



AP Language and Composition

2020-2021

Summer Assignment

Mr. Brooker

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Dear Student,

Welcome to AP English Language & Composition! In this class we will focus on using evidence, examining rhetoric, and crafting arguments. As compared to the English classes you have taken up until this point, this class will mostly focus on non-fiction literature, historical documents, and various journalistic articles and opinion pieces. This isn't to say we won't be reading literature, too, but we will be spending a lot of time in "real world" text. In addition, we will focus on making you a better writer and editor.

Of course, this class is meant to prepare you for what await on the AP test; your summer work is designed to mirror that in some regard. The readings and essays you will write this summer closely match what you will encounter on the test. The varied text set will examine one topic through several different lenses, and then you will then use these as sources for two brief papers.

Starting off, you will dive into Truman Capotes American classic *In Cold Blood*. This is often considered the first non fiction novel. In this work, Capote chronicles the story of a quadruple murder in the small Kansas town. Fair warning: there is graphic descriptions of the crime scene. You'll listen to a podcast, read an article, and view a documentary. The other three texts are not traditional books, but the AP test draws from many different styles of literature.

After you've read the texts you'll be tasked with two different papers styled after the essays you will write on the AP test. The first is a synthesis essay; here you will use the texts as your sources to argue a point. The second is a brief rhetorical analysis – you will explain how one text tries to convince it's audience.

I wish you the best of luck this summer, and as you endeavor to prepare for your next school year. I'm looking forward to discussing these works with you.

Sincerely,
Broker

Assignment #1

Estimated time: 15 mins.

Remember how on the previous page I said this class would focus on making you better writers and editors? Let's put that into practice: find the errors in my letter. There are over 10 of them! These range from grammar mistakes to some organization/clarity errors. I hope most of them are easy to spot, but I've tried to be tricky on a few!

A piece of advice from my days as a copy editor: read the letter backwards. When we read like normal, our brains tend to fill in the gaps and ignore the errors.

We will go over this on the first day of class.

Text Set

In Cold Blood by Truman Capote (1966)

This book can be checked out at any local library or purchased at any bookstore. After you've finished reading this, may I suggest watching the excellent film "Capote?" It's a dramatic retelling of how Capote wrote the book, and it details how his friend, Harper Lee (you know, who wrote that little book called *To Kill a Mockingbird*), helped him.
(reading time ~14 hrs.)

"Serial: Season 3" by *This American Life*, hosted by Sarah Koenig (2018)

Episodes 1-5

In the third season of this hit podcast, host Sarah Koenig follows several cases in an Ohio courtroom to discover how the US Justice System works. The podcast's episodes can be downloaded on most podcasting apps. In addition, transcripts of each episode and additional information for each case can be [found on their website](#). I would suggest taking contemporaneous notes as you listen so that it is easier to reference the podcast in your synthesis essay. I am only requiring the first 5 episodes, but you are welcome to listen to the full 9 episodes and refer to it in your essays. Please note: frequent use of foul language and descriptions of criminal activity.
(listening time ~5 hrs.)

"Trial by Fire" by David Grann, *The New Yorker* (2009)

Link: <https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2009/09/07/trial-by-fire>

This is a prime example of long-form journalism you should expect to find on the AP Test. The article covers one court case in Texas, its result, and why everything may not be so clear cut.
(reading time ~30 mins.)

"It's Criminal" dir. Signe Taylor (2017)

Link: <https://lapl.kanopy.com/>

Signe Taylor's award-winning documentary follows several Dartmouth College students enrolled in a gender studies class. The class has students working with incarcerated women to craft and perform an original play together. It can be viewed for free through the [Kanopy app](#). This app is accessed with a [Los Angeles Public Library card](#).
(viewing time 80 mins)

Assignment #2 - Synthesis Essay

Estimated writing time: 2 hrs.

Directions

The following prompt is based on the text set described on the previous page. This question requires you to integrate a variety of sources into a coherent, well-written essay. *Refer to the sources to support your position; avoid mere paraphrase or summary. Your argument should be central; the sources should support this argument.*

Topic

America, over its history, has been held-up on a pedestal for its criminal justice system. The Constitution and the Bill of Rights introduced the world to many liberties that were previously unheard of. It could be the right to a swift trial by jury, protection from “cruel and unusual punishment,” or even what’s known as one’s “Miranda Rights;” regardless, there are many features of the system put into place to protect the innocent and preserve justice. But does “justice” exist? Is justice ever obtained by the very system that seeks to find it?

Assignment

Use the sources listed on the previous page to craft an essay to argue whether or not you think justice exists. Remember to attribute both direct and indirect citations. Type out your double-spaced essay in 12-pt., Times New Roman font.

Try to write the essay as quickly as possible in one draft.

The essay will be due the first Friday of class.

Assignment #3 – Rhetorical Analysis Essay

Estimated writing time: 1 hr.

Directions

Choose one source from the text set to produce a rhetorical analysis. Be clear in your essay which source you have chosen. *Refer to the text frequently to explain your analysis; avoid mere paraphrase or summary.*

Assignment

Analyze what your chosen source argues and explain how it seeks to persuade you. Consider what you already know about rhetoric and argumentative styles as you craft your brief essay. Focus only on the most prominent and effective rhetorical choices of the author. Do not waste time explaining whether or not you agree with the argument and do not linger on how the author could have improved their writing.

Type out your double-spaced essay in 12-pt., Times New Roman font.

Try to write the essay as quickly as possible in one draft.

The essay will be due the first Friday of class.