St. Pius X High School

AP Language and Composition 2026-2027

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Our Mission: “To Restore All Things In Christ” Pope Pius X

Course Description

The AP English Language course provides students with the opportunity to read rigorous texts from various eras and in different genres, analyzing the big ideas of rhetorical situation, claims/evidence, reasoning/organization, and style. Students use given texts to reach the goal of effective writing and analysis: they will read and annotate texts from a critical perspective in order to craft well-reasoned essays and personal reflections in response. The course is structured both thematically and chronologically, based on district requirements and College Board’s unit guide. The overarching theme for the course is that of power. I extend and explore the basic readings by asking students to work with nonfiction titles that expand on the ideas stated or implied in the required texts. Additional readings come from such varied sources as Project Gutenberg, current events, national publications, and any other resources that seems likely to provide for rigor, depth, and high interest.

Big Ideas

Rhetorical Situation: Individuals write within a particular situation and make strategic writing choices based on that situation.
Claims and Evidence: Writers make claims about subjects, rely on evidence that supports the reasoning that justifies the claim, and often acknowledge or respond to other, possibly opposing, arguments.
Reasoning and Organization: Writers guide understanding of a text’s lines of reasoning and claims through that text’s organization and integration of evidence.
Style: The rhetorical situation informs the strategic stylistic choices that writers make.

Texts - you are expected to bring physical copies of your texts to class everyday. Ms. Barta may have extra copies - just ask!

Summer Reading Option
The Language of Composition: Essential Voices, Essential Skills, BFW (provided)
Left to Tell by Immaculée Ilibagiza
The Great Gatsby by F. Scott Fitzgerald
The Things They Carried by Tim O'Brien
The Crucible by Arthur Miller (provided)
All other readings will be provided or posted on Google Classroom.

Student Practice

Throughout each unit, Topic Questions will be provided to help students check their understanding. The Topic Questions are especially useful for confirming understanding of difficult or foundational topics before moving on to new content or skills that build upon prior topics. Topic Questions can be assigned before, during, or after a lesson, and as in-class work or homework. Students will get rationales for each Topic Question that will help them understand why an answer is correct or incorrect, and their results will reveal misunderstandings to help them target the content and skills needed for additional practice. At the end of each unit or at key points within a unit, Personal Progress Checks will be provided in class or as homework assignments in AP Classroom. Students will get a personal report with feedback on every topic, skill, and question that they can use to chart their progress,

and their results will come with rationales that explain every question's answer. One to two class periods are set aside to re-teach skills based on the results of the Personal Progress Checks.

Course Units - the course is aligned with the College Board Units, which may be found by scanning this QR code.

Attendance

Promptness and coming to class prepared are imperatives. All students are expected to be seated when the bell rings. Attend class regularly. Please see the St. Pius X handbook for attendance policies. Each student will be expected to adhere to the school policy and will be held accountable.

Getting notes from a friend or obtaining the handouts for a given class cannot substitute for your actual presence in class. Many of the activities completed in class cannot be recreated.

If you are absent, you are responsible for makeup work. You should check with Ms. Barta and arrange with another student to get notes, handouts, etc. If you miss a test or quiz, you need to make an appointment to come in before school. If able, most assignments will be posted on the class Google Classroom page.

It is necessary to complete assigned readings before coming to class and you must be willing to question and critique the ideas raised. Since class sessions depend extensively on discussion and group work, it is important that you are in class both to learn from others and to help others as you express your ideas and contribute to their work.

Assignments

Turn in assignments on time. I will provide detailed instructions/expectations for assignments in advance. Expect to turn in one to two assignments per week. LATE ASSIGNMENTS WILL NOT BE ACCEPTED FOR A FULL GRADE. 10% off per day the assignment is late. Electronic submission of assignments, when absent, is expected to meet this requirement. If a student is absent on the day a major assignment is due, the assignment can be emailed to the teacher at school, shared in Google Classroom (if able) or hand delivered to the teacher by a friend or family member. If emailed, the assignment will be dated by the time on the email. A hard copy reflecting the same content as the emailed copy (no edits or changes) must then be given to the teacher the day the student returns to class. There are no test retakes. Essay corrections will be available.

Discussions

Get engaged during class sessions. Because class sessions depend extensively on discussion and group work, it is important that you are in class both to learn from others and to help others as you express your ideas and contribute to their work.

Discussions are an essential part of learning, particularly as we consider various genres, cultures, and perspectives. We will be discussing a wide range of important ideas and issues throughout the course. We will spend a lot of time honing the ability to critically discuss issues with others, reserve judgment, consider alternatives, and form opinions/arguments based on a thorough investigation of each topic. Please note: Each student receives a grade for class participation. Any of the following behaviors will result in a severe point deduction—falling asleep in class, refusal to participate, failing to stay alert and engage in active listening, or consistent failure to bring necessary materials.

Writing

Demonstrate professionalism in written assignments. All work assigned for completion outside of class needs to be typed. Please use Times New Roman, 12 point font, one inch margins, and comply with MLA guidelines on headers and citations on assignments when necessary.

Make your papers as readable as possible. Readability includes the following:

- typed and double spaced
- if written, use ink and double space. Make your writing as legible as possible
- do not turn in papers with ragged edges.

Participate in discussions and activities. People who are involved in the daily class business tend to be more aware of the content and processes of the course. Consequently, they perform better on papers and exams. Students who do not engage with the course usually perform poorly on tests and papers.

Academic Dishonesty

Adhere to academic honesty policies. This classroom has a zero tolerance policy when it comes to cheating. Any instance of academic dishonesty (e.g., cheating on exams, papers, or plagiarism) will result in a grade of "0" for the assignment or exam, second offenses will result in a semester grade of "F", and third offenses will result in a semester grade of "F" as well as an immediate Disciplinary Board meeting with the possibility of expulsion. For more information on academic honesty, please consult the St. Pius X catalog.

AI Usage - Any attempt to claim AI generated writing as your own is Academic Dishonesty and will be disciplined as such.

Professionalism

Your role as a student should be perceived as serious and professional. Phones will not be allowed in the classroom. The discipline process will be followed if you are using it without permission. When you email your instructors, realize that you are asking for their time, thoughts, and consideration. Always include the following basics: student name and hour/class, subject line, request or question. For example: "This is my rough draft of the descriptive essay. In my second body paragraph, what details might make the image more vivid?" When sharing a document in Google Classroom, please make sure that the file name references your name and assignment. You must use your St. Pius X email account for all correspondence, and send all assignments/questions to my school account. I attempt to answer all emails within 24 hours.

Grading Breakdown per Semester

Essays/Tests: 40%
Homework and Classwork: 30%
Quizzes: 10%
Class Participation: 5%
Final Exam: 15%

SPX Grading Scale

100 - 98.0%.....A+	93.1 - 97.9%.....A	90.0 – 93.0%.....A-
87.0 - 89.9%.....B+	83.1 - 87.9%.....B	80.0 – 83.0%.....B-
77.0 - 79.9%.....C+	73.1 - 77.9%.....C	70.0 – 73.0%.....C-
67.0 - 69.9%.....D+	63.1 - 67.9%.....D	60.0 – 63.0%.....D-
Less than 60.0%.....F		

AP Language and Composition - Course Schedule

Month	Focus and Essential Skill
August	Focus: Rhetorical Situation and appeals Essential Skill: Students are introduced to rhetorical analysis, learning to identify purpose, audience, and rhetorical appeals in short, accessible texts.
September	Focus: Colonial/early American texts leading into *The Crucible* Essential Skill: Students strengthen close reading and rhetorical analysis skills, moving from identifying choices to explaining how those choices shape meaning in more complex works.
October	Focus: Argument foundations and essay writing practice Essential Skill: Students begin developing argumentation skills, crafting clear claims supported by evidence, while also practicing synthesis at a basic level by connecting ideas from multiple short sources.
November	Focus: Argument and synthesis work tied to *The Great Gatsby* Essential Skill: Students advance to argumentation and synthesis in longer essays, integrating multiple sources smoothly and sustaining a clear line of reasoning, while refining rhetorical analysis for literary fiction and paired nonfiction.
December	Focus: Finishing *The Great Gatsby* and beginning synthesis essay preparation and practice Essential Skill: Students focus on synthesis at an intermediate level, learning to select and evaluate the most relevant evidence to support a claim across varied topics.
January	Focus: Synthesis project and intro to *Left to Tell* Essential Skill: Students apply synthesis and rhetorical analysis together, integrating multiple perspectives while evaluating rhetorical strategies in speeches and nonfiction works.
February	Focus: *Left to Tell* and rhetorical situation analysis Essential Skill: Students deepen rhetorical analysis skills, practicing more precise commentary that links rhetorical choices to context and audience in extended nonfiction texts.
March	Focus: Finish *Left to Tell*, begin *The Things They Carried* Essential Skill: Students sustain rhetorical analysis across a full-length work, maintaining depth of commentary while improving multiple choice strategies for complex passages.
April	Focus: Deep dive into *The Things They Carried*; AP exam prep Essential Skill: Students demonstrate advanced rhetorical analysis and argumentation, producing essays under timed conditions that balance analysis, evidence, and commentary.
May	Focus: AP exam review and practice across all FRQ types Essential Skill: Students consolidate mastery of rhetorical analysis, synthesis, argumentation, and multiple choice strategies, applying all skills with speed, accuracy, and confidence in AP Exam conditions.

Unit One: The Power of Perspective: The Author and The Audience
Topic: Community
Big Ideas: Rhetorical Situation; Claims and Evidence
Skills: 1.A, 3.A, 4.A
Readings: *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass*
Greta Thunberg's Speech to the United Nations
Madeline Albright's Speech to Mount Holyoke College

Instructional Activity:
Students will read Greta Thunberg's speech to the United Nations. using the rhetorical triangle to identify the parts of the rhetorical situation, as well as the author's understanding of audience. Then, they will discuss in groups the components of the rhetorical situation addressed in the summer reading book (Skill 1.A). After a discussion in class of claim, evidence, commentary, student groups will then list in bullet-point form the major claim, evidence, and commentary in one chapter or segment in the book (Skill 3.A). Next, students will develop a group paragraph that explicates claim, one piece of evidence, and commentary from the book. Finally, each student will continue the group paragraph by adding an additional example of claim, evidence, and commentary.

AP Classroom
Complete Personal Progress Check MCQ for Unit 1.
Complete Personal Progress Check FRQ for Unit 1

Unit Two: The Power of Evidence: Claim, Evidence, and Commentary (Audience and Thesis)
Topic: Identity.
Big Ideas: Rhetorical Situation; Claims and Evidence
Skills: 1.B, 2.B, 3.A, 3.B, 4.A, 4.B

Instructional Activity
By reading *The Crucible*, students will extend their skills in identifying and writing claim, evidence, and commentary (Skills 3.A, 4.A). Through readings of Joseph McCarthy, students will identify and describe the overarching thesis of an argument, relating that thesis to the argument's structure (Skill 3.B), before writing thesis statements that require proof or defense, and which may preview the argument's structure (Skill 4.B).

Students then read aloud The Crucible, analyzing the causes and effects of characters' actions, as well as noting the use of the appeals and rhetorical devices (Skill 1.B). After reading the play, students turn to Margo Burns' article, which addresses the poetic license Arthur Miller took with the historical events of the Salem Witch trials. They conclude by writing a short analysis of two pieces in this segment

AP Classroom
Complete Personal Progress Check MCQ for Unit 2.
Complete Personal Progress Check FRQ for Unit 2.

Assessment
Students write an Argumentative Essay on the societal importance of "tattling" or "snitching."

Unit Three: The Power of Controversy: Argument and Storytelling
Topic: Truth
Big Ideas: Claims and Evidence; Reasoning and Organization
Skills: 3.A, 4.A, 5.A, 6.A, 5.C, 6.C

Students will continue reading *The Crucible* to discover how the power of controversy enters arguments.

Instructional Activity:
Students read and annotate “The Case for Working with Your Hands” by Matthew Crawford, marking the text for claim, evidence, and commentary (Skill 3.A). They then write and compare claims made by Crawford within the text, making a bullet-point list of evidence to support at least three claims (Skill 3.A). Students prepare a chart or short video that describes Crawford’s line of reasoning in the article; they explain how the line of reasoning supports his argument’s overarching thesis, as well as the method of development used to create the argument (Skills 5.A, 5.C). Students then write a thesis statement and a paragraph using claim, evidence, commentary in which they describe the effect of Crawford’s arguments (Skill 4.A)

AP Classroom
Complete Personal Progress Check MCQ for Unit 3
Complete Personal Progress Check FRQ for Unit 3

Assessment
Complete synthesis essay about poll numbers and election results.

Unit Four: The Power of Beauty and Influence
Topic: Beauty and Influence
Big Ideas: Rhetorical Situation; Claims and Evidence; Reasoning and Organization
Skills: 1.A, 2.A, 3.B, 4.B, 5.C, 6.C

Students will read *The Great Gatsby* and selections of Great Depression era writings.

Students will be introduced to the Toulmin model.

Instructional Activity:
Students read a variety of texts that focus on how beauty standards impact individuals. Then, students conduct interviews with classmates about how the standards impact and inform their own experience. They share their findings with the class. After sharing, each student writes a Toulmin-type thesis statement that creates an original argument about beauty. Class members vote on the three best thesis statements; they may then adopt one of the three statements for use in their own writing, or they may use their own statement. Students decide on the rhetorical situation underlying their essay and make choices that demonstrate an understanding of their audience’s values or needs. Students then choose a method of development in which to present their findings, write an introduction to support the thesis statement, and develop at least four paragraphs to address argument and counterargument. The essay closes with a well-crafted conclusion (Skills 2.A, 4.B, 6.C).

AP Classroom
Complete Personal Progress Check MCQ for Unit 4
Complete Personal Progress Check FRQ for Unit 4

Assessment
Complete Argumentative essay on requiring social media users to disclose filters or physical editing.

Unit Five: The Power of Nature: Analysis 101

Topic: Nature
Big Ideas: Rhetorical Situation; Claims and Evidence; Reasoning and Organization
Skills: 1.A, 2.A, 3.B, 4.B, 5.C, 6.C

Activity:
Students read “The Serpents of Paradise” from Desert Solitaire, annotating for rhetorical situation, anthropomorphism, allusions, and diction choices (Skill 1.A). Students also read Henry David Thoreau’s “Where I Lived and What I Lived For,” annotating for the same categories. Students then choose one of these pieces as the subject of study. They identify and describe the overarching thesis, as well as the use of claim, evidence, commentary. Using Toulmin as a model, they write an analytical thesis statement that requires proof and previews the structure of the argument (Skills 3.B, 4.B). Students then write an introduction and conclusion to an essay on one of these pieces, paying particular attention to the method of development used by the author or speaker (Skills 2.A, 5.C).

AP Classroom
Complete Personal Progress Check MCQ for Unit 5
Complete Personal Progress Check FRQ for Unit 5

Assessment
Complete a practice MC Exam for Accuracy

Unit Six: The Power of Influence: Research, Claims, and Citing Sources
Topic: Ethics
Big Ideas: Reasoning and Organization; Style
Skills: 5.A, 5.B, 6.A, 6.B, 7.A, 8.A

Activity
After reading *Fahrenheit 451*, students brainstorm everything they know about ethics in relationship to categories of professional and personal experience (e.g., education, business, technology, medicine). They read Pinker’s “Is the World Getting Better or Worse? A Look at the Numbers.” In groups, students analyze the line of reasoning and explain whether the reasoning supports the overarching thesis of the argument (Skill 5.A). They explain how the organization of the text creates unity and coherence, supporting the argument’s reasoning (Skill 5.B). They mark the essay for use of word choice, comparisons, and syntax, explaining how these items contribute to tone and/or style (Skill 7.A). Then, students conduct online research on the topic of ethics in today’s world, narrowing their topics to a specific problem that requires a solution. They write an argument paper that synthesizes a minimum of three sources, one of which much be a visual. Students should follow these steps: outline the articles for claim, evidence, commentary and thesis; create a thesis statement that allows them to develop a position on their chosen topic; write an introduction using the thesis statement; develop a line of reasoning and commentary; use transitional elements to guide the reader through the line of reasoning; and strategically use words, comparisons, and syntax to convey a specific tone or style. All sources must be properly documented (Skills 6.A, 6.B, 8.A).

AP Classroom
Complete Personal Progress Check MCQ for Unit 6
Complete Personal Progress Check FRQ for Unit 6

Assessment
Complete synthesis research papers.

Unit Seven: The Power of Education: Claims and Evidence, Style
Topic: Education
Big Ideas: Claims and Evidence; Style
Skills: 3.A, 3.B, 4.A, 4.B, 7.A, 8.A

Activities
Students choose one selection from this list: “School” by Kyoko Mori; “Shanghai Schools’ Approach Pushes Students to Top of Tests” by David Barboza; “I Know Why the Caged Bird Cannot Read” by Francine Prose. Students annotate the selection for claim, evidence, commentary (Skill 3.A). They note the overarching theme of the selection, as well as the indications showing the argument’s structure (Skill 3.B). They outline the use of word choice, comparisons, and syntax to discover the relationship between these elements and the style or tone of the piece (Skill 7.A). Students then write an analysis of that selection. They write a thesis statement requiring proof and previewing the structure of the argument (Skill 4.B). Then, they write two to four paragraphs that utilize claim, evidence, commentary to analyze the style and organization of the selection (Skill 4.A). As they write, students use strategically chosen words, comparisons, and syntax to convey a specific tone or style; they may choose to echo or imitate the style or tone of the original piece (Skill 8.A).

Students will read “Me Talk Pretty One Day” by David Sedaris and “Superman and Me” by Sherman Alexie. They write a comparison/contrast essay that addresses the style, diction choices, organization, comparisons, and syntax used by each author (Skill 7.A). In their own writing, they use strategically chosen words, comparison, and syntax to convey their own tone or style to the argument (Skill 8.A).

AP Classroom
Complete Personal Progress Check MCQ for Unit 7
Complete Personal Progress Check FRQ for Unit 7

Assessment
Complete comparison/contrast essay about Sedaris and Alexie.

Unit Eight: The Power of the Written Word: Diction, Style, Mechanics, and Structure
Topic: Language
Big Ideas: Rhetorical Situation; Claims and Evidence; Style
Skills: 1.A, 2.A, 3.C, 4.C, 7.B, 7.C, 8.B, 8.C

Activity
Students react to “Use It or Lose It: Why Language Changes Over Time” by Nikhil Swaminathan or “How Language Shapes the Way We Think” by Lera Boroditsky by writing a claim about one of the selections. They write a cogent introduction to an essay in which they make a claim and then qualify it, using modifiers, counterarguments, or alternate perspectives. The sentences in their essay should clearly convey their ideas and arguments; they use the established conventions of grammar and mechanics to communicate clearly and effectively (Skills 2.A, 4.C, 8.B, 8.C).

AP Classroom
AP Classroom
Complete Personal Progress Check MCQ for Unit 8
Complete Personal Progress Check FRQ for Unit 8

Assessment
Complete introduction and two body paragraphs of an argumentative essay

Unit Nine: The Power of Winning
Topic: Sports
Big Ideas: Claims and Evidence
Skills: 3.C, 4.C

Activity
Students choose a controversial topic from the field of sports, possibly including pay inequity between the genders, paying college athletes, young people and injuries, or any other topic that interests them. They then choose two articles they find on the internet; the articles should present two sides of the chosen controversy. They create a thesis statement and outline an essay; they choose one paragraph to write, in which they qualify their claim using modifiers, counterarguments, or alternate perspectives (Skill 4.C).

AP Classroom
Complete Personal Progress Check MCQ for Unit 9
Complete Personal Progress Check FRQ for Unit 9

Assessment
Complete sports essay draft.