# William H. Taft Educational Complex- Bronx Collegiate Academy

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**Principal Assistant**

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**Mrs. Hurtado**

**AP English Literature and Composition Syllabus**

**2014-2015**

“If the literature we are reading does not awaken us, why then do we read it? A literary work must be an ice-axe to break the frozen sea inside us.”

— Franz Kafka, 1904

Dear Students and Parents,

I am truly excited about this school year! It will be a challenging, engaging, and productive one. I am always available at [rhurtado@bxcollegiate.org](mailto:Jdavid4@schools.nyc.gov) should you have any questions, concerns, or ideas. I also have an online gradebook, available at pupilpath.com. Additionally, please visit our classroom blog: http://taft-ap-literature-composition.weebly.com

Best wishes for a successful school year!

Mrs. Hurtado

**Course objectives:**

This course is designed to engage students in close reading and critical analysis of literature. This course will build upon previous knowledge and literary experience while increasing their exposure to, and understanding of, various works of literature. This course will expose students to various texts drawn from multiple genres, periods, and cultures. The students will develop their close reading skills at three levels: experience, interpretation, and evaluation.

By this year, you have studied English as a subject for two or three years of high school and have learned valuable skills. Like all of your previous courses in English, this one will build on what you’ve mastered in the subject. There are some very important points of emphasis in this course however, that make it unique and particularly challenging. To put it simply, the purpose of an AP English course is to teach you two major skills that are interrelated: close-textual analysis, and critical analysis.

**Close textual analysis**

Writers take a long time to create well-crafted sentences, paragraphs, and stories. Close-textual analysis is the practice of taking our time, as readers, to look in detail at what the author did (whether on purpose, or unintentionally). We will learn strategies to explain and analyze the methods that writers take.

**Critical analysis**

By the end of this course, you will think critically of all the texts you encounter. You will have a stronger understanding of the various manners in which a text can be analyzed (Freudian, reader-response, archetypal, neo-classical, historical, etc.). You will create your own critical analysis of the texts as well as master the art of defending your own interpretation in a clear, cogent analytical essay.

**Each week, our five class periods will include time for each of the following:**

* In-depth discussion of the literary works we are reading (the majority of our time)
* Presentations and discussions on the reading led by **you** and your peers
* Informal reader’s response writing
* Vocabulary development
* Lessons on writing conventions and strategies, based on the class’ developing needs
* Conferencing about your writing and revision of your writing
* Introduction of new literary terminology and critical methodologies

**Our Readings**

For each text, we will examine:

* Our own experiences and interpretations of the text
* Literary elements within each text (character, tone, theme, setting, etc.), both those that are universal and those that are specific to each genre
* The author’s writing style, use of figurative language, and rhetorical strategies
* How culture, time period, the author’s background, and literary period influence the piece
* Critical methodologies that can be used to analyze this text (Feminist, Marxist, Structuralist, etc.)

Your reading assignments will be the most important assignments you complete all year. The class is based upon our discussions of the reading, and it is imperative that you be prepared for each day’s discussion. We will focus on **active reading strategies** to help you read productively and in a sophisticated manner.

For each novel-length text, you will work collaboratively as a team and will be assigned one literary element to focus on in your reading (the elements will rotate throughout the year). For example, you might be in charge of tracking themes *Death of a Salesman*. You should be prepared to comment on how the author is using that literary element, have questions for the class based on the themes you see emerging, or have marked a significant passage for us to analyze in class. You are expected to take notes on your literary element while you are reading at home so that you will be prepared to share in class. Your group will also present your assigned element or technique on the text on a pre-scheduled basis.

**Our main readings for the year**

*TIn the Time of the Butterflies- Julia Alvarez*

*Death of a Salesman – Arthur Miller*

*Beloved*, Toni Morrison

The Color Purple- Alice Walker

Lots of poetry by British and American writers, 16th century to the present, including Keats, Wordsworth, Stevens, Moore, Dove, Cummings, Eliot, Marvell, Donne, Nye, Neruda, Collins, William Shakespere

Short stories and essays by Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, Jhumpa Lahiri,

Many of our short stories, poems, sample essays, and reference materials will come from *The Bedford Introduction to Literature*, edited by Michael Meyer

**Writing Assignments**

**Reader’s Response Journal, Blog, and Creative Writing**

Throughout the year, you will engage in informal writing, focused mainly on journaling in your reader’s response journals. These assignments will frequently be shared with your peers to allow you to explore ideas together and develop your responses more fully. Informal writing assignments will also aid your fluency and help you practice the writing skills we are studying on a daily basis.

We will be developing an internet-based conversation around our texts on our class blog, which will allow us to read and comment on each other’s responses. There will also be occasional creative writing exercises and journaling assignments done in class, usually in order to develop an understanding of a particular literary technique by using it ourselves.

**Timed in-class essays and essays written outside of class: A Three-Week Cycle**

For most of the year, you will be writing on a three-week cycle. In the first week of the cycle, you will complete a timed, in-class writing response similar in form to the questions on the AP Exam. During the second week, you will write rough drafts for an essay relating to the literature we are reading. Based upon writing conferences with me, peer response, and your own careful revision, you will spend the third week revising and editing your paper to turn a final draft in at the end of that week.

Final drafts of essays should be typed in 12-point Times New Roman font. You should turn in all rough drafts with your final draft so that you have a record of your writing process. Your essays will be collected into a writing portfolio which we will use for assessment and reflection on your progress.

Take note: Before you turn in any draft—even a rough draft or a timed in-class essay—you **must** read over your draft for careless errors, awkward or unclear sentence structure, or omissions. A draft turned in to me with obvious careless errors will be handed right back to you.

**Evaluating Writing**

As a class, we will create a rubric for effective persuasive writing, which will be used to grade your work.

I will help you develop your writing in the following areas:

* Developing a thesis
* Logical organization (especially transitions, introductions, and conclusions)
* Balancing generalizations with specific supportive detail and evaluating which examples and quotations best develop the thesis
* Rhetorical strategies that can be used to persuade the reader (controlling tone, use of a consistent voice, creating emphasis through parallelism and antithesis)
* Vocabulary use and word choice, including an awareness of denotative and connotative meanings and of register
* Variety in sentence structure (including subordinate and coordinate constructions)
* Writing conventions (grammar, punctuation, etc.)
* Developing your own voice as a writer utilizing diction and tone

**Reflection and Goal-Setting**

After you turn in each essay, you will save it in your portfolio and complete a reflection on it, evaluating it based on our rubric and writing a brief narrative about the strengths and weaknesses displayed in your piece. You will then set your own writing goals for the next essay cycle.

Generic Essay-Scoring Rubric

All essays on the AP exam are scored on a scale of 1-9; so, too, in this course. The AP readers are given a rubric specifically designed for each question before they score the individual essays. The rubric below is generic and serves merely as a guideline.  
  
Scoring Rubric for Essays

(9=100,8=97)A+, **A**: These grades are for essays in which excellent content and impressive writing reveal the writer’s ability to reason with perception and to express ideas clearly and skillfully-stylistic maturity. They accomplish *all* of the following:

1) Demonstrate an understanding of the assignment/question;

2) Reveal depth of analysis supported by appropriate, specific references to the text;

3) Reflect consistent control over the elements of effective writing, particularly diction, syntax, and structure.

(7=92;6=87) B+, **B**, B-: These grades are for essays that demonstrate the writer’s ability to express ideas clearly but with less maturity and control than the top papers and sometimes with minor flaws in interpretation, analysis or writing. These essays may demonstrate *any or all* of the following:

1) An understanding of the assignment, major concepts and content but lacking depth of analysis;

2) Specific support from the text may be inconsistent, partial or disorganized;

3) Inconsistent control over the elements of effective writing.

(5=82; 4=77) **C, C-**: These grades are for those essays which demonstrate *any or all* of the following:

1) An understanding of the assignment but not a full analysis, often with a vague, superficial, limited response that reflects a simplistic approach and flaws in interpretation;

2) Little specific support from the text;

3) Writing which is adequate to convey the writer’s thoughts but which is not as well-conceived, organized, or developed as the upper-level papers-lacks stylistic maturity.

(3=72) **D**: These grades are for essays that compound the weaknesses of the *C* essays in *any or all* of the following areas:

1) Weak control over the elements of good writing including diction, syntax, and/or structure;

2) Failure to demonstrate a complete understanding of the assignment;

3) Mostly plot summary with little analysis;

4) Incomplete response to the assignment;

5) Recurrent stylistic flaws;

6) Lack of specific, persuasive evidence from the text for support.

**(**2=67; 1=62 or below**) F**: This grade is for essays that fail to respond adequately to the assignment. They may exhibit *any or all* of the following:

1) Distortion or misapplication of the assignment;

2) Serious problems in diction, syntax, and/or structure;

3) Mere summarization of the plot;

4) Lack of clarity, organization, or supporting evidence.

5) Such a brief response to the assignment that the student’s writing ability cannot be identified.

***General Directions*:** Writers are rewarded for what they do well in response to the assignment. A poorly-written essay will not be graded higher than *D*. The grade for a well-written essay which does not fully meet the assignment will be given a *C*.

Student Responsibilities

* Follow school rules.
* Complete outside assigned work on time. **Late work will not be accepted from students in school on the due date.** Students absent from school on the due date must arrange for a make up date; otherwise, the assignment will be considered late after two days.
* Actively and cooperatively participate in class activities and discussions.
* Students are responsible to attend class daily at the time scheduled. Absence and lateness will be recorded; the school attendance policy will be strictly followed.
* No eating or drinking allowed in class
* Students must report to class for permission to attend any other activity scheduled during class time. If this procedure is not followed, there will be no make up given for any missed quizzes or other work, and these will be graded zero.

**Schedule**

Notes:

1. For each major text, students will be assigned to research the author, context, and literary period of the work and present that information to the class before we read.

2. Every out of class essay will include class time for one-on-one conferencing, peer review, and revision in class.

**Introduction to the AP Literature Exam and Close Reading 2 weeks**

*When Mr. Pirzada Came to Dine- Jhumpa Lahiri*

Introduction to the course and to active reading strategies (annotation, questioning, connections, predictions, strategies for encountering difficult texts)

Themes include: Multi-culturalism, conflict, immigration, identity,family

Literary Elements in Focus: setting, tone, symbolism

Mini Lessons: Literary Elements, Close reading techniques

Assessment: Close Reading Graphic Organizer

Break down of what to expect on the AP Literature and Composition Exam

**Theme 1: The Limits of the Human Experience 5 weeks**

Essential Questions:

What are the limits of empathy? Can one human being truly understand another? Can one human being judge another?

What is the function of law/convention/societal standards? Do they encourage morality?

To what extent are we or should we be bound by law or society’s standards?

*In the Time of the Butterflies, Julia Alvarez*

Supporting texts:

Themes include: redemption, suffering, alienation, the Superman, guilt and innocence

Literary Elements in Focus: character, plot, symbolism, suspense

Critical Lens: Structuralist criticism/ archetypal criticism

Writing Skills Minilessons: developing a thesis and selecting evidence to support it; integrating quotations and evidence into a paragraph

Assessment: In class timed essay

Sample Essay Topics

1. Many have criticized the ending of *In the Time of the Butterflies;* Do you believe it is effective and fitting? Why or why not?

**Theme 2: Varieties of Love 5 Weeks**

Essential Questions:

What is love? Are there various identifiable categories of love?

What is the relationship between the lover and the object of his or her affection?

What does love require of us? / How do we express or demonstrate love?

Do we see love as a part of nature or as transcendent?

Poetry:

William Shakespeare, T.S. Eliot, Anais Nin, Sylvia Plath.

Literary Elements in focus: Versification and meter, rhyme and other elements of sound, allusion, metaphor, figurative language, poetic forms, free verse, imagery

Critical Lens: new criticism

Writing Skills Mini-lessons: introductions and conclusions

Assessment: Timed in-class essay

*Beloved*, Toni Morrison

Themes include: identity, past vs. present, alienation, sacrifice, community, guilt, naming, love

Literary Elements in Focus: point of view, plot structure, setting, theme

Critical Lens: deconstructionist

Writing Skills Mini-lessons: organization and transitions, crafting paragraph order for persuasive effect

Assessment: out of class essay

Sample Essay Topics

Interpretive Level:

1. Do a close reading of one poem, focusing on how the poet utilizes sound, meter, rhyme, and structure to contribute to the overall meaning of the poem.

2. What function do names play in *Beloved*? How do the characters assert identity (their own and others’) through naming?

Evaluative Level:

1. How do poets from distinct eras and literary schools present love differently? Select two love poems from different eras or schools and analyze how their contexts affect their presentation of love, both in form and content.

2. Morrison is deliberately ambiguous about Beloved’s true nature. Why do you think she leaves this question open? How does it affect the reader’s understanding of the traumatic event at the novel’s center?

**Theme 3: Constructing Identity within Society 6 Weeks**

Essential Questions:

How do we construct our identities?

How is our identity a response to our context, society, and past?

How do we negotiate the boundary between the inner, private self and the public self?

How is our identity a response to our relationships?

*The Color Purple, Alice Walker*

Themes include: race, oppression, segregation, family, justice, sexism

Literary Elements in Focus: setting, comedy as a genre, plot structure (3 unities), contrasts

Critical Lens: Review of the Southern Racial Segregation and poverty in the deep south in the 1930’s

Writing Skills Minilessons: decoding diction

Supporting Text: *We Should All be Feminist- Chimimanda* *Adichie*

Assessment: Analytical essay explaining the growth and the coming of age within the characters in the novel

**Theme 4: The Narrator/ Reader Relationship ( Family Conflict) 6 Weeks**

Essential Questions

What is the relationship between the narrator and the reader in a text?

What happens to our reading of a text if the narrator is unstable or unreliable?

What are the limits of interpretation?

How do dream and aspirations of family impact relationships from generation to generation?

*Death of a Salesman- Arthur Miller*

Themes include: American Dream, Ageism, depression, father-son relationship

Assessment: Students will work in groups in directing and acting out a full scene of the play .

**Theme 5: Realism, Magical and Otherwise 5 Weeks**

Essential Questions

What do we mean by “realism”?

What do we expect from the relationship between a text and “reality”?

What is the function of the imagination in literature?

Poetry—The Imagination and the Text

Wallace Stevens, , Billy Collins, John Keats, Pablo Neruda,

Short Stories— The Imagination and the Text

“Soldier’s Home” Ernest Hemingway

“The Funeral Singer” Edwidge Danticat

“Sonny’s Blues” James Baldwin

“The Garden of the Forking Paths” Jorge Luis Borges

Literary Elements in Focus: the short story as a genre, elements as appropriate to each individual short story

Critical Lens: cultural criticism

Writing Skills Minilessons: moving past interpretation to evaluation

Assessment: Research paper in which student will read one or two critical articles about one of the stories and evaluate those critical articles in light of his or her own reading of the text

Sample Essay Topics

Interpretive Level:

1. How do poets represent the role of the imagination in the world? Select one poem we read and analyze how the poet describes the relationship between art and life.

2. Many of our short stories present a main character at a crossroads or a point of decision. Select one story and analyze how the author engages the reader in that moment of choice and assess whether or not the ending fulfilled your expectations as a reader.

Evaluative Level:

1. Select one of the short stories and write about how the author’s cultural background or historical context affected his or her writing.

2. How does the short story differ from the novel? Draw from the short stories and novels we’ve read to make some generalizations about how the genres function differently.

**Practice for the AP Exam 1 week**

**After the AP Exam**, we will explore “alternative” types of texts: graphic novels, films, and other arts to apply the techniques of experience, interpretation, and evaluation to them.

**Grading Policy**

**Participation 15%**

* Class discussion
* Listening
* Group work/process
* Conferring
* Attending class on time
* Sharing Work Aloud

**Classwork / Homework 30%**

* Homework assignments and readings are completed
* Do now’s
* Independent work during class time is completed
* Journals are up to date
* Group work – process and product
* Reflections
* Student is prepared for class
* Student’s work is organized

**Assessment 55%**

* Essays
* Quizzes
* Tests
* Projects
* Presentations

I have read the syllabus and course expectations and am fully committed to do my best to reach my full potential in this course

**Student's name (printed) \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**

**Student's signature \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**

**Parent's/guardian's name\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**

**Parent's/guardian's signature\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**

**Parent’s phone number:\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**

**Parent’s email address:\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**