

**AP English Language & Composition**  
Course Syllabus

**Mr. McCowin**

**COURSE DESCRIPTION**

This course engages students in study and analysis of all types of literature, but primarily nonfiction. Through close reading, students will come to understand the ways authors use language for a variety of effects. The course also challenges students to practice the techniques used by the excellent writers they study. Finally, two significant portions of the course will focus on argument and research writing, as these constitute the bulk of the AP Language exam. The second semester will also include some oral debate and the opportunity to earn 3 credits through the University of Pittsburgh. (See attached information on Pitt's College in High School Program.)

**SUMMER READING TEXTS**

*The Norton Sampler*

*On Writing Well*, William Zinsser

A nonfiction book of the student's choice (must be approved by teacher)

**TEXTS**

*The Prentice Hall Reader*, 7<sup>th</sup> edition. George Miller. Prentice Hall, 2004.

*In Cold Blood*, Truman Capote

*1984*, George Orwell

Supplements from *Everything's an Argument* (Bedford) and *They Say, I Say* (Norton)

**TYPES OF WRITING ASSIGNMENTS**

Journal Writing	Students will write journal entries to respond to reading, to reflect on writing, and to explore ideas for larger writing assignments.
Micro Essays	These are something between journal entries and the writings described below. Micro essays are no more than a page and let students try various writing techniques (e.g. description, using examples, repetition) in a shorter, less formal format than a typical essay assignment.
Appreciation Papers	These allow students to find quality writing that appeals to them and write a style analysis similar to those required on the AP Exam. These essays will be scored using the 9-point AP rubric and will be worth 50 points each. Students will write two Appreciation Papers each quarter, one due at mid-quarter and the second at the end of the quarter.  1 <sup>st</sup> 9 weeks: 1) Focus on syntax 2) Focus on tone 2 <sup>nd</sup> 9 weeks: 1) Focus on diction 2) Choose a piece of satire 3 <sup>rd</sup> 9 weeks: 1) Focus on rhetorical modes 2) Choose a persuasive piece

Draft Essays	<p>Students will work through several drafts of these essays, which will include personal narrative, expository, and researched argumentative writing. In order to encourage creativity and risk-taking, first drafts will NOT be scored. Students will revise their essays after self evaluations, peer evaluations, and teacher evaluations. These evaluations will focus on the following writing skills:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Using a wide-ranging vocabulary effectively and accurately</li><li>2. Using varying sentence structures, including coordination and subordination</li><li>3. Using logical organization and techniques such as repetition, transitions, and emphasis</li><li>4. Using an effective balance of generalization and specific detail</li></ol>
AP Practice Essays	<p>Students will regularly practice 40-minute essays. Some prompts will come from previous AP Exams, while others will be modeled after the AP Exam. These essays will be scored using the 9-point AP rubric and typically will be worth 25-50 points.</p>

## OVERVIEW OF MAJOR UNITS

### Rhetorical Modes

#### Examples

- SOAPS – Analyzing subject, occasion, audience, purpose, speaker
- Close reading & marking a text
- Study of Syntax: “The Things They Carried” – Tim O’Brien
- “The Name is Mine” – Anna Quindlen
- “Cut” – Bob Greene
- “Westbury Court” – Edwidge Danticat
- Micro Essay: Using examples and writing with coordination and subordination

#### Narration

- Study of Tone – Words used to describe tone & Name That Tone
- “Salvation” – Langston Hughes
- “Sister Monroe” – Maya Angelou
- “The Biggest Play of His Life” – Rick Reilly
- Classic Essay: “Shooting an Elephant” – George Orwell

#### Description

- Study of Diction
- Plagiarism
- “Po-Po”, Eric Liu
- Classic Essays: “Once More to the Lake” – E.B. White  
“The Death of the Moth” – Virginia Woolf
- Draft Essay #1: Personal narrative using some description
  - ✓ Writing Skill Focus: Balancing generalization and specific detail

#### Division and Classification

- “What’s in Your Toothpaste?” – David Bodanis
- “In Defense of Talk Shows” – Barbara Ehrenreich
- “English 99: Literacy Among the Ruins” – Frank Gannon

### Comparison and Contrast

- “Academic Selves” – Mary Pipher
- “The Color of Love” – Danzy Senna
- “Virtual Love” – Meghan Daum
- Draft Essay #2: Exposition of Consumer Life or Pop Culture
  - ✓ Writing Skill Focus: Logical organization and coherence

### Process Analysis

- “My Daily Dives in the Dumpster” – Lars Eighner
- “The Culture of Martyrdom” – David Brooks

### Definition

- “Adults Only” – Bob Greene
- “I Want a Wife” – Judy Brady

### Cause and Effect

- “Black Men and Public Space” – Brent Staples
- “Dreadlocked” – Veronica Chambers
- Classic Essay: “A Modest Proposal” – Jonathan Swift
- Draft Essay #3: Social Commentary
  - ✓ Writing Skill Focus: Wide-ranging vocabulary

### Persuasion/Argument

- Ethos, pathos, logos
- Logical Fallacies
- Induction and deduction
- The Toulmin Model of Argument Analysis – grounds, warrant, claim
- “The Marrying Kind” – Jonathan Rauch
- “The Case Against College” – Linda Lee
- “What Do Murderers Deserve?” – David Gelernter
- “The Singer Solution to World Poverty”, Peter Singer
- Classic Essays: “The Allegory of the Cave” – Plato  
“I Have a Dream” – Martin Luther King, Jr.  
“Letter from Birmingham Jail” – Martin Luther King, Jr.

## Research Writing

Through instruction, practice, and two major writing assignments, students will learn to:

1. evaluate, use, and cite primary and secondary sources
2. effectively integrate direct, indirect, whole, and partial quotations
3. present an argument that analyzes and synthesizes several sources
4. use MLA documentation
5. analyze how graphics and visual images (e.g. editorial cartoons, charts, graphs, advertisement posters) relate to text and serve as texts themselves

**Synthesis Essays** Students will write at least one synthesis essay in response to an AP Exam prompt. These essays will be scored using the 9-point AP rubric and will be worth 50 points each.

**Research Paper** Students will write one researched argument paper of at least five pages, which will be the fourth “draft essay” of the course. This will include MLA Documentation with parenthetical citations and a list of works cited.

**1984 – George Orwell**

- Students will study doublespeak, political language, symbolism, and creation of mood through details, diction, and imagery.
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**In Cold Blood – Truman Capote**

- Students will analyze syntax, diction, tone, selection of detail and more aspects of Capote's style.

**Vocabulary**

Students will develop a broader vocabulary through several methods, including:

1. Rhetorical Terms

1<sup>st</sup> 9 weeks: Applied Practice Triple Play Terms Set 1

2<sup>nd</sup> 9 weeks: Applied Practice Triple Play Terms Set 2

- 3 tests on each set:
- 1) matching terms and definitions
  - 2) identifying examples in a text
  - 3) creating examples in an original writing

2. Vocabulary Quizzes

These will be given regularly as part of the reading quizzes from *The Prentice Hall Reader*. These quizzes encourage students to look up definitions of unfamiliar words in the essays they read.

3. Tone Words

Students will study and apply an extensive list of words to describe tone. Tone will be a regular topic of discussion with essays practice AP tests.

**AP Practice Tests**

Students will regularly practice 40-minute essays (usually analytical or persuasive) and multiple choice questions, some taken from past AP exams and others that are modeled after the AP exam.

**FORMS OF ASSESSMENT**

**Tests/Quizzes:** These will include regular reading/vocabulary quizzes, rhetorical terms tests, practice AP tests, etc.

**Essays:** Some will be in-class timed essays, others out-of-class with several drafts.

**Journals:** These will be used for reflection, responsive writing, questioning of text, imitation of a writer's style, etc.

**Participation:** One of the most important ways you will learn in this course is through discussion of readings, writings, etc. Therefore, contributing to these discussions is extremely important. Roughly 10% of your grade each quarter will be participation. Contributing to discussions and to our learning experience will earn you a good participation grade. Not contributing and/or having a negative impact on the learning experience (such as have a negative attitude, being disrespectful to others in class, etc.) will result in a poor participation grade.

**AP EXAM:** **The School district will pay for the AP Exam for anyone who wants to take it.**

## Argument 0500: University of Pittsburgh's College in High School

Basically, this is a course within a course. As a student in AP English 12, you have the opportunity to earn 3 credits through the University of Pittsburgh. You can transfer those credits to most other colleges, about 90% of them, which is better than the percentage of schools that will give credit for a good AP score.

Here's **who** should consider it:

Students who are:

1. Doing good work in AP English 12 (B's or better)
2. Willing to speak in front of the class
3. Want to earn some college credit but are headed to a school that won't give credit for a good AP score.

Here's **why** you should consider it:

1. It's cheap: \$200. Compare that to the cost per credit for in-state undergrads in Pennsylvania (in 2012-2013): \$364.77. That's just one credit.  $364.77 \times 3 \text{ credits} = \$1094.31$ . That is for a state school. Many other colleges charge over \$600 per credit or over \$1800 for a course like this.
2. You will be doing most of the work anyway. As an AP English 12 student you will already be participating in class discussions, debates, and other activities that make up the Argument 0500 course. (Remember, it's a course within a course.)
3. The credits "transfer" better than AP. (Typically, you must earn a C or better to transfer credit.)

Here's **how** you do it:

1. Register. Mr. McCowin will distribute registration materials in mid February.
2. Fulfill all Argument 0500 requirements:
  - a. Use at least 10 sources for your research paper (usual minimum is 6).
  - b. Prepare for classroom debates with independent research.
  - c. Participate in classroom debates.
  - d. Complete various reading, writing, or argument evaluation assignments.

Here's **when** some important events will occur:

- February 25: Deadline to submit registration to Mr. McCowin.
- March 1: Pitt's deadline for registration.
- April 1: Withdrawal deadline. (No refunds)
- Early April: All-AP 12 Debate
  - Our top 4 debaters will compete in a videotaped debate with all 3 classes watching.
- Late April: Pitt CHS Argument Forum (Our top debater will attend and compete!)
- June: Request a transcript from Pitt.