that they will have the confidence, analytical tools, and awareness to become active participants in our society, and fully aware individuals, confident in their own identities.

As a teacher, I believe that my role is to facilitate student exploration of ideas without imposing my own opinions and values. Each student (and teacher) brings unique insight to literature, life, and the issues discussed in class, and a teacher who fails to allow the consideration of all ideas is not truly helping students develop into more critical thinkers; she is teaching them to accept, to acquiesce—and our society cannot afford to transform minds that are naturally inquisitive and critical into those that are staid and unmoving, or worse, easily swayed. Only open dialogue, in an environment that is safe for intellectual exploration, forces students to fully consider their values, their knowledge, and their place in the world. My role as a teacher is to create that atmosphere of respect and safety, develop a culture of discussion, and provide material that will lead to challenging and interesting discussion among the students. A classroom should be a place of laughter, occasional flashes of insight, and shared experience: a community of learners.

## writing assignments

There will be a regular writing assignment every week in class. It will always be posted one week in advance of the due date and can be completed and submitted at any time. Other than the occasional "one shot" essay, you will be able to revise each essay three times--as long as each revision reflects the changes I suggest from the preceding draft and real progress is being made.



I will also make extra essays available for students who want to improve their skills. I will grade these as a normal essay, though they will have no impact on your grade.

## essay submission

Each first draft of essays will be due on a Friday. If you prefer, [you can submit the paper to me electronically using Google Docs before 1:00 p.m. on Sunday.](#) Please do not abuse this privilege. I am unimpressed with excuses about technological failures and e-mail outages.

## blogging

The AP Language course is centered around the development of three skills: synthesis of information to make an argument, evaluation of argument, and the construction of compelling arguments. Blogging will provide you an interesting outlet for an informal application of all three skills.

Students will use blogs for makeup work and for the occasional writing assignment. More details will emerge as the year goes on.



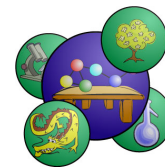
Anything can be the subject of a good blog entry, as long as the writer treats her piece as an important idea, so write about whatever you find interesting--sports, music, phrenology. Just make your writing matter.

## web publishing

The blogging component will obviously be published online. Students will not be identified by their last names on the site, and I will limit individually identifiable information. I will send a parent permission slip home before the end of the second full week of school explaining the use of the site and your right to opt-out.

## projects

During the course of the year, we will engage in a few long-term projects to demonstrate mastery of argumentation concepts and thematic elements we are discussing. The projects will be announced well in advance of their due date, and while I strongly prefer that these be cooperative, the possibility for individual work will exist on at least some of the assignments.



## vocabulary

We will have a vocabulary quiz each week for the first three quarters of the course. The content of the vocabulary will be varied and include a review of Latin and Greek roots, ACT/SAT words, and rhetorical and literary terms.

## participation

AP Language is a class built around the study of argumentation and ideas. I expect every student to participate meaningfully and productively in class. Excellent participation will not only improve your grade in the course, but develop your skills. Participation is 10% of the grade for each quarter.

# Thematic Units of Study

*Almost every unit we study this year will be a 2-4 week look at a related set of topics, arguments, and ideas. While I have chosen some of the units, the class will also be able to create its own units of study as well.*

## Classical Persuasion



The foundation of the course will be a study of classical rhetoric and argumentation. We'll explore logos, pathos, ethos, tone, and the ten most important rhetorical terms a person should know.

## Propaganda



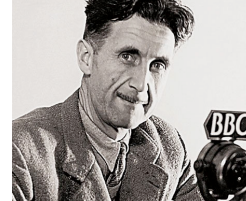
This unit will focus on the study of historical and contemporary propaganda techniques, and the work of Hermann and Chomsky, Ellul, and Postman. A culminating project will require the students to develop a propaganda/political campaign.

## Politics and Protest



When political persuasion fails or is not heeded, rhetors often turn to protest. This thematic unit will explore the power dynamics in communication, the role of protest in society, and its efficacy. We'll read works by Martin Luther King, Jr., Eugene Debs, and Jeanette Rankin, among others.

## Satire



As powerful as direct efforts to persuade and even propaganda can be, satire is often an even stronger weapon for change. We'll study the classical roots of satire and great writers like Orwell, Swift, and more.

## The Educated Person



This unit will focus on what it means to be educated, equality in education, and the role of schools in society. We'll center our discussion on the works of Freire and Kozol, with other points of view to challenge and accompany their thinking. A culminating project will require students to develop and present an education improvement project.

## Exceptionalities



Why are some people so far from the norm and how should society deal with those who have exceptional needs and abilities? Is it a matter of genetics and effort or just simply luck? We'll center our discussion on *Outliers* by Malcolm Gladwell.

## American Literature



We will study the giants of American literature, focusing on one novel each quarter as well as a collection of shorter works. Tentatively, we will read *The Great Gatsby*, *The Grapes of Wrath*, *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* and *Catcher in the Rye*.

## Logic and Toulmin



This unit will explore the use, misuse, and outright abuse of logic in persuasion. How do rhetors intentionally (and unintentionally) twist logic in support of their claims?

Additionally, we'll look at the foundation of modern argument, the work of Stephen Toulmin and his inscrutable model.

## The Environment



This unit will focus on human interaction with the natural world, as well as our rights and responsibilities to the environment. We'll debate climate change, take a nature walk and more.

## Student Selected



The students in class will select other thematic units based on their interests. The units can cover any area that contains excellent writing, from sports to the arts, the sciences to music.

# Materials and Grading

*While much of the reading will be short pieces of fiction and expository writing, these titles will be read, either in their entirety or in significant excerpts.*

- *Current Issues and Enduring Questions*
- *The Shame of the Nation* by Jonathan Kozol
- *Outliers* by Malcolm Gladwell
- *Pedagogy of Freedom* by Paulo Freire
- *Elements of Style*
- *The Adventures of Huck Finn* by Mark Twain
- *The Grapes of Wrath* by John Steinbeck
- *The Great Gatsby* by F. Scott Fitzgerald

## Grade Scale

90-100: A

80-89: B

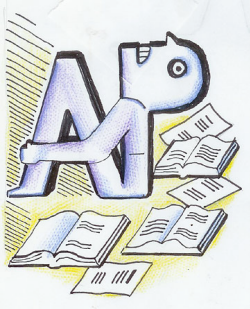
70-79: C

60-69: D

59 or Below: A great deal of sorrow

*Assignments that are late will receive an automatic 10% grade reduction. After one more class day has elapsed, you will not be able to get credit for the assignment. Please adhere to this rule closely.*

## The AP Examination



The AP exam will take place on Wednesday, May 11 at 8:00 a.m. All students are encouraged to take the exam, which will cost \$87. Assistance is available for students who cannot afford the cost of the test.

Review sessions will be available for in and out of class, and on the class web site.

## Other Resources

All of the material for the course will be provided for students, but if you are interested in additional writing resources for expository writing, I would recommend the following titles:

- Diana Hacker, [A Writer's Reference](#)
- Donald Murray, [The Craft of Revision](#)
- Gerald Graff and Cathy Birkenstein, [They Say, I Say](#)
- Andrea Lunsford and John Ruskiewicz, [Everything's An Argument](#)

*Any edition of these texts would be great, and all are available reasonably priced online in used copies.*

## Contact Mr. Pogreba

### Class Phone

406.324.2262

### Home Phone

406.461.8651 (emergencies please)

### Class Web Site

<http://www.pogreba.com>

### E-mail

[dpogreba@gmail.com](mailto:dpogreba@gmail.com)

### Class Twitter

mrpogreba

### Google Talk/Google Docs

[dpogreba@gmail.com](mailto:dpogreba@gmail.com)



# Writing and Revising: The Game Plan

*“A perfectly healthy sentence, it is true, is extremely rare. For the most part we miss the hue and fragrance of the thought; as if we could be satisfied with the dew of the morning or evening without their colors, or the heavens without their azure.”*

— Henry David Thoreau

## Essays

It's only through writing, reflection and revision that writers are made. As a result, we will write a great deal this year, but you will have some degree of control over how much writing you end up completing in the course.

Every other week, there will be a formal essay assignment. It will be due (in printed form) on Friday in class or before Sunday at 1:00 p.m. if you submit using Google Docs. [These are unshakeable deadlines and forms of submission.](#)

The essays will gradually increase in point value as your skill improves.

During the fourth quarter, we will engage in intensive writing preparation for the AP exam. More details to come.

## Revision

Revisions are at the discretion of the individual student. Once you receive a draft back, you have 2 class days to submit a revision for a higher grade and more comments. Revisions must:

- be submitted in print, attached to all previous drafts of the essay.
- be returned within 2 class days of the return of the previous draft.
- reflect serious, thoughtful revision.

I reserve the right not to accept revisions that do not meet these requirements. Please make sure that revisions are worth both your time and mine. :)

## Essay Formatting

Please follow these guidelines when you submit essays:

- 10 point font
- 1"
- double-spaced

## Blogging

During weeks without new essays, you will be submitting brief blogs. These assignments will be assigned at the start of each week.

## Google Docs

My account name is [dpogreba@gmail.com](mailto:dpogreba@gmail.com) and I will show you how to use Google Docs if you need it.