

AP English Literature and Composition Light and Darkness: From Sight to Insight

Syllabus
2012-2013

COURSE OVERVIEW

Building on the themes studied in grades 9-11, “the examined life,” “coming of age,” and “transforming self and society,” the theme of this course in AP literature is “Light and Darkness: From Sight to Insight.” It will include frequent and varied writing assignments and a focus on close reading, textual analysis and critical thinking.

The objectives of this upper level English course stem directly from the school outcomes. It is our hope that our graduates are effective communicators, collaborative learners, critical thinkers, problem solvers, lifelong learners and morally responsible women and men. This course is designed to engage motivated students in college-level work and to prepare students for the required AP Literature and Composition exam on **Thursday, May 9.**

READINGS include representative works from various periods and genres that invite careful, deliberative reading. As we read, we consider structure, style, and theme as well as the use of figurative language, imagery, symbolism, and tone, deepening our understanding of the ways that writers use language to provide both meaning and pleasure for their readers.

WRITING ASSIGNMENTS focus on the critical analysis of literature and include expository, analytical and argumentative essays. The course includes frequent opportunities for students to write and rewrite formal, extended analyses and timed in-class responses. We will write:

- To understand: Informal, exploratory writing activities help us discover what we think in the process of writing about our reading (assignments include annotation, freewriting, journaling, and response/reaction papers).
- To explain: In expository, analytical essays we draw upon textual details to develop an extended explanation/interpretation of the meanings of a literary text
- To evaluate: In analytical, argumentative essays we draw upon textual details to make and explain judgments about a work’s artistry, quality, and social and cultural values.

FREQUENT FEEDBACK from the instructor and from peers, including writing workshops, ensures that instruction is provided before and after revision, and that students develop:

- An appropriate, effective and wide-ranging vocabulary;
- The ability to construct a variety of sentences, including appropriate use of subordination and coordination;
- The ability to organize essays, using techniques such as repetition, transition, and emphasis;
- The ability to balance the general and the specific, using illustrative detail; and
- An effective use of rhetoric, including controlling tone, establishing and maintaining voice, and achieving appropriate emphasis through diction and sentence structure.

WRITER’S WORKSHOP is generally a whole-class activity in which a student’s work is placed on the overhead or SmartBoard for consideration by the assembled group of writers. Active participation is a course expectation, comparable to participation in Socratic seminar. Your performance as a participant providing feedback will be evaluated according to a rubric, not just your preparedness as a writer. Like Socratic seminar, it is student-centered and student-led, with teacher participation only when needed for correction or addition.

KAP (Kenyon Academic Partnership)

The KAP English course is designed to help students develop skills in perceptive reading, critical thinking, and effective writing, through the study of significant literary texts representing a range of genres and chronological periods, and drawn from a variety of gender and cultural perspectives.

Students enrolled in this course have the option to earn college credit at Kenyon College. The course has been reviewed and approved by the English faculty at Kenyon College. The grade you receive in the course is the grade that will appear on your Kenyon college transcript. The credit will be as transferable to another college as any Kenyon College credit. If you are interested, see the course instructor for a registration form.

COURSE EXPECTATIONS & ASSESSMENT

I assume that writing is a process and that the role of a writing teacher is that of a coach who facilitates the process of thinking, learning, and self-discovery. Our goal, together, is to construct new understandings about ourselves, each other, and the texts we are working with. I also assume that learning is a cooperative/collaborative effort that will occur only when each party invests the necessary time, energy and attention to make it work.

Students are graded on preparation, participation and quality of written work. All of the course work demands that students move beyond observation and recall to interpretation and evaluation. Major papers and projects which evolve over time and go through a rigorous revision process are weighed most heavily. Daily assignments will reflect preparation and engagement and will be evaluated on a regular basis. In-class work will occasionally be collected and evaluated. Formal Socratic seminars, writing workshops, and informal discussion of the assigned literature are designed to encourage independent thought, clear articulation of ideas, and close analysis of specific textual detail.

A major component of KAP English classes is the informed and specific discussion of the assigned literature. Discussion should engage as many students as possible each day, and should encourage independent thought, clear articulation of ideas, and close analysis of specific textual detail.

DAILY PREPARATION and participation are crucial to success in this course. Daily reading and writing assignments, formal and informal, individual and collaborative, in-class and assigned, will be used to assess preparation and growth in critical reading and writing skills. Socratic seminars and writing workshops will be regularly scheduled in order to support and promote fluency and sophistication in writing and in reading comprehension.

Daily homework assignments must be completed in a timely fashion, as they are the springboard for in-class activities; it will be impossible to engage in the in-class activities without adequate preparation. All students are expected to demonstrate that they have read and prepared for class each day. Failure to do so will result in a zero for daily work and may also result in exclusion from full participation in class activities, particularly in Socratic seminars and writing workshops where full participation by all students is expected. It is an expectation of the English department that student work be made public.

ENGLISH DEPARTMENT HOMEWORK & ABSENCE POLICIES

In accordance with recent research on habits of the mind, a valued skill for students to acquire is persistence, the ability to begin a task and see it through completion. This skill is directly applicable to developing the adult capacity for problem solving. Similarly meeting deadlines in timely fashion is a form of intelligent behavior and shows respect for teacher and peers. In hopes of fostering and encouraging this habit of the mind, the English department has adopted the following policies regarding late work, late work due to absences, and the legitimate use of email for submitting work:

- **Major Assessments:** Hard copies of all assignments are due at the beginning of class. There will be a 10% deduction per calendar day late, up to a 50% deduction. Missing work will not be accepted after 2 weeks.
- **Homework:** No late homework will be accepted without an excused absence.
- **Excused Absences:** In the event of an excused absence, missing work is due the next class meeting following the absence. If, however, a student is absent from class yet in attendance for part of the school day, it is expected that the work still be submitted that day. Missing work will receive an 'I' in the gradebook; after two weeks, the missing work will receive an 'M', which cannot be made up. Both 'I' and 'M' count as zero in the gradebook.
- **Planned Absences:** If a student knows that he/she will be absent, work for that day is due before his/her absence or on a date agreed upon between the student and teacher.

CLASSROOM EXPECTATIONS In order to best cultivate a positive, cohesive classroom culture, all school policies will be upheld at all times. Please take special note of the following:

Dress code

Any student not in compliance with the dress code as described in the Gilmour Handbook will be sent to the Main Office until such time as the offense is corrected. The time out of class will be considered unexcused. As examples of dress code enforcement, students in this classroom will have their shirts tucked in at all times; gentlemen's neckties will be adjusted appropriately; ladies skirts will be at a proper length; and outer wear that is neither a blue blazer nor a Gilmour sweater will not be permitted and will be confiscated and given to the Dean of Student Life—outer wear that is not permitted is inclusive of "hoodies".

Cell phones

In addition to being distracting, cell phone usage in this classroom poses a threat to the integrity of the learning process; they are not permitted in class. If cell phones are seen, or if their use is otherwise detected, they will be confiscated and given to the Dean of Student Life. Keep it in your locker. Please remember that cell phones and saved content are subject to search when confiscated.

Tardiness

Tardiness disrupts the class and takes away from valuable time in class. If you come with a valid pass, you will not be subject to a detention, but tardiness with a pass should not be a regular occurrence.

Plagiarism:

"Plagiarism is the dishonest act of presenting the words or thoughts of another writer as if they were your own. You commit plagiarism whenever you use a source in any way without indicating that you have used it." (James A.W. Heffernan and John E. Lincoln, *Writing: A College Handbook*, 2nd ed., New York: Norton, 1986, 522.). Flagrant, unacknowledged use of another's material is a grave matter. All acts of plagiarism will be referred directly to the school Honor Council.

Course materials

Cassill, R.V., and Richard Bausch. *The Norton Anthology of Short Fiction*. 6th ed. New York: Norton, 2000.

Cassill, R.V., and Joyce Carol Oates. *The Norton Anthology of Contemporary Fiction*. 2nd ed., New York: Norton, 1998.

Arp, Thomas. *Perrine's Literature: Structure, Sound and Sense*. 7th ed. Fort Worth: Harcourt, 1956/1991.

Hunt, Douglas. *The Riverside Anthology of Literature*, 3rd ed. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1997.

Smiley, Jane. *A Thousand Acres*. NY: Fawcett, 1991.

McCarthy, Cormac. *The Road*. NY: Knopf, 2006.

Fitzgerald, F. Scott. *The Great Gatsby*. NY: Scribner, 1925/1999.

Ishiguro, Kazuo. *Remains of the Day*. NY: Vintage, 1990.

Wroblewski, David. *The Story of Edgar Sawtelle*. Anchor Canada, 2009.

One of the following:

Smith, Zadie. *On Beauty*. NY: Penguin, 2005.

Franzen, Jonathan. *The Corrections*. NY: Picador, 2001.

McEwan, Ian. *Atonement*. NY: Doubleday, 2001.

Housseini, Khaled. *A Thousand Splendid Suns*. NY: Riverhead, 2007.

Morrison, Toni. *Song of Solomon*. NY: Knopf, 1977.

Verghase, Abraham. *Cutting for Stone*. NY: Vintage, 2009.

Cunningham, Michael. *The Hours*. NY: Picador, 1998.

Various short stories, poems and essays will be distributed in class.

A generous and inviting reading journal

A notebook and large 3-ring binder for handouts and miscellanea

COURSE SCHEDULE**Summer Reading assignment:**

- *Zeitoun* by Dave Eggers
- *The Road* by Cormac McCarthy
- *A Thousand Acres* by Jane Smiley
- *The Story of Edgar Sawtelle* by David Wroblewski

SEMESTER 1**Week 1-3: Course introduction- Why do we read? What is art?****Texts and materials:**

- *Zeitoun* by Dave Eggers
- "Mr. Difficult" by Jonathan Franzen
- "Seeing" by Annie Dillard

Assignments may include, but are not limited to:

- Socratic seminar on Franzen piece
- Essay in imitation of Dillard
- Reading journal entries, graded and ungraded

We open the year with several days of informal discussion of the summer reading, including the school-wide book-in-common, *Zeitoun*. *Zeitoun* is a starting point for our discussion on writing with purpose. We continue our discussion and consider writing for an audience versus writing for aesthetic purposes only, using Jonathan Franzen's essay "Mr. Difficult" as a springboard for discussion of "quality" of works of fiction and high art versus low art. We review how to annotate, guidelines for keeping a reading journal, and discuss key terms including explication, analysis, interpretation and evaluation.

Weeks 4-10: The Tragic Hero**Texts and materials:**

- Aristotle's Poetics (definition of the tragic figure)
- *Oedipus Rex* by Sophocles
- *The Story of Edgar Sawtelle* by David Wroblewski
- *Hamlet* by William Shakespeare
- *King Lear* by William Shakespeare
- *A Thousand Acres* by Jane Smiley
- Joseph Campbell on myth
- *Looking for Richard* by Al Pacino
- *Ran* by Akira Kurosawa

Assignments may include, but are not limited to:

- Character maps for *A Thousand Acres* and *King Lear*
- Reductions
- Reading journal entries, graded and ungraded

- Discussion of select literary criticism of play
- Socratic seminar
- Writer’s workshop (description above; used in each subsequent major unit)
- AP style in-class timed writing

In this unit, we work quickly through *Oedipus Rex*, discussing the myth of Oedipus, the symbolism of “blindness,” and Aristotle’s definition of tragedy and the tragic figure. We then begin discussing Shakespearean language and how to read, watch, and understand it. We listen to Michael York’s explanation of the Shakespearean dialect and watch Al Pacino’s *Looking for Richard*, in which Pacino discusses and demonstrates how to read, perform and understand Shakespeare, specifically *Richard III*.

A character map and discussion of themes in David Wroblewski’s *The Story of Edgar Sawtelle* will serve as a springboard for our review of *Hamlet*, and Jane Smiley’s *A Thousand Acres* lays the groundwork for our study of *King Lear*. Finally, we will turn to *The Tragedy of King Lear* itself, mapping it against Smiley’s novel, working through the language, and watching various interpretations of key lines and key scenes. We read through several critical essays on *Lear*, work together to frame an essential question connecting *Lear* and Larry Cook from *A Thousand Acres* for a Socratic seminar, then engage in a timed in-class writing to the same prompt. In a writer’s workshop, we read and critique the essays. The revised essay is submitted for evaluation.

Week 11-13: Poetry I- Structure and Form

Texts and materials may include, but are not limited to:

- A variety of sonnets by William Shakespeare
- “Ars Poetica” by Archibald MacLeish
- “Constantly Risking Absurdity” by Lawrence Ferlinghetti
- “Sestina” and “One Art” by Elizabeth Bishop
- “My Last Duchess” by Robert Browning
- “Metaphors” and “Daddy” by Sylvia Plath
- “Do Not Go Gentle into that Good Night” by Dylan Thomas
- “Anthem for a Doomed Youth” by Wilfred Owen
- *Poems, Poets, Poetry* by Helen Vendler

Assignments include, but are not limited to:

- SOAPS, TPCASTT
- Identify and analyze poet’s use of tone, imagery, etc.
- Identify and discuss diction/tone/irony
- Identify shifts in tone, attitude, etc.
- In-class timed writing: critical analysis of poem specifically addressing use of poetic devices

In our first poetry unit, we discuss how to read a poem, review the concepts of connotation and denotation, and consider the use of basic poetry terms including imagery, figurative language (including metaphor, symbol and allegory), rhythm and meter. We begin to move on to more complex devices such as apostrophe, metonymy, synecdoche, and subtler devices such as understatement and irony.

Week 14-18: Elements of Style- Prose Analysis

Texts and materials:

Short stories:

- "Sonny's Blues" by James Baldwin R
- "Cowboys Are My Weakness" by Pam Houston
- "Emotion Recollected in Tranquility" by Jonathon Penner
- "Pet Milk" by Stuart Dybek
- "Revelation" by Flannery O'Conner
- "Hills Like White Elephants" by Ernest Hemingway P
- "A Very Old Man with Enormous Wings" by Gabriel Garcia Marquez RN
- "Araby" by James Joyce
- "The Story of an Hour" by Kate Chopin N
- "The Swimmer" by John Cheever P
- "Shiloh" by Bobbie Ann Mason
- "Girl" by Jamaica Kincaid R

Novels:

- *The Road* by Cormac McCarthy
- *The Great Gatsby* by F. Scott Fitzgerald
- Podcast: NPR discussion of *The Great Gatsby*

Assignments may include, but are not limited to:

- Journal entries, graded and un-graded
- Reading & summarizing critical responses to a work
- Literary analysis/research paper
- Comparing and contrasting elements of style
- In-class, timed writing
- Seminar: essential question derived from podcast
- Writer's workshop

Our prose analysis unit initially focuses on close reading and analysis of complex short stories from a variety of writers from different time periods. We discuss character, setting, plot, diction, and theme; write a literary analysis paper focusing on one of those literary characteristics; and workshop examples of strong papers. We then turn our analysis to Fitzgerald's tragic 1925 novel *The Great Gatsby*. Three years before the novel was published by Scribner's, Fitzgerald said that he planned to write "something new - something extraordinary and beautiful and simple and intricately patterned." We consider the novel's structure, point of view, symbols, and use of language, and we debate its merits and consider its place in the canon of American literature.

Assigned reading over Christmas break: *The Great Gatsby* by F. Scott Fitzgerald

SEMESTER 2**Week 1-2: Elements of Style- Prose Analysis (continued)****Week 3-8: Irony and Social Commentary**

Texts and materials:

- *A Modest Proposal* by Jonathon Swift
- *A Tale of Two Cities* by Charles Dickens
- Critical reviews

Assignments may include, but are not limited to:

- Reading journal entries, graded and ungraded
- Socratic seminar
- Literary analysis and discussion regarding theme, content, style.
- Paper on refined topic of choice
- Reading & summarizing critical responses to a work
- In-class, timed writing

'If irony says what it doesn't mean in order to mean what it doesn't say, how do we recognize it when we see it? If Jonathan Swift, for instance, urges us to eat Irish babies as a cure for the poverty of eighteenth-century Ireland, how do we know he doesn't mean it? What *does* he mean? And how can we be sure?' In this unit, we explore these questions, and others, as we study Swift, Austen and Dickens, authors who use irony and satire among other rhetorical strategies to criticize their respective societies and advocate for change.

Week 9-12: Poetry II- Movements in Poetry

Poems may include, but are not limited to:

- "A Valediction: Forbidding Mourning" by John Donne
- "The Tyger" by William Blake
- "The World is Too Much with Us" by William Wordsworth
- "Rime of the Ancient Mariner" by Samuel Taylor Coleridge
- "Ozymandias" by Percy Bysshe Shelley
- "Ode on a Grecian Urn" by John Keats
- "Song of Myself" and "A Noiseless Patient Spider" by Walt Whitman
- "Dream Deferred" by Langston Hughes
- "The Red Wheelbarrow" by William Carlos Williams
- "Sound and Sense" by Alexander Pope
- "Fire and Ice" and "Out, Out" by Robert Frost
- *Poems, Poets, Poetry* by Helen Vendler

Assignments include, but are not limited to:

- Reading journal entries, graded and ungraded
- Timed in-class writing

- Sample AP multiple choice tests
- Writing workshop; developing a rubric for the final paper
- Final paper: explication & evaluation of a poem of choice

In our second poetry unit, we study characteristics of and poets associated with historical movements in poetry, including selections from the Renaissance, Neo-classical, Romantic, Victorian, and Modernist movements. We continue to examine and discuss basic (including form) and more complex poetic devices (such as allusion and irony).

Spring Break: Independent Reading

Over spring break, students will read a contemporary novel from the following list, or a contemporary novel of comparable merit:

- *On Beauty* by Zadie Smith
- *The Corrections* by Jonathan Franzen
- *Atonement* by Ian McEwan
- *Cutting for Stone* by AbrahamVerghese
- *Song of Solomon* by Toni Morrison
- *A Thousand Splendid Suns* by Khaled Housseini
- *The Hours* by Michael Cunningham

Assignments include, but are not limited to:
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- Reading journal entries, graded and ungraded
- Reduction
- Essay (review of the novel)
- Seminar on the state of/quality of the contemporary novel
- In class, timed writing

In this unit we re-visit a question we explored in the beginning of the course regarding the quality of fiction. What is good fiction? What is high art? Why do we read? Analysis may enhance our understanding of a work, but does it inhibit our enjoyment of the work? These are the essential questions we discuss through the reading of one of these award-winning contemporary novels on the list of choices.

Week 12-14: Review & Test preparation

The final unit focuses on test preparation, including strategy and practice of published AP tests. Exercises will focus on prose and poetry, multiple choice and essay questions, including timed in-class and take-home assignments. Students will review texts studied this year as well as other significant texts studied in grades 9-11. Seniors are finished with formal coursework almost two weeks before the AP Literature and Composition exam on Thursday, May 9, but they may come in for additional preparation.

Note: Ancillary workshops will occasionally be offered by various members of the department.