Welcome to A.P. Literature and Composition/UConn E.C.E. 1007! This course will provide you exposure to college-level rigor, materials, and instruction through a variety of academic writing forms. Throughout this coming year you'll gain valuable experience in developing purposeful, argument-driven, evidence-based academic writing that utilizes peer involvement, instructor feedback, and analysis through the lens of literature (poetry and prose). During this writing process we'll further develop our understanding of the choices writers make and the impact of those choices through careful revision and reflection.

Prior to the beginning of class this fall, please complete the following tasks (3):

A) Join our 2025-2026 A.P. Lit. & Composition/UConn 1007 Google Classroom: **q3c4w3bl**

B) Select and read a novel from our reading list and craft five potential research questions based on your interpretation of the text. We'll be using these research questions on Day 1 of class this fall (See examples) and therefore your five research questions are **due on the first day of class. Late submissions will not be accepted.**

C) Compose a college essay that responds to one of the Common App. questions (pg. 4). Please see my suggestions and guiding notes to help you with this assignment (these can be found on the following pages of this document). This assignment can be submitted at any time this summer via TurnItIn but **no later than the first day of class. Late submissions will not be accepted.**

Step I: Choose your summer **reading text** (link). Hard copies of books are available in A04, the NHS library, or at your local library. You may also select a digital text from the list below.

Step II: After you've read, formulate 5 potential research questions based on your view of the text. *See examples*:

Possible research questions I have after reading...(I'll use *The Grapes of Wrath* as my example)
1. In what ways does the desperation experienced by the Joad family in John Steinbeck's *The Grapes of Wrath* mirror the experiences of contemporary Syrian refugees?
2. How does the unforgiving and arid setting in John Steinbeck's *The Grapes of Wrath* foretell the economic impact of a changing United States climate?
3. Why might John Steinbeck's *The Grapes of Wrath* serve as a prelude to America's agricultural economic struggles seen in the 21st century?
4. How does John Steinbeck's *The Grapes of Wrath* expose the inherent kindness that's innate in human beings in times of universal struggle?
5. In what ways does the cruelty of the American banking system within John Steinbeck's *The Grapes of Wrath* still permeate today's contemporary business culture?

Your Turn:
You will need this document on Day 1 of class as we will begin planning our Research Paper summative.

Name of Text Selected & Analyzed:

1.
2.
3.
4.
5.

Part III: The College Essay (*Interim*)

Common Application College Essay Prompts
-Pick One-

1. Some students have a background, identity, interest, or talent that is so meaningful they believe their application would be incomplete without it. If this sounds like you, then please share your story.
2. The lessons we take from obstacles we encounter can be fundamental to later success. Recount a time when you faced a challenge, setback, or failure. How did it affect you, and what did you learn from the experience?
3. Reflect on a time when you questioned or challenged a belief or idea. What prompted your thinking? What was the outcome?
4. Reflect on something that someone has done for you that has made you happy or thankful in a surprising way. How has this gratitude affected or motivated you?
5. Discuss an accomplishment, event, or realization that sparked a period of personal growth and a new understanding of yourself or others.
6. Describe a topic, idea, or concept you find so engaging that it makes you lose all track of time. Why does it captivate you? What or who do you turn to when you want to learn more?
7. Share an essay on any topic of your choice. It can be one you've already written, one that responds to a different prompt, or one of your own design.

Holistic Grading Rubric: The College Essay (*Interim Grade*)

This assignment is due on the first day of class. -10/day late. Zero credit after three days.

An A paper:

Clearly responds to the selected prompt *(Please note the prompt you're using in heading)*
Uses specific examples to provide support; examples shown—not told *(see samples)*
Features a title that's creative and reflective of the essay's theme
Demonstrates a mastery of language; this will include:
a variety of sentence types, no fragments, splices, or run-ons—a proofread draft
Reflects the writing, revision, and editing process
Adheres to length requirements: 650 Words Max; Uploaded to TurnItIn by first day of class

B paper:

Also responds to the selected prompt
Uses examples but perhaps without the depth or detail of papers in the top tier
Some details shown rather than merely told to reader
May contain minor errors in grammar/punctuation
May require minor but further revision/editing
Adheres to length requirements: 650 word maximum.

C paper:

Addresses the prompt but without the clarity of papers in the top half
Provides support in a general way
A mere telling of experience rather than actual illustration of growth, experience
May contain significant errors in grammar/punctuation
May not reflect a completed revision/editing process

D paper:

Will demonstrate little awareness of the task(s) presented in the prompt
Provides little support
May present a pattern of errors in grammar and punctuation
May not reflect revision or editing
Is significantly longer or shorter than length requirements

F paper:

Will demonstrate no awareness of the task(s) presented in the prompt
Provides no support
Presents a pattern of errors in grammar/punctuation that distracts the reader
Does not reflect revision and editing
Presents a major deviation from length requirements

Example Essays:

College Essay Example I: "Packing Perspectives" (Prompt #6)

Remember, eggs always go on the bottom of the bag. This is what my father always says before I leave to start my shift at the local supermarket. Most would brush this off as a typical dad joke. But this statement got me asking, "Why can't eggs go on the bottom of the bag?" The carton they lie in has been developed to protect the eggs, and the flat surface it creates is optimal for the base of a bag as long as the weight is kept applied evenly.

This limited way of thinking undermines innovation and creation, a trend that can be applied to more than just bagging, but to much of the world we live in today. I have no intention of making my life as a bag boy out to be heroic. However, my time spent at the end of conveyors provides me with an incredible opportunity to learn. Organization and communication (verbal and non-verbal) are keys to my success. From simple communication, like asking a customer if they want bags, to more intricate communication, like noticing someone with a mask is more mindful of germs and is telling me to take extra care in separating each food group. I even have different techniques for loading the bags into carts depending on the type of bags, and the size of the cart so that everything fits evenly.

Beyond these skills, I learn about people, the economy, the environment, and myself. As a silent observer, I witness the world, one shopper at a time. The politician and the pacifist; the healthy and the sick; the entitled and the homeless; the giver and the thief. I witnessed the giver in a man who ordered 200 dollars worth of bottled water for the local food bank. His act exemplified generosity and being committed to one's community. On the other hand, I have witnessed the "thief" when a man, driven by desperation and necessity, tried to shoplift $300 worth of groceries. This encounter highlights issues like economic struggle and food insecurity, which can cause people to make morally ambiguous decisions just to survive. The politician is always dressed in some political item of clothing, ready to share their newest complaint about the government. I admire their dedication to advocating for change even in mundane settings like a grocery store, but sometimes I wonder if they are dedicated to change or the destruction of the opposing side. The entitled person, who wants next week's sales prematurely, is juxtaposed with the pacifist, who is almost entirely quiet and refuses to ask for any help. This paradoxical duo reminds me to self-advocate, but in a patient and respectful manner. The products also speak to me. Shrinkflation is clearly evident in the greater amount I am able to fit into each bag. Also, my arms are less tired at the end of each shift. I see companies' efforts to reduce plastic every time I have to put a produce bag around the blueberries to prevent them from spilling out of their prototype packaging. I see pounds of food being discarded secondary to spoilage, damage, and expiration.

Throughout high school, as I dedicated myself academically and athletically, I have always kept an eye out for the opportunity to serve, mentor, and improve others. As I listen to conversations, as I witness human behavior, and as I handle each product, I recognize that I have the ability to make a difference. My efforts may start with the careful packing of a customer's groceries, a simple smile, or a helpful hand. However, my goals extend well beyond the grocery cart and include the principles of compassion, service, equity, and sustainability. With the support of an institution whose values and rigorous academic standards align with my own, I look forward to becoming part of a community where I can continue to contribute and grow collaboratively and individually.

Mr. Gereg's Notes:

- *The best college essays will approach this assignment as a narrative. Alongside your essay, colleges will receive your academic transcripts, and therefore it's imperative that you avoid citing your individual accomplishments within your essay.*

- *What makes this essay particularly effective? Admire the way the student is able to seamlessly integrate a seemingly mundane experience, like packing groceries, and use it as a metaphor for his understanding of the world. We've all lived moments that appear benign on the surface, but there's a larger commentary buried underneath.*

College Essay Example II: "The Wonderful Wisteria" (Prompt #1)

My birth plant is a climbing wisteria vine that has entangled itself around our grape arbor and blossoms once a year. My grandmother, my namesake, planted it. I'm convinced she's omniscient, because I am the human embodiment of a resilient brown vine. Just as my brother, who got a holly plant, has a particular prickle to his personality. She has marked every family milestone by adding a plant to her gardens that exemplifies the essence of the person or event.

Not so coincidentally the wisteria plant flourishes when provided a structure to support itself. Without support it grows into a gnarled bush, but given the opportunity it will wrap around anything available, growing until it runs out of resources. My support has been three generations of strong women living on my property, in addition to my father, who is one of the strongest feminists I've ever met. These women have been artists, lawyers, executives, teachers, spiritual seekers and my biggest fans. They have raised me on a steady diet of empowerment. At the age of three I entered martial arts, and at eleven I received my black belt. Without my parents influencing me to engage in this, I would be massively different today. My parents did not just tell me that I could be anything I wanted, they allowed me to be it. It's because of this I dared to be a black belt, an emergency medical responder, and joined a predominantly male robotics team. I had the gall to take Harvard classes at age sixteen, and do cancer research at age seventeen. I believe I can grow to be one of the largest wisteria, covering acres and acres.

When I was young I passed my wisteria on the way to the bus every day. Always naturally inquisitive, I would occasionally pluck a green fuzzy pod off of the vine. I cracked open the contents, thoroughly examining the white gunk inside. It always mystified me how that substance turned into gorgeous pendulous racemes. I did not have the easiest time growing up. I sometimes didn't relate well to my peers; I cried easily and often, and it took me longer than others to assimilate into the jungle of adolescence. Like wisteria I took a while to mature, but my trials made my dripping purple blossoms magnificent. I hit my stride in high school, expanding across my arbor, my branches reaching further and further. My tendency to overexert myself requires pruning. My junior year of high school I took on too many officer positions, and it sapped my happiness. I attempted to grow in every which way, and gleaned a valuable lesson about directions— too many create thin dwindling branches that stress cry themselves to sleep.

Over the summer, I found my direction. I discovered a passion in lab work, and my future blossomed in front of me. I was allowed to make my own mistakes and appreciate the consequences. I am coming into my adulthood.

My real wisteria plant is beginning to crack the wooden beams supporting it. Unlike me, it cannot move to a larger structure, but I am frothing at the mouth for my next stage in life. I will experience many cycles of a wisteria's seasons, some as a brown vine, others as cascading blossoms, but I will always carry the power to recover. My roots are strong, planted deep in the earth, forged by people who taught me to harness the best of myself.

The most important thing I can say about wisteria is that it improves the soil it is planted in. Most plants pull nutrients from the earth and deplete the environment, in the same way that some people succeed at the expense of others. I want to work with others to create a lush and beautiful landscape. My wisteria plant is bursting its boundaries, and so am I.

Mr. Gereg's Notes:

- *In this well-crafted and thoughtful essay, the student is able to tether her most formative influences through the symbol of her birth plant, the wisteria plant.*
- *This essay, in addition to Essay A, answers the question of what qualities can the student provide to his or her university. This student provides a resounding response through parallels drawn from her own life and the characteristics of the wisteria.*
- *Many students overlook the value of a title. Notice that both students use the title as yet another opportunity to crystalize meaning in their prose. It bears repeating: take advantage of this.*

College Essay Example III: "Pavement" (Prompt #6)

I like the time spent in the intermediate places.

The lines.

The driveways.

The parking lots.

I have come to love the waiting moments, all the befores and the afters.

I love the excitement leading into a concert venue: the *need* to make time pass which somehow always leads to playing chopsticks, Alex almost winning but never quite tasting victory. The thick daze I find myself in immediately after leaving the venues, moments spent on the sidewalk, ears hurting, eyes adjusting, heart pounding. I look around and see people smiling and laughing with their friends. I turn to my own and do just that. We stand on the sidewalk, reminiscing about the moments that have just passed. The sidewalk becomes a canvas and our jokes splat and spit with color, creating an impressionist work of art. The recent past is cemented into our minds, but I focus on the present. The laughs become my favorite part of the night.

I love the cherished goodbyes earned after a night with the group, sitting around a fire talking about life, or shouting around a TV playing games and always trying to be the best in Smash Bros. Loitering in the driveway because no one really wants to leave, and when everyone finally does, I always take the time to look around and see all the brake lights start up. Blaring red turns soft, yellow marks the hazy air in front. Bass kicks. Wheels turn.

I love the nights spent eating McDonald's in the neighboring LaBonne's parking lot. The moments listening to music while waiting on that one friend who takes ten years to eat a ten-piece McNugget but it's fine. They gave us eight packets of sweet and sour sauce and no ketchup, but it's fine. There's no place better than right there. I've watched the LaBonne's close and all the employees leave more times than I've been in the store. I've laughed and made memories in between those yellow lines that I hope to never forget.

I love the moments spent that one would normally forget. I love the in-betweens.

I hate coming home to wine opened.

I don't smell anything, but I can still tell.

I don't see anything yet, but I can still tell.

I don't taste it in the air yet, but I can still tell.

I can hear the words already.

I hate the comparisons that come out accompanying the purple in the glass, swirling together in a waltz.

I already know how much better he was.

I already know about the great things he's gone on to accomplish.

I already know that all I do will never be enough.

The waltz continues, ever graceful, stepping only on the tip of the tip of the toes. Careful now.

I walk downstairs.

16 steps.

I put the headset on and hope that some friends are there. I queue music, but it always plays wrong. I like times like these because without them, how am I supposed to know when music sounds right?

I know that as I stand shaking, ready to make a major change in life that the moments I see are blurred. The colors soft, the smiles shifting. I know too that as I move away from these moments, that everything will adjust. I understand that the colors will change and the shapes distort, the painting will change styles. All I can hope for is to be able to appreciate it for the work of art it is.

Mr. Gereg's Notes:

- *This essay offers something that the previous pair do not: unconventionality. This student manipulates language in a way that's especially creative, and frankly poetic. Notice how the student plays with the white space and the structure of language on the page. This style isn't for everyone though it's clearly different. In fact, this particular student merited an email from his university which stated, "This was the best essay we received from the entirety of the incoming freshmen class." That's high praise and it's completely justified.*

- *More specific to the content of the essay, notice how this student allows his audience to learn something incredibly personal about him. We learn of his background, his challenges at home, and his appreciation for life, human contact, and the arts.*

College Essay Example IV: "Slaying the Dragon Inside" (Prompt #5)

I have a dragon to slay and my weapon of choice is a whisk.

My dragon has a name: Anxiety. He's been there for ages; a constant roar in my head, never leaving me alone. He was there the fall of sixth grade, when we received our letters for soccer. *"You're not good enough,"* he hissed. "You won't make it," and when that letter read "unfortunately" instead of "congratulations," he let out a cackle, "I told you so."

For years, I dealt with him taunting me, but dealing and conquering are two vastly different things. He prevented me from challenging myself, from stepping beyond my comfort zone, because the second I tried, he would swoop in and scare me back into my safe little circle. He would beat me with his barbed tail until the only thought in my head was "I'm a failure."

People told me to just "be positive," to pick my head up and smile the pain away, and I *tried*, but Anxiety would be there to remind me why my head was down in the first place. So, for a while, I took the simple path and let Anxiety control me.

Until, I *didn't*.

I realized if I stayed on Anxiety's chosen path, I'd be the one slain. There was really only one way for me to survive: I had to defeat the dragon. From then on, I searched for the weapon that would beat him. I tried everything from meditating to exercising my problems away, but nothing seemed to work. With each failed attempt, Anxiety would hiss "just give up." It was the easy option and it was so tempting, but I was tired of taking it *easy*. So I kept looking for my flaming sword, because I *would* beat Anxiety. As it turns out, I didn't have to look far. My saving grace was in a place I always felt safe from Anxiety: my kitchen.

The whisk became my sword the moment I found baking. Now you may be thinking, "you can't bake your problems away, Dani," but just stay with me. All those ingredients, and measurements, it's a precise process. One wrong move and your delicious dessert becomes a disaster. You add too much flour and it's

dry; too much butter and it's flat. You add too much chocolate and…well there's never "too much chocolate," but you get the point. There are so many variables I have to keep track of, so many ways the good can go wrong, that I become fully engrossed in what I'm doing and I forget about Anxiety. When I'm standing there, flour staining my shirt and dough sticking to my fingers, it doesn't matter what the finished product is, all that matters is I'm having a blast. In those moments, Anxiety doesn't seem so impossible to defeat.

I still fight Anxiety every day. Sometimes his roar is booming, echoing in my head, and other days it's a whisper, drifting quietly through my thoughts. But, no matter what, I'll no longer let him control me. When I didn't make the soccer team in middle school, I kept training, and now when I lace up my cleats, it's to step onto the field as a senior Captain. I know I'll conquer every challenge that I'm faced with because I finally learned the only time I'm a "failure" is when I let myself give up. Discovering how to slay the dragon in my head has made me a stronger woman, one who's willing to step out of my comfort zone every day--and the extra benefit is, I make some killer cookies.

Mr. Gereg's Notes:

- *This prompt asks that students identify a moment of personal growth. This is certainly an unconventional connection to the prompt, though it's quite creative as we're able to connect our fight with anxiety and how we're able to grow from it. Metaphors are always an engaging way to illustrate your ideas to your audience and the "dragon" here plays both the role of antagonist and catalyst. In modeling this draft, consider how a metaphor might help you to communicate personal growth, using a vulnerability as a strength.*

Looking for more examples? Consider the essays provided by University of Chicago.
http://www.law.uchicago.edu/alumni/magazine/spring11/intheirownwords

When finished...

Please upload the final draft of your College Essay assignment to TurnItIn (please do this no later than the first day of class). You will receive feedback and commentary from me for further revision prior to sending your essay to colleges this fall. I'll post the TurnItIn log-in with a link this summer on our classroom page. Please review our policy regarding academic honesty and use of AI.

turnitin

Class I.D. : _____ **Enrollment Key:** Gereg

(To be posted on Google Classroom this summer)