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**A WORD OF WELCOME TO AP LANGUAGE AND COMPOSITION STUDENTS:**

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Welcome to AP Language and Composition! The focus of this course is to examine how writers use language, rhetoric, and persuasion to convey meaning. In order to achieve this goal, we will be examining mostly non-fiction texts in a variety of styles, on an assortment of subjects, and representing a range of historical periods.

In addition to having an overall spectacular time reading, writing, and discussing truly fascinating content, sometime in the first or second week of the month of May, the AP English Language and Composition exam will arrive. As author and English educator Geraldine Woods explains:

*It will sit there like one of those alien globs from a bad sci-fi film, extracting cells from your brain for a little more than three hours and ruining an otherwise fine week. It will force you to darken little ovals with a No. 2 pencil and scribble brilliant words in a pink answer booklet. All in a stuffy room presided over by a proctor who last smiled during George Washington’s presidency. But cheer up. No matter what, June – and summer vacation – eventually arrives.*

In all seriousness, though, this class is going to be fun, and the material is going to be exciting and mind-expanding! We will cover newsworthy current events, personal experiences, and cultural concerns. We will read, write (about), debate, and discuss “hot topics” in society today such as leadership, power, greed, ethics, morals, gender, relationships, identity, discrimination, family, mortality, war, violence, science, technology, progress, justice, conformity, rebellion, good, and evil. We will master the art of persuasion, opinion, criticism, and argumentation.

All of this, combined with learning strategies, rhetorical skills, and argumentation techniques, will prepare you for the AP Language and Composition Exam made up of two sections. The 55 question multiple-choice section takes one hour and counts for 45 percent of your total score. The essay section, lasting two hours and fifteen minutes, comprises 55 percent of your grade. During this time you will write three essays: a rhetorical analysis essay (analyzes the style, rhetoric, and use of language in a selected prose passage), an argumentative essay (takes a position on an idea expressed in a given statement), and a synthesis essay (uses sources to support your position on a given issue).

Scores are reported on a scale of 1-5. In general, scores are interpreted to mean…

* 5 Extremely well qualified
* 4 Well qualified
* 3 Qualified (passing score)
* 2 Possibly Qualified
* 1 Not recommended for AP credit

Our goal is for each and every one of you to receive a “passing” score on the

AP Exam; that means, a 3, 4, or 5. A high score on the exam demonstrates a proficiency in English at least on par with students who have successfully completed an introductory college level course in composition or rhetoric. Recognizing this, many colleges and universities waive the freshman English requirement for high-scoring students (3’s, 4’s, or 5’s depending on the institution of learning). Some give academic credit or permit freshman students to take a more advanced English course. Because each college and university makes its own policies regarding AP scores, you will need to check with the admissions office of the institution you hope to attend for their specific policy.

Throughout this school year you will get an overview of the structure and content of the AP exam, discover the best strategies to approaching each type of question – both multiple choice and essay – and review the principles of writing being tested on this particular assessment. Beyond the exam, this course will help you write better essays, boost your reading comprehension, beef up your vocabulary, and streamline your study techniques. Need I point out that these skills give you an edge in all your courses, including the most important one on your schedule: English! Sorry, I can’t help myself; I’m an English teacher!

Remember, learning all of these skills will not be instantaneous. For most students it is a gradual and challenging process of study, review, and application. In other words, give yourself time. Take it slowly; there is no substitute for the steady accumulation of knowledge over a period of time. That being said, the amount of effort you put into this class will be the level of achievement that will result.

Regardless of how you go about approaching this class, I wish you luck. In May, when test day comes around, over 300,000 students will be taking the AP Language and Composition Exam. I wish every one of them lots of luck, but because you are my student, I will be rooting especially for you. ☺