

To: SBHS Counseling Department

From: Patricia Ruth

1/31/21

AP Seminar engages students in cross-curricular conversations in which they explore the complexities of academic and real-world topics and issues. Students read and analyze literary and philosophical texts, as well as peer-reviewed articles and research studies; they watch and analyze theatrical performances; and they view and analyze art. They practice synthesizing information and perspectives from multiple sources, developing their own perspectives in written essays, and designing and delivering oral presentations, both individually and as part of a team. In their culminating written and oral presentations, students make arguments for what they see as solutions to wide-ranging problems that must be addressed in today's world.

Students in SBHS's AP Seminar this year have explored the ways in which human beings have regarded and interacted with Nature for the past four-hundred years. Here are the texts, performances, and art with which they have worked:

Mary Shelley, Frankenstein, or, the Modern Prometheus

National Theatre London, Frankenstein (directed by Danny Boyle, 2011)

William Wordsworth, "Tintern Abbey," "Composed upon Westminster Bridge, September 3, 1802," "The World Is Too Much with Us"

Paintings by Gainsborough ("Blue Boy"), Constable ("Flatford Mill"), and Turner ("Snow Storm: Hannibal and His Army Crossing the Alps" and "Rain, Steam, and Speed—the Great Western Railway")

William Shakespeare, The Tempest

Shakespeare's Globe Theatre, The Tempest (directed by Jeremy Herrin, 2013)

Hope Jahren, Lab Girl (Penguin Random House, 2017)

Robert McFarlane, "Should This Tree Have the Same Rights As You?" (The Guardian, Sat 2 Nov 2019)

They have also read about and researched a contemporary manifestation of the Nature vs. Humans scenario—wildfires in the Western United States—and moved on to research issues that they themselves have chosen. They have decided, for example, that Term 3's Performance Task 1—which will constitute 20% of their assessment grade for the course as a whole—will address issues and problems relating to the COVID pandemic.

It should be clear from this description that AP Seminar is a course which grants students considerable autonomy and requires of them an unusual level of responsibility.

It's important for students to recognize that AP Seminar *must* be a traditional year-long course, since the exam portion of the course takes up **the entire second semester**, from January to June. In this, AP Seminar is unlike any of our other AP courses. The assessment includes, in addition to the standard one-morning-in-May timed exam, two performance tasks, the one that I referenced earlier and the other coming up in April.

AP Seminar is part of the College Board's AP Capstone program.