

Kevin McDonald
Advanced Placement (AP)
English Language and Composition
English III

COURSE OVERVIEW

This course is designed to prepare students to communicate effectively in our modern society. Through close textual study of both fiction and non-fiction, students develop a clear focus on an author's considerations regarding audience and purpose, then learn how to apply that same focus in a variety of writing modes – specifically those outlined in both the most current edition of the *AP English Course Description*, as well as those mandated by our state's "Priority Academic Student Skills" requirements.

This course focuses on the skills necessary "to read primary and secondary sources carefully, to synthesize materials from [such texts] in their own compositions, and to cite sources using conventions recommended by...the Modern Language Association (MLA)" (*AP English Course Description* 6). A chronological study of American Literature is the vehicle for the acquisition of these skills. Three factors drive this decision: 1) A strong, pre-established district curriculum for the junior year focused on American Literature; 2) David Joliffe's *AP Central* article, "Blending AP English and American Literature;" 3) the cross-curricular opportunities provided with AP US History offered the same academic year. In addition, a chronological study allows students to study both written and spoken persuasion from a similar time period side-by-side, while also allowing students to see the evolution of language, and specifically rhetoric, within one culture as authors learn from their predecessors, modifying their writing as necessary. With these analytical insights, students should incorporate observed skills into their own compositions, creating works that will effectively communicate "with mature readers" (6).

GRADING

Students' grades for their transcript are placed on an 100-point percentage scale, with traditional 10-point grade ranges for "A" through "D." The student's grade in the course will be based on a total point system. For these purposes, daily grades, assignments designed to learn and practice skills, and assignments requiring less effort will receive fewer points than major papers, tests, and long-term assignments. This is the general philosophy driving the class; however, two exceptions must be noted per district and grade-level policy. Semester exams are worth 20% of the total grade, and during the second semester, the final draft of the research paper will be worth 10% of the total grade, leading to semester breakdowns that look like this:

First Semester:
80% - Total points
20% - Semester Final

Second Semester:

70% - Total points

20% - Semester Final

10% - Research Paper Final Draft

One final comment about the grading scale: please remember the adjectives used to describe each letter grade. An “A” means excellent, a “B” means good/above average, a “C” is average, a “D” is below average, and an “F” is failing/unsatisfactory. In my experience, students who put forth their best effort on every assignment have little trouble earning an “A” or “B” in this class. However, that means your best effort every single time – students cannot afford to “take a week off,” even when busy with extra-curricular activities. And please note my word choice – “best effort.” Simply completing an assignment is expected – going through the motions is average at best, and no more.

MONTHLY COURSE PLANNER

Summer Assignment:

**The Crucible* – Arthur Miller

Assessment: Students are asked to keep a dialectical journal while reading this play, recording selections of text that they find important (including Act and page number reference) followed by their commentary on why the recorded passage has relevance to their analysis. Students must also research four articles that either: a) examine the connection between *The Crucible* and Miller’s involvement with McCarthyism and the Red Scare following WWII, or b) document the factual changes made by Miller from the historical records of the Salem Witchcraft Trials, including explanations as to Miller’s purpose in making such changes. After finding these documents, students must produce an annotated bibliography using the MLA citation format for each article, followed by summary and analysis of the documents they have discovered. The projects are evaluated while the course begins its chronological progression through American Literature; students will use them for developed writing assignments once we reach the appropriate historical point.

Yearlong Assignments:

*Vocabulary Study: Weekly vocabulary lists and quizzes taken from a variety of sources, including novels, literary and rhetorical terms, SAT/ACT test prep. resources.

*Journaling: Students will regularly do impromptu journaling related to topics addressed in readings and current events.

*”Life Days”’: These are discussion days based on current events important for student knowledge. These are sometimes planned in relationship to readings, and sometimes happen due to interesting news stories. Always, these involve using our access to SmartBoard technology, the internet, and access to video and visual imagery as persuasion.

End of August through September:

- *excerpts from *The General History of Virginia* – John Smith
- *from *Of Plymouth Plantation* – William Bradford
- *excerpts from The Trial of Anne Hutchinson
- *“Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God” – Jonathan Edwards

Discussion: These texts, along with historical introductions, provide a foundation for English writing in America. Each of the above four texts allows for close textual analysis, focusing specifically on each author’s purpose and the devices used to achieve that purpose. This also provides a study of colonial language through primary documents prior to revisiting Miller’s *The Crucible* so that students can compare actual language patterns of the 1600s with that created by Miller to represent 17th Century English.

- **The Crucible* – Arthur Miller
- *“Why I Wrote *The Crucible*” – Arthur Miller
- **The Crucible* – 1996 Movie Version starring Daniel Day-Lewis (Act III only)
- *Student-researched articles
- *Maps from *Salem Possessed* – Boyer/Nissenbaum

Discussion: The play is now discussed in light of the historical/religious documents that start the school year. As well, students are asked to engage a visual representation of the text, evaluating the similarities and differences between screenplay and play, both from the same author. Students will evaluate the impact of such decisions by the author and director through journal entries and class discussion. Students will also share their research, comparing information and discussing its impact on the text, allowing them to consider Miller’s purpose before reading his essay on the subject.

Assessment: Multiple options are available. A prompt over an excerpted passage of Miller’s prose sections within the play’s text could ask students for close passage analysis. Students are asked to consider Reverend Hale’s assertion from Act 4 in light of the text, their own experience, and/or personal observation. As well, students are asked to create a thesis as to Miller’s rhetorical purpose, synthesizing the play, their researched articles, and maps of Salem during the witchcraft trials as evidence to support their position.

- **AP Lang Exam Introduction* – Released Multiple Choice and Essay Samples
- **Everyday Use: Rhetoric at work in Reading and Writing* – Roskelly/Jolliffe
- **Everything’s an Argument* – Lunsford/Ruszkiewicz

Discussion and Assessment: Most students in this course had AP European History their sophomore year, so they are familiar with the basics of AP Testing. This is a good opportunity to expose students to the specifics of the AP Lang Exam, as well as provide them with the opportunity to bench mark themselves. Most multiple-choice passages are used as teaching tools involving extended discussion – only two of five passages will be recorded in the grade book. The introduction of sample essay prompts demonstrates to students that they have already engaged the modes of writing requested by the AP Lang Exam. The students will

respond to three prompts (two at home; one timed, in-class), which will be returned having been scored using released rubrics, but not entered into the grade book. They will have the opportunity to review student samples and learn about the characteristics of an AP Lang Rubric, then revise one of the three essays and submit it for an official grade. To facilitate explanations and vocabulary development, *Everyday Use* is used to introduce Aristotle's theory on rhetoric, including introducing the words ethos, pathos, and logos, connecting them to discussions of appeals held with the first four texts of the term. *Everything's an Argument* is used to introduce Toulmin's model of argumentation as well. Both texts' glossaries help with vocabulary study.

- *from *The Autobiography* – Benjamin Franklin
- *from *Poor Richard's Almanack* – Benjamin Franklin
- *"Defense of Freedom of the Press" – Andrew Hamilton
- *Speech in the Virginia Convention – Patrick Henry
- *from *The Autobiography: The Declaration of Independence* – Thomas Jefferson
- *Defense of Alien/Sedition Acts – Timothy Pickering
- *Reaction against Alien/Sedition Acts – Virginia/Kentucky Resolutions
- *First Inaugural Address – Thomas Jefferson
- *from *Democracy in America* – Alexis De Tocqueville

Discussion: This extended section of non-fiction allows for close text reading in numerous modes for varying purposes. The students' recent exposure to the exam also allows for discussing various modes of writing both for study and for modeling. For example, the Patrick Henry will become a model of strong argumentation after our analytical discussion. As well, the selection from Jefferson's *Autobiography* contains his original draft of *The Declaration of Independence*, as well as a comparison to the document as we know it. This allows for extended discussions about the need for control and revision, even for one of our country's greatest rhetoricians.

Assessment: Any of these texts can be the basis of a close reading, analysis prompt. Regardless, the two documents about the Alien/Sedition Acts (gained through collaboration with the AP US History teacher) will be the basis of a compare/contrast essay where students will be responsible for a full rhetorical analysis of each piece, including their view as to which of the two documents is more effective.

October:

- *"Thanatopsis" – William Cullen Bryant
- *"The Fall of the House of Usher" – Edgar Allen Poe
- *"Rip Van Winkle" – Washington Irving
- *"Rappaccini's Daughter" – Nathaniel Hawthorne
- *excerpts from *Moby-Dick* – Herman Melville

Discussion: These works, along with historical background, convey a major shift in American culture and its corresponding representation in literature. As well, they are an opportunity to introduce fiction as persuasive, particularly "Thanatopsis," "Rappaccini's Daughter," and the

four chapters from *Moby-Dick*. With *Moby-Dick*, students are divided into groups where they not only have to analyze the persuasion used by the characters/narrator of their excerpt, but they must engage in a debate with me as to the quality of the writing versus the enjoyment of the reader. The class then evaluates who makes a better argument based off the textual evidence presented. This requires students to apply what we have learned through our reading and writing in spoken setting.

*Poetry Unit

works by William Cullen Bryant, Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, John Greenleaf Whittier, Oliver Wendell Holmes, and James Russell Lowell

Discussion and Assessment: Students choose groups and are then assigned a poet. After a general introduction to poetry as rhetoric (review “Thanatopsis;” read and discuss “Old Ironsides”), students must research poems by their poet, along with biographical information. After analyzing and submitting a minimum of five poems for approval, the group must pick three that display both the conventions of romanticism as well as have a clear persuasive purpose. These three texts, along with a biography and MLA formatted source information for poems and biography, are presented to the class. Students have one class period to teach their information, and must provide copies of their presented poems (with citations) to the class, as well as visuals to accompany their presentation (most choose a Power Point show). Students’ ability to analyze texts and coherently convey that information to their peers is part of their assessment.

November:

*from *Nature* – Ralph Waldo Emerson

*from *Self-Reliance* – Ralph Waldo Emerson

*from *Walden* – Henry David Thoreau

*“On the Duty of Civil Disobedience” – Henry David Thoreau

Discussion and Assessment: Arguably America’s two greatest philosophers, any and all writing done by these two authors is essential for the purposes of this class. Not only do we see an evolution in from cultural Romanticism to philosophical Transcendentalism, but we see the establishment of Thoreau’s “Civil Disobedience” as a text that will govern American behavior during conflict during the Civil Rights Movement. At this point, if it seems appropriate for a given group of students, we may also read and evaluate Martin Luther King, Jr.’s “Letter from a Birmingham Jail.” Other years, we will wait and keep this within the chronology. This collection of writings also inspires many interesting discussions with students, allowing for numerous aphorisms from either author to form the foundation for student argumentation, as they agree with, disagree with, or qualify given statements. This provides many wonderful opportunities for student choice as well as multi-draft papers. In addition, *Everyday Use* can return here with its work with “Civil Disobedience,” although much of this section of class will come from *The Language of Composition*.

*Progressives Unit

works by William Lloyd Garrison, Fredrick Douglass, Harriet Beecher Stowe, Abraham Lincoln, Elizabeth Cady Stanton, and others

Discussion and Assessment: Numerous works discussing the social changes occurring prior to the Civil War are inserted here. This is a rather amorphous section, often based on timing and the need to “catch up” with the calendar. However, discussions of the abolitionist movement started with the “Poetry Unit” and continued with the Transcendentalists can be expanded into multiple voices, but specifically to Fredrick Douglass and the 1997 prompt taken from his 1845 autobiography. This is also an excellent place to review historical writing and compare the writings of women from the 1700s to the 1800s. Again, numerous options exist based on time, and in some cases, the ability to collaborate with AP US History, who have numerous non-fiction documents from this period. Because so much student writing from the Transcendentalists is argumentative, student work in this section is typically analytical, including initial forays into satire.

December:

**The Scarlet Letter* – Nathaniel Hawthorne

Discussion: This novel is effective for many reasons. First, its language requires students to work with and apply their knowledge of effective subordination if they are to be successful in reading the text. To facilitate this, students have extensive review questions to answer while reading the text outside of class. In many ways, these questions look like AP Multiple-choice question stems, but students do not have multiple answers to choose from – they must discover the answer from within the text. They are expected to record the answer and page number on which they find an answer. This also leads to close text reading of a full novel. Next, Hawthorne’s purpose for the text can receive extended treatment due to many varying critical essays addressing the issue. These can be provided for students, or research, too, is a viable option. To address more specific issues of argumentation, we will return to the many speeches made by characters, discussing issues of audience, purpose, motivation, etc., to determine why or why not given characters are successful at different times. These speeches get lost in the whole of the novel, but provide many opportunities to use close text reading to illuminate larger themes within the work now that the novel is completed.

Assessment: Along with the review questions discussed, students will see full multiple-choice questions modeled after the AP Exam return at this point of the course. These will be used for lesser “daily grades,” but will also comprise a portion of their semester test, which normally happens at the very end of this month, or the very beginning of January. Students will write an extended documented essay over this novel, considering such potential topics as “Which of our three main characters commits the worst sin?” “Which of our main characters has a chance at redemption?” These topics have been discussed in class, and multiple options for a thesis and evidence have been shared. There is not a correct answer for any of these questions, requiring students to use their skills of argumentation to support their claim about the text.

Semester Test: We will have a modified daily schedule during Semester Exams, allowing for a two-hour testing block. If this exam happens in December, students will have multiple-choice passages over *The Scarlet Letter* and then a single timed-writing prompt taken from the novel as well. If this text happens in January, depending on the calendar location of winter break, the exam may then have a mixture of materials from *The Scarlet Letter* and released materials from College Board, or it may contain only College Board materials. This decision will be based on demonstrated student knowledge and relevancy, but regardless of exam content, the students will have four multiple-choice passages to address in the first hour of the exam, and one timed writing in the second. This mirrors, at least to some degree, what the students will face with the AP Exam, and certainly what they might see in a Freshman-level college course.

Semester-long assignment: In addition to the yearlong assignment discussed previously, it is now that students will begin a weekly writing assignment. This will take many forms, from timed-writings (many of which will be released AP Lang prompts), to extended documented essays, to drafts of their research paper, etc. However, students will produce a full-length work each week, using varying assignments and sources for inspiration.

January:

- *Various works – Walt Whitman
- *Various works – Emily Dickinson
- *The Gettysburg Address – Abraham Lincoln
- *The Emancipation Proclamation – Abraham Lincoln
- *Second Inaugural Address – Abraham Lincoln (released AP Prompt)
- *Plan of Reconstruction – Andrew Johnson
- *Atlanta Exposition Address – Booker T. Washington
- *“Talented Tenth” and Niagara Address – W.E.B. Du Bois
- *“An Occurrence at Owl Creek Bridge” – Ambrose Bierce
- *“An Episode of War” – Stephen Crane
- *“The Story of an Hour” – Kate Chopin
- *“In Favor of Imperialism” – Albert Beveridge
- *Defends the Occupation of the Philippines – William McKinley
- *“White Man’s Burden” – Rudyard Kipling
- *“The Imperialist Religion” (satire) – Charles Spahr
- *“The Real White Man’s Burden” (satire) – Ernest Crosby
- *“The Poor Man’s Burden” (satire) – Howard Taylor

Discussion: The obvious historical progression of the above author’s continues our chronological movement through American Literature. Highlighted is the transition from Civil War documents to the realism that develops in fiction after the war, prior to the 20th Century. This is shown through both fiction and non-fiction, moving into popular satire from the late 1880s and the 1890s. This is a demanding analytical section, requiring students to work with multiple styles and modes with the expectation that all techniques discussed during the first semester will have continued application as we deal more and more with satire.

Assessment: Any of these texts provide opportunities to address our weekly writing assignment. These texts will not lead to multiple drafts as we work to hone our timed-writing skills, and because we are beginning our research paper that is a multi-draft text.

***Research Paper**

Although students have had extended practice with MLA citation up to this point, this history-base, persuasive research paper will require their most extensive application of these skills and test their ability to synthesize documents.

Discussion: The base description of this paper clearly addresses the requirements of the AP English Language course. In addition, the topics for writing are previously released AP US History Document-Based-Question Prompts. Students do not receive the documents, and if they have them from their AP US History class, they are not allowed to use them unless they find them in an independent source during their research. Only one student per class period may select a topic, so topic selection is done on a first-come-first-served sign-up, with students picking topics of either personal interest or previous acquaintance.

Assessment: Students will first submit a “Prospectus” – an undocumented paper that presents their working thesis and general knowledge of their chosen topic. This is submitted and returned to students before our first library day, creating a sense of focus and purpose to their early research. We will alternate weeks between the library and computer lab for three weeks, allowing students to research and process documents while also creating teaching opportunities specific to research that have yet to occur in other projects. At the end of the third week, students will submit bibliography cards and photocopied/printed sources for their work so far. Most students understand MLA documentation practices by now, but this provides an opportunity to evaluate documentation of unusual or difficult sources prior to the rough draft, and to make suggestions about thin research that needs addressing. One week after this material is returned, students will submit a full rough draft including all parenthetical citations and a works cited page. Again, because we have documented sources dating back to our summer assignment, this is a formality to catch minor errors. These rough drafts will receive peer and teacher review, then students will have an additional week to take such comments and finalize their paper. Dating back to the Prospectus, students will have a minimum of three drafts of this paper that have been submitted. Most create four to five as they see the benefits of peer revision. Peer building agreement, the final draft of this paper is worth 10% of the student’s second semester grade.

February:

***1900-1950**

works by Paul Lawrence Dunbar, Edwin Arlington Robinson, Edgar Lee Masters, Robert Frost, T.S.Eliot, John Steinbeck, Ernest Hemingway, James Thurber, Margaret Sanger, Langston Hughes, Zora Neale Hurston, Herbert Hoover, Franklin Roosevelt, Huey Long, visual analysis of WWI and WWII propaganda, plus others

Discussion: This unit allows for mixing fiction, non-fiction, and poetry as social criticism becomes more overt in much of this writing. This unit allows for a great deal of flexibility to

account for facility scheduling issues that may affect the research paper deadline, as well as an incredibly busy time on our campus with school activities.

Assessment: Works are chosen from the above authors to become prompts for weekly writings. Modes for these writings will take their inspiration from those suggest in the *AP English Course Description* and our more developed focus on the AP Exam, evaluating Inaugural Address and other non-fiction from the era.

**The Great Gatsby* – F. Scott Fitzgerald

*excerpts from *The Power of Myth* – Joseph Campbell

Discussion: The typical literary discussions about *The Great Gatsby* are held, informed by close text study fueled by another dialectical journal similar to the done with *The Crucible*. In addition, excerpts from collections of letters between Scott and Zelda Fitzgerald and biographical discussions of both allow us to discuss this text as a social commentary and potential satire. We will also read a chapter from Joseph Campbell that discusses love and its various stages, encouraging students to see not only our morals in the text, but see a broader socio-historical context informed by archetypes.

Assessment: Afore mentioned dialectical journals will be joined by smaller in-class discussion journals. Once the Campbell is discussed, students will write a documented essay where they take a stance on some assertion made by Campbell, then establish a dialog between the Campbell text and *The Great Gatsby* to support their position.

March:

*Ongoing until Exam – students will regularly do released multiple-choice packets to hone skills

*Short Story Unit

“In Another Country” – Ernest Hemingway

“A Rose for Emily” – William Faulkner

“The Life You Save May Be Your Own” – Flannery O’Connor

“Hills Like White Elephants” – Ernest Hemingway

Discussion: This unit, typically completed before Spring Break, encourages close text study of works that all contain social commentary, often hinging on ironic and/or satiric shifts. This sort of text provides a nice challenge for students as we use challenging fiction to practice the skills used on the AP Exam.

Assessment: Much of the written work with these passages will involve developing strong thesis statements concerning the purpose of these works, further developing our skills of concise insight. Students share and revise these extensively, working to create artful introductions with meaningful thesis statements that will directly apply to the coming exam. These skills have been discussed throughout the year, but they are a targeted focus right now. In addition, we are doing more and more practice time-writings, sometimes two a week.

**The Things They Carried – Tim O’Brien*

Discussion: This text pairs nicely with the Civil Rights discussion and Vietnam unit occurring concurrently in the AP US History course. O’Brien also challenges the boundary between fiction and non-fiction – a gap that students typically notice shrinks as our readings for the year have gone along. It is also a compelling text, something important for students as their multiple AP classes are all making the big push towards the exam.

Assessment: Students will have two major assignments for this book. The first is a style imitation of O’Brien’s second paragraph, substituting the teenage world for that of the Vietnam soldier. This is often an assessment that, through imitating O’Brien, allows students to discover a personal voice that is simultaneously artistic and persuasive. In addition, students are asked to write a documented essay that discusses the role of women in the novel, asking them to develop a thesis about the role of the female in the largely militaristic world of the novel. This is encouraging students to move beyond the obvious, adequate discussions to something more effective. Again, this has been a theme for our writing throughout the year, but this assignment is designed to push reticent students to take a chance where there is a high chance for success.

**Non-fiction from 1950 to Present*

works by Rosa Parks, Martin Luther King, Jr., Malcolm X, Betty Friedan, Gloria Steinem (including a number of satires), Phyllis Schlafly (directly opposed to Steinem), Supreme Court legal rulings, John F. Kennedy, Stokely Carmichael, Jimmy Carter, Ronald Reagan, and other current readings

Discussion and Assessment: This unit bridges March into April, and works heavily to keep students grounded in non-fiction during our last novel study. These can be the focus of some timed-writings, intentionally mixed with passages from the 18th and 19th Centuries to keep our familiarity with the syntax of these periods because of our recent work with 20th Century writing that students often find more accessible.

April:

**Invisible Man – Ralph Ellison*

Discussion: Students have created the skills during the year to negotiate successfully this challenging text. Working with Ellison’s rich, dense text prepares students for the rich, contemporary non-fiction they will find on the AP Exam. This work also expects a maturity of its reader that requires a measured reaction, understanding that shocking material is best dealt with coolly and with patience. If students can apply the same reasoning to exam materials, they should find success when writing their timed essays over topics that could allow for student over-reaction. This is our culminating text, as it demands the most maturity from students in both their reading and their subsequent writing.

Assessment: After an introduction to the text, students read the novel, tracing two symbolic elements as Ellison develops them throughout the work. Students will submit two, two-to-three

page papers on the day we begin in-class discussion. To accompany this, students will answer several passages worth of multiple-choice questions over this text, again helping us prepare for the AP Exam. Essay prompts similar to those from the Exam will be required writing as well. Our discussion and work on this text will take most of April. When we finish, we will revert to our released AP Exam materials to finish our test preparation.

May:

**To Kill a Mockingbird* – Harper Lee

Discussion: After the AP Exam, we will work with this novel, bridging the gap between this junior level AP class and their senior level AP Literature class. Once again, working with the *AP English Course Description* and my senior English teachers, we will study this text and discuss how students can use the rhetorical analysis skills they have developed in this class, as well as the literary tools they have developed to this point and through this class, to successful transition to the AP Literature class.

Assessment: Resources modeled after the AP Literature exam begins a student's introduction to the conjoined worlds of AP English Language and AP English Literature.

TEXTS USED IN AND INFORMING THE COURSE

Aaron, Jane E., Dorothy M. Kennedy, and X. J. Kennedy. The Bedford Reader. New York: Bedford/St. Martin's, 2006.

Arp, Thomas R., ed. Perrine's Literature: Structure, Sound, and Sense. Fort Worth: Harcourt Brace, 1998.

Aufses, Robin Dissin, Lawrence Scanlon, and Renée H. Shea. The Language of Composition. New York: Bedford/St. Martin's, 2007.

Cohen, Samuel, ed. 50 Essays: A Portable Anthology. New York: Bedford/St. Martin's, 2004.

Jolliffe, David A. and Hephzibah Roskelly. Everyday Use: Rhetoric at Work in Reading and Writing. New York: Pearson Longman, 2005.

Literature: Timeless Voices, Timeless Themes – The American Experience. Upper Saddle River, New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 2002.

Lunsford, Andrea A. and John J. Ruskiewicz. Everything's an Argument. New York: Bedford/St. Martin's, 2004.