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## PINEWOOD - THE AMERICAN INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL OF THESSALONIKI, GREECE

### AP RESEARCH

**AP Research** is the second of two courses that serve as the core of the **AP Capstone** program, following AP Seminar. Like AP Seminar, AP Research is a skills-based course that focuses on developing critical thinking and the habits of mind that lead to thoughtful analysis and effective argumentation in **research-intensive academic work**. But AP Research is a much more **individually** driven course. Whereas in AP Seminar students have several different tasks they must complete, including group work and a final exam, in AP Research students are given the **entire** year to complete **one large research project** of their own design and on a topic of their **own** choosing. As such, it raises the bar significantly and stands for most students as the **culmination** of their high school experience. They have an entire course in which they can follow their own personal academic interests wherever those interests lead them.

One of the most interesting aspects of this curiosity-driven approach is that students can—and indeed are encouraged to—**connect with subject-matter experts** as **mentors**. The meaning of mentorship in this context is very broad: it may be as little as one meeting or even a brief email exchange to address a specific issue, but it can also be more in-depth and last the entire year. Mentors can be drawn from **within** the Pinewood community but can also come from **anywhere** else in Thessaloniki or the world. There is no geographic or contractual limitation on mentorships, apart from the student's well-being and the mentor's willingness to volunteer their time.

As one might imagine, the projects that AP Research students complete each year are very different from one another, and often to a **very high standard**. The teaching and assignments that constitute the course at Pinewood are intended to support each student in their individual research trajectory. We therefore work on activities and assessments that ensure students have a **solid** base of knowledge about the topic they have chosen, they have a **strong** research question driving their work, they are **rigorous** in their selection and application of research methods, they develop ways of presenting their insights in a **polished** and **professional** way, they revise and refine each of these elements throughout the year as they discover more, and they thoroughly **understand** the rubrics that will be applied to their deliverables. To accomplish these

goals, students will be required to build up a **portfolio of materials** (e.g., annotated bibliographies, personal reflections, mentor reports, peer assessments, etc.) that will be evaluated for the local Pinewood grade, in parallel with the official score they receive from the College Board.

The official score itself is made up of only **two** components: a **4,000-5,000-word academic paper** and a **15-20 minute presentation** in which the student argues their case and takes 3-4 questions in an oral defense of their argument. The paper is worth **75%** of the overall score, and the presentation and oral defense are worth the remaining **25%**. As with all other AP courses, the overall score is on a scale of 1-5, but unlike almost all other AP courses, there is **no final exam** of any kind in AP Research.

AP Research is a truly **transformative** course. It's demanding, with students driving their own significant projects and adhering to firm College Board deadlines. However, the students who embrace this challenge emerge as **independent, sophisticated** researchers and **critical** thinkers, **exceptionally well-prepared** for the complex academic and professional endeavors that lie ahead.