



Course Introduction

Read not to contradict or refute; nor to believe and take for granted; nor to find talk and discourse; but to weigh and consider.

–Francis Bacon

The word—spoken, written, thought—is full of powerful potential. The study of language and literature, then, becomes a study of works that have shaped our culture and our thinking. But not only that, working hard at the way we use language becomes a key to effective communication, powerful expression, and clear thinking. To this end, all English courses will emphasize clear and logical thinking, strong study in the conventions of language (grammar, syntax, mechanics, metaphor, vocabulary), reading, critical thinking, speaking, and listening. Students will learn to deal with the various writing situations with which they will be faced, and to do so with calm confidence. In the same way, students will learn to read well for various purposes. We hope to activate lifelong thinkers who demonstrate Christ's wisdom, winsome speakers who articulate truth, thoughtful readers who use Scripture as a standard, humble disciples who love the Lord with their minds.

Course Description

Argumentation and American Ideology Honors is a study of American thought from the pre-colonial to the postmodern age. Readings include fiction and nonfiction texts. In the study of fiction, all assignments and discussions look to the connection between language and thought. Particular attention is given to the rhetorical strategies, diction, and syntax employed; connections are made between the language choices and the ideologies presented by the text. In the study of nonfiction, all assignments and discussions begin with exercises aimed at helping students uncover both the argument being made and the reasoning(s) being used (abductive, deductive, inductive, analogy, narrative); eventually, assignments and discussions of nonfiction end with students evaluating the argument for effectiveness, considering audience, method, and logical fallacies in their evaluation. Overarching all texts in the course is the question of how American ideology has shifted, particularly in the queries of the nature of man and the nature of knowledge; this is a discussion that course revisits all year long.

This course is a culmination of three prior years of academic study in the English department. It necessitates skills acquired and honed in the three prior classes. From class discussion to summative assessment, the class daily integrates the knowledge of the prior courses into its analysis of text. Additionally, the students come to this course having read a variety of texts and written for a variety of purposes: they have read Homer to Hobbes; they have written persuasive arguments in Classical Discourse as well as narratives for the "Maycomb County Newspaper."

The honors curriculum challenges students to advanced-level critical analysis. As an example, students read passages from *The Scarlet Letter* and analyze the syntax through the lens of Fowler's linguistic criticism—how language particularly relates to power. This discussion builds upon the prior years' studies in grammar, close reading, and rhetorical strategies. This is not an isolated event; every unit examines author's style with this level of detail; every unit examines nonfiction argument with Toulmin's Model of Argumentation, extracting claims from the pieces and reorganizing the argument into an outline that helps students to identify the claim from subclaims; additionally, students further organize that argument into a syllogism. Last, students first comb through the syllogism and then through the sub-claims with an eye for fallacious logic. This is challenging, advanced-level critical analysis is a part of every persuasive nonfiction discussion.

Composition is the summative assessment of the honors course—and much of the formative assessment, too. Students write continually; the majority of papers are revisable through the quarter, meaning students are required to meet with teachers and turn in an average of four drafts, sometimes more, of each paper; it is not uncommon for a student to write up to eight drafts of a single paper. Students compose a major writing assignment on average every other cycle of the curriculum. They are writing frequently and ever revising. The writing topics move students to examine layers of complexity. While they may start the course with analysis on a singular author, they quickly layer their analysis, synthesizing authors and movements and symbols; additionally, many of the texts move the student towards evaluation—effectiveness of figure, validity of argument, persuasiveness of rhetoric. The last paper is a synopsis of the anthropology of the six movements studied with quoted material from at least as many authors and a final evaluation of the students' own view of man. Students are required to meet with their teacher to go over the written comments copiously given in the annotations on the papers, acquiring verbal feedback and direct teaching on how to improve their papers. Peers have a chance to read each other's papers through both the learning management system and through class collaborations where student models of writing are critiqued. Additionally, student writing assignments require more from the honors students in detail and in style. For example, students in the college preparatory courses write a comparison/contrast essay between metaphors of two Puritan authors where they conclude with which was more effective; students in the honors courses write a comparison/contrast essay between two Puritan authors where they detail the image, the connotation of the image, the surrounding style or structure in which the image is given (and its import), the ideological implications of the image (usually an offshoot of connotation) and the effectiveness of the vehicle in presenting the ideology. Additionally, the college preparatory students are required to use two rhetorical strategies in their own writing (anaphora, parallelism) while the honors students are required to use three (anaphora, parallelism, antithesis). These additional style requirements always increase in the honors courses.

Students in the honors courses have a more challenging independent study as well as more challenging written requirements. For example, students in the honors courses

juggle reading *The Scarlet Letter* as an at-home assignment during the Puritan and the Colonial units, allowing for movement comparisons and cultural discussions, discussing Ryken's view of Puritans against Bradstreet's against Hawthorne's; honors students' independent study is, paradoxically, meant to reinforce the blurred lines between the movements as well as heighten the contrast in the shifts. It allows for immediate complexity in the discussions of the texts; this is just one example of the differences in independent study; similar changes in pacing occur in all the units, moving *Huckleberry Finn*, *Great Gatsby*, and *Death of a Salesman* to outside reading with Socratic Discussion in class (students are exchanging collaborative learning of these texts for independent study; that said, they are engaging in collaborative learning in the classroom while pursuing independent study of the novels—their texts are simply the more challenging excerpts of nonfiction literature.)

Finally, the oral component requires more of the students in this honors course. In the college preparatory courses, questions for oral exams consider motifs and characters discussed plentifully in class; in the honors courses, questions for oral exams require impromptu analysis of ideology or language, with quoted examples. There is purposeful scaffolding of greater challenge from the college preparatory to honors, and it's not simply length of assessment given; it's more complexly the layering of prompts, the rigor of more sophisticated style, the expectation of students to be ready to stand and deliver.

This is a yearlong course consisting of 6 units. Upon successful completion students will receive 1 credit towards high school graduation.

Major Texts include *The Scarlet Letter*, *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*, and *The Great Gatsby*

Additional poems and excerpts from *Anne Bradstreet*, *Edward Taylor*, *Jonathan Edwards*, *Cotton Mather*, *Thomas Jefferson*, *Thomas Paine*, *Ben Franklin*, *John Adams*, *Ralph Waldo Emerson*, *Henry David Thoreau*, *John Locke*, *Walt Whitman*, *William James*, *John Dewey*, *Mark Twain*, *Gertrude Stein*, *T.S. Eliot*, *Arthur Miller*, *Wallace Stevens*, *Tim O'Brien*, *Annie Dillard*, *Don Delillo*, *David Foster Wallace*

Purpose of the Course

- to be familiar with major American writers, works, and time periods
- to be able to place unfamiliar American works within the stylistic and ideological movements they best represent
- to identify and write logically valid arguments
- to evaluate others' arguments for logical validity and stylistic patterns
- to express both academic and personal thoughts in writing
- to present information to a group clearly and comfortably
- to increase a sophisticated, precise vocabulary

Course Prerequisites

Students should have completed Rhetoric and Style with a “B” or higher before enrolling in this course.

Course Overview**Semester 1**

- Reign of God
- Reign of Reason
- Reign of Self

Semester 2

- Realism and American Naturalism
- Modernism
- Review and Final Exam

Required Course Materials

Please access the list of course materials from the OC Online book ordering system and order your materials as soon as possible. Oftentimes, course materials are on back order and you may experience a delay in receiving them, causing students to fall behind in their online coursework. When ordering used or rented materials, be careful that online access codes are also current.

Methods of Evaluation

Students will be assessed via discussion board contributions, oral exams, paragraph responses, developed essays, verbal reasoning quizzes, multiple choice reading quizzes, and video presentations. An approximate percentage breakdown of evaluations is included below.

- Tests (Includes extemporaneous oral exams and essays) 15%
- Quizzes (Includes vocabulary and reading quizzes) 10%
- Assignments (Includes miscellaneous assignments, discussion boards) 40%
- Participation 10% (discussion posts, synchronous sessions)
- Final Exam 25%