COURSE OVERVIEW:

What is rhetoric, and how does it shape American society and the world around us? How can you, as an empowered citizen and steward of your community, use rhetoric, evidence, argumentation, and critical thinking to engage meaningfully in conversations all around you? In AP English Language and Composition, we will address these questions and more, as we apply college-ready skills to the real world. You will practice your skills in evidence-based analytic and argumentative writing, as you research and pursue topics that matter to you, and you will dig deeply into varied nonfiction texts to learn how authors utilize language as a tool to communicate their intentions and elicit reader responses. The skills and knowledge that you will learn in this course will prepare you for college, as well as for responsible civic engagement and participation in society. This course is structured according to carefully selected themes which draw upon many of the controversies and conversations that matter today.

By the end of the course, you will be able to:

- **Read critically** to identify the rhetorical situation of a text; note the writer’s choices in terms of diction, syntax, tone, and style; and evaluate the effectiveness of the text. (PoG Academic Excellence & Critical Thinking)
- **Argue effectively** by refining your claim, using evidence and commentary, and making stylistic choices to advance your argument. (PoG Skillful Communication & Critical Thinking and Problem Solving)
- **Engage in the recursive writing process** by moving from the ideation phase, through to organization, drafting, and revision, repeating steps as necessary, with careful attention to responding stylistically to the rhetorical situation. (PoG Self-Direction and Skillful Communication)
- **Engage in the research process** by selecting and refining a topic that matters to you; gathering and evaluating a variety of sources, including those which present arguments that run counter to your own; and incorporating and citing source material effectively. (PoG Self-Direction)
- **Engage in civil discourse** by respectfully listening and responding to ideas that may differ from your own. (PoG Stewardship)

WHAT STANDARDS DOES THIS COURSE ADDRESS?

This course builds student knowledge using the English Language Arts Common Core standards. In addition, this course will draw extensively on the AP English Language and Composition Standards as articulated in the AP English Language and Composition Course and Exam Description. WUHSMS has adopted four ELA anchor standards which guide curriculum, instruction, and assessment.

ELA ANCHOR STANDARDS:

**Reading:** Students will read and comprehend complex rhetorical texts independently and proficiently. Students will learn to analyze the rhetorical situations of written, spoken, and visual texts, and to evaluate the effectiveness of the rhetorical strategies used by the writer/creator.

**Writing:** Students will produce the three styles of essays that are included in AP curriculum: argument, rhetorical analysis, and synthesis. They will also conduct short and sustained research projects.

**Speaking and Listening:** Students will engage with audio/audiovisual materials to understand a variety of perspectives and rhetorical arguments. Students will also participate in classroom discussions and present information, both in person and via digital media.
**Language:** Students will demonstrate a command of the conventions of standard English grammar and usage when writing or speaking. They will also learn vocabulary specific to rhetorical analysis.

**COURSE MATERIALS:**
There will not be a singular textbook used for this course; we will, however, use portions of *The Language of Composition* (Shea, et al). Every effort will be made to incorporate a variety of materials, including what the College Board terms canonical work written between the 18th century and the early twentieth century; modern and contemporary essays, editorials, letters, art, and audio-visual materials; and AP test materials so that you can know what to expect and practice for the AP exam. In addition, there will be times when you are selecting reading materials based on your own interests. Please note that the reading materials listed in the unit descriptions below as potential texts are subject to change.

**ANTICIPATED UNITS OF STUDY:**

**Unit 1: An Introduction to Rhetoric**
*How can a speaker/writer shape rhetoric based on the specific rhetorical situation?*
In this unit, we will be primarily focused on the first step of rhetorical analysis: understanding the rhetorical situation, which includes determining the speaker/writer, the purpose of the rhetoric, the intended audience, the context in which it was created and delivered, and the exigence, or precipitating factor(s), of the rhetoric. We will also begin to analyze and evaluate the rhetorical choices that the speaker/writer made in light of what we understand about the rhetorical situation. Students will practice these foundational skills on teacher-provided rhetoric and as well as rhetoric that they select.

**Unit 2: With Liberty and Justice for All**
*To what extent does our society live up to the idea of “liberty and justice for all”?*
During this unit, we will look at a variety of historical and contemporary responses to the question of whether our nation lives up to its ideals of “liberty and justice for all.” This will give us ample opportunity to expand our rhetorical analysis skills to include a deep dive into how authors harness various methods of development, such as description and narration; make rhetorical appeals and sometimes descend into logical fallacies; and use rhetorical devices to add power, elegance, and beauty to their arguments. Texts will include portions of our nation’s founding documents, MLK’s *“Letter from Birmingham Jail,*” poetry inscribed on the walls of Angel Island by immigrants from Asia awaiting entrance into the United States, The Alcatraz Proclamation (1969), Ta-Nehisi Coates’s *Between the World and Me,* and other texts. The focus of writing during this unit will be on writing formal rhetorical analysis and practicing several methods of development that are important to argument: the extended definition and division and classification.

**Unit 3: The Power of Nature**
*What responsibility do people have to the natural environment? How do we find inspiration in the natural world?*
In this unit, you will continue to develop your rhetorical analysis skills by reading a series of texts about nature and the way humans interact with our planet and its flora and fauna. This will allow us to explore diverse rhetoric about the beauty and inspirational qualities of nature, as well as arguments focused on important topics such as climate change, the placement of pipelines and wind turbines, and environmental social justice. Potential texts include *Last Child in the Woods,* “I Contain Multitudes,” *“Mind-Blowing, Magnified Portraits of Insects*” (TED Talk), and Greta Thunberg speaking at the 2019 UN Global Climate Action Summit, as well as additional, student-selected texts.

**Unit 4: Inspiring Others & Knowing Oneself**
*How can rhetoric be used to inspire others?*
In this unit, we will examine texts that are designed to inspire or provoke others to act, including speeches, letters, social media posts, essays, photographs, ads and other visual art. In addition, each student will select a memoir to read during this unit. Students will continue to develop their analytical and rhetorical skills, while carefully considering diction (word choice) and syntax (the arrangement of words into phrases and sentences). The focus of writing during this unit will be on argumentation.

**Unit 5: “Brother, Can You Spare a Dime?”**
*What is the role of money in our society?*
We’ve all heard about the so-called “American Dream,” “free trade,” and pay inequities. We also may have heard people argue for reparations to be paid to indigenous peoples and people of color for past injustices, or establishing a “guaranteed income” for all...
Americans, or “debt relief” for college students burdened with tens of thousands of dollars of debt. People are classified by how much money they have, and how they came by their money (e.g. terms like old wealth, one-percenters, the middle class, the working poor). Even the very concept of money—as well as decentralized digital currencies like bitcoin—is pretty interesting (and strange) to think about! In short, money plays a huge role in all of our lives, and thus gives us lots of potential topics to formulate an argument about. After reading several shared texts, each student will select a topic to research that intersects with the theme of this unit. After conducting this research, students will craft an essay that synthesizes their research into a coherent argument.

Unit 6: Stylin’

*How can style impact the rhetorical effectiveness of a text?*

During this unit, you will be reviewing and practicing in preparation for the AP exam, as well as focusing on diction, style and mechanics. You will practice writing the three different types of essays that you will encounter on the exam, as well have in-class time to revisit and review material from earlier in the school year. Sample texts that may be included in this unit: “*Use It or Lose It: Why Language Changes Over Time*” and Lera Boroditsky’s TEDTalk “*How Language Shapes the Way We Think*.”

Unit 7: Creating for a Specific Audience

*How can we use rhetoric to create for a specific audience?*

With the AP Lang & Composition exam behind you, it is time to play in the sandbox! You will be able to group up or work individually to revisit ANY of the materials from this course and create new, original pieces that can span the gamut in terms of their form. Ideally we will end the year with student-created rhetoric that assumes a variety of forms and which can be shared with a wider audience. Projects can range from persuasive essays to artistic expressions, from thematic MOTH-style collaborations to podcasts/TEDTalks on particular themes.

**ASSESSMENT OF LEARNING, GRADING AND REPORTING:**

Three types of assessments will be used to determine if you have gained the necessary knowledge and skills of this course: Formative Assessments, Summative Assessments, and Habits of Work for Learning. The grade in this course will be based on Formative & Summative Scores (95%) and HOWLs (5%). For more info about assessment types, scoring, and overall grade calculation, please click here. Essays on the AP Language and Composition Exam are scored on a 6-point rubric, which you can view here. For this class, the AP 6-point rubric has been blended into WUHS’s 4-point rubric, with the goal of providing you with on-going feedback throughout the year that is consistent with the AP rubric. A sample WUHS AP Lang and Comp rubric can be found here.

**COMMUNICATION:**

How do I know what my assignments are, what the expectations are, and when my assignments are due?

- Assignments will be explained in class; materials will be distributed during class and/or posted on Google Classroom.
- Due dates for assignments and assessments are conveyed during class and posted in Google Classroom.
- If you have any questions or concerns, you can always contact me via email.

How Do I Know What My Grades Are?

- All Summative Assessments will be scored on a rubric; students will receive both a 4-point grade and a letter grade.
- You can monitor your progress in the following ways:
  - By reading feedback and scoring returned to students on formative and summative assessments.
  - By monitoring the scores and “overall course mastery grade” in the Parent/Student portal on JumpRope.
- If a student is missing an assessment, it will be coded with an M and listed in the “Missing Assessment” section of JumpRope.

Please be sure to communicate directly with me if you are unclear about the grading or feedback you receive on a specific assessment, believe that your work has been unfairly scored, or think that your score was not properly entered into JumpRope. I am always happy to sit down with you to discuss your work and clarify my feedback, to reconsider your work, or to fix any errors that I have made.

Where Can I Find This Syllabus during the School Year?
This syllabus will be available in our Google Classroom and on the school website in the English department tab.

**EXPECTATIONS FOR YOU AND FOR ME**

For our shared success this year, I think that it is helpful to outline what you can expect of me, and what I expect of you.

**What You Can Expect of Me:**
I hold myself to high professional standards with regard to being prepared for each class, fair in my assessment practices, and timely in providing you with thoughtful and thorough feedback on your assessments. It is my intention to prepare all of my students for the AP Lang & Comp Exam, and to help you grow as a writer, reader, and thinker. I also will:

- **Be patient and understanding** as you navigate the school year. Typically my students have lots to juggle during the school year -- a rigorous academic schedule; a part-time job; involvement in athletics, theater, clubs, etc.; and family events and responsibilities. And this year, of course, we have the on-going pandemic…. I know that's a lot.
- **Promote an open and inviting classroom,** where each and every student feels comfortable, “seen,” and appreciated.
- **Welcome your feedback, opinions, and ideas about the course.** I will provide multiple opportunities for students to provide feedback throughout the course (some formal, some informal), and I will make adjustments based on my own observations and student feedback.
- **Be transparent and forthcoming in terms of grading/assessment criteria** (e.g. provide you with rubrics in advance of assessment due dates, support your learning and development of skills).
- **Select texts that showcase varied perspectives and provide you with an appropriate level of academic challenge.**
- **Show respect toward you** when I provide you with feedback on your writing and when I engage with you in class.

**What I Expect of You:**

- **Communicate with me** regularly, not just to appease academic requirements of the course, but also to let me know how you are doing and what you might need. You can communicate with me in-person, via email, through surveys, and in your writing. Please be in contact with me if you are absent (or are anticipating an extended absence) so that you can remain current with your assigned work. You can also use Google Classroom to obtain class materials or be reminded of class assignments.
- **Embrace the college preparatory element of this class by practicing “self direction.”** Self-direction means completing assessments in a timely way and to the best of your ability, and asking for help and support when you need it.
- **Come to class prepared and with the following materials and equipment:** a notebook and folder dedicated to AP Lang, writing utensils (pens, pencils, and multicolored highlighters), and a laptop (note: smart phones may not be used in lieu of laptops! If you do not have a laptop, the school will provide you with a chromebook).
- **Show respect toward your fellow classmates and toward your teacher** when you are providing feedback on other students' writing, working on group projects, and engaging in classroom discussions and activities. In order to foster open dialogue in our classroom, please refrain from engaging in speech which marginalizes or disenfranchises any specific group of people. This will foster a happy and productive classroom environment.
- **Follow the personal mobile devices policy** and procedures as outlined in the Family Handbook, which specifies that cell phones will not be used during class time except when being used for a specific, academic purpose at the direction of a teacher (see page 11).
- **Use your academic time well and encourage/allow your classmates to do the same** by staying on task and avoiding potentially distracting behaviors.
- **Be academically honest,** which means doing your own work and being careful to cite your sources and put quotations around another author’s words. Please note that the Family Handbook states: “WUHSMS has zero tolerance for cheating and/or plagiarism. Students found to be cheating and/or plagiarizing will receive a 0 on the assignment and may not redo that assignment” (page 4).