



# AP Seminar Course Syllabus

## Overview

In this class, students investigate real-world issues from multiple perspectives, gathering and analyzing information from various sources in order to develop credible and valid evidence-based arguments. AP Seminar is a foundational course that engages students in cross-curricular conversations that explore the complexities of academic and real-world topics and issues by analyzing divergent perspectives. Using an inquiry framework, students practice reading and analyzing articles, research studies, and foundational literary and philosophical texts; listening to and viewing speeches, broadcasts, and personal accounts; and experiencing artistic works and performances. Students learn to synthesize information from multiple sources, develop their own perspectives in research-based written essays, and design and deliver oral and visual presentations, both individually and as part of a team. Ultimately, the course aims to equip students with the power to analyze and evaluate information with accuracy and precision in order to craft and communicate evidence-based arguments.

## Skills

This course's purpose is not to cover mere content and learned information but a specific set of skills; development and demonstration of these skills is essential to score a B or an A in the class. These skills (referred to as 'QUEST' in the Capstone curricular requirements) are identified below:

- **Question and Explore** – Questioning begins with an initial exploration of complex topics or issues. Perspectives and questions emerge that spark one's curiosity, leading to an investigation that challenges and expands the boundaries of one's current knowledge.
- **Understand and Analyze Arguments** – Understanding various perspectives requires contextualizing arguments and evaluating the author's claims and lines of reasoning.
- **Evaluate Multiple Perspectives** – Evaluating an issue involves considering and evaluating multiple perspectives both individually and in comparison to one another.
- **Synthesize Ideas** – Synthesizing others' ideas with one's own may lead to new understandings and is the foundation of a well-reasoned argument that conveys one's perspective.
- **Team, Transform, and Transmit** – Teaming allows one to combine personal strengths and talents with those of others to reach a common goal. Transformation and growth occur upon thoughtful reflection. Transmitting requires the adaptation of one's message based on audience and context.

## Research

As the AP Seminar program engages students in college-level work, the AP Seminar course may include perspectives that could be considered controversial, including references to ethnicity, nationality, religion, politics, race, dialect, sexuality, gender, or class. AP Seminar requires students to have the level of maturity and skill to thoughtfully consider and analyze diverse perspectives. The inclusion of topics, readings, texts, and other source material is not intended as an endorsement by the College Board, the school, or the instructor of the content, ideas, or values expressed in the material.

## **Wish List**

There are some supplies that are useful for the classroom and teacher that are not supplied by the school. Some of these needs are:

- Canon #245-246 ink cartridges
- hand sanitizer
- disinfecting wipes



- paper towels
- 5-hour Energy Shots



# Performance Tasks

During the AP Seminar Course, students complete the following performance assessments: **two through-course performance tasks** and an **end-of-course exam**, while adhering to the College Board's policies to ensure the validation of scores.

## Performance Task #1 (Team Project and Presentation)

In the Team Project and Presentation, students work collaboratively with a team of 4 or 5 to identify, investigate, analyze, and evaluate a real-world or academic problem or issue; consider and evaluate alternatives or options propose one or more solutions or resolutions; present and defend the argument for their solutions through a multimedia presentation; and provide a defense to questions posed by the teacher.

This Performance Task is made up of two parts: the 1,200-word *Individual Research Report* (scored by the teacher and validated by the College Board) and an 8-10 minute *Team Multimedia Presentation and Defense* (scored by the teacher). As a whole, Performance Task #1 is 20% of the student's AP Seminar score for the College Board. Performance Task #1 will be due in early February (specific date TBA).

## Performance Task #2 (Individual Research-Based Essay and Presentation)

In the Individual Research-Based Essay and Presentation, students work independently to identify a research question based on provided stimulus material; research the issue; analyze, evaluate, and select evidence to develop an argument; present and defend a conclusion; and produce a multimedia presentation to be delivered to their peers.

The College Board's AP Program will annually release cross-curricular source materials (texts) representing a range of perspectives focused on a single theme or topic. Students use these texts to identify a research question of their own; conduct research; analyze, evaluate, and select evidence to develop an argument; and present and defend their conclusions. The final paper must refer to and incorporate at least one of the provided sources.

This Performance Task is made up of three parts: the 2000-word *Research-Based Argumentative Essay* (scored by the teacher and externally validated by the College Board), the 6-8 minute *Individual Multimedia Presentation* (scored by the teacher), and the *Oral Defense of Presentation* (two questions from the teacher, scored by the teacher). As a whole, Performance Task #1 is 35% of the student's AP Seminar score for the College Board. Performance Task #2 will be due in early April (specific date TBA).

## Performance Task #3 (Written Exam)

During the AP Exam administration window (early May, specific date TBA), students take the three-hour AP Seminar written exam which is entirely scored by the College Board, not the teacher. The exam consists of five items: three short answer questions and two essay questions.

The three short answer questions ask for an analysis of an argument in a single source or document. The two essay questions ask for a comparative analysis and evaluation of the authors' arguments as well as a synthesis/development of evidence-based argument. As a whole, Performance Task #3 is 45% of the student's AP Seminar Score for the College Board.

# Year-at-a-Glance

## **Weeks 1:1-2 (Aug. 10-19)**

These first few weeks will serve as a broad introduction to the course including topics such as the nature of plagiarism, the 'QUEST' framework, and the fundamentals of scholarly research.

## **Weeks 1:3-9 (Aug. 22-Oct. 7)**

The remaining majority of the first quarter will be devoted to covering the foundational skills required for future success in the course. The student-selected topic of 'Technology and Social Media' will serve as a common theme that will direct our collective practice of skills. The first quarter will end in a Mock PT1 (individual research reports and group presentations).

## **Weeks 2:1-6 (Oct. 10-Nov. 18)**

The majority of the second quarter (prior to the Thanksgiving Holidays) will be focused on developing the more advanced skills required for success on the coming Performance Tasks. The student-selected theme of 'Culture and Art' will serve as a jumping-off point for a Mock PT2 (individual research papers and presentation).

## **Weeks 2:7-9 (Nov. 28-Dec. 16)**

The time between the two breaks (the one-week Thanksgiving Holidays and the two-week Winter Holidays) will serve as practical preparation for the coming Performance Tasks. Groups will be formed for Performance Task #1; the pending release of the stimulus materials will be discussed; and intense practice of skills will continue. The semester will end with a Mock PT3 as the fall exam. Students are encouraged to meet up at least once over the break with their PT1 groups.

## **Weeks 3:1-6 (Jan. 3-Feb. 10)**

This period of time will be devoted to the completion of Performance Task #1. Throughout the entirety of the second semester, Mr. Benton will not be able to provide specific feedback on students' work on any of the College Board's Performance Tasks. During these weeks, both the *Individual Research Report* and the *Team Multimedia Presentation and Defense* will be due in class. Specific due dates will be announced in advance. During these weeks, students will also begin working with the College Board's stimulus materials in preparation for PT2.

## **Weeks 3:7-10 (Feb. 13-Mar. 10)**

During these weeks prior to the Spring Holidays, students will be working on Performance Task #2, especially the *Research-Based Argumentative Essay* and early planning for the *Individual Multimedia Presentation*.

## **Weeks 4:1-3 (Mar. 21-Apr. 7)**

During these weeks after the Spring Holidays, work on Performance Task #2 will come to an end. The *Research-Based Argumentative Essay*, the *Individual Multimedia Presentation*, and the *Oral Defense of Presentation* will all be due. Specific due dates will be announced in advance.

## **Weeks 4:4-7 (Apr. 10-May 5)**

These weeks will serve as focused preparation for Performance Task #3, which will take place on May 4<sup>th</sup> at 12:00 noon).

## **Weeks 4:8-9 (May 8-18)**

These final weeks will serve as a period of transition into the senior-level Capstone course, AP Research. There is no spring exam for AP Seminar aside from the College Board's PT3.

# Student Contract

As a student of Mr. Benton's AP Seminar course, I agree to the following class policies regarding absences, homework, late work, computer access, tutoring, required supplies, plagiarism and academic honesty:

## Absences

It is completely the **student's responsibility** to obtain "make-up work" and to set up with Mr. Benton a time after school to make up any missed quizzes, in-class essays, notes (if necessary), or to properly receive any other information missed due to an absence. If a student has missed a class, he or she should refer to the agenda available in class, in his or her planner, and on [bentonenglish.com](http://bentonenglish.com). However, if the student has questions about the assignment, has missed notes, or has missed an assessment of some sort (e.g. quiz, essay), he/she will have to talk with Mr. Benton before or after (but not during) class or contact him via email. If a student is absent for an assessment, quiz, or essay, he or she has exactly five school days to make it up before that task's grade is permanently entered as a zero.

## Homework

AP Seminar is a college-level course that introduces students to college-level research, writing, and presentation skills. There is no textbook. Most readings will come in the form of a handout or online. Though there is no textbook, there may be assigned tasks which require students to read a book at home. These books may be purchased, checked out from a library, or read on an electronic device. Other homework will consist of readings and a great deal of writing. Students are highly encouraged to use cloud storage (e.g. Google Drive, Dropbox, OneDrive) or a thumb drive to keep track of their research and written work.

To be considered "on time," assigned homework must be turned in within the first few minutes of class (or, in the case of work submitted online, before the deadline. Assignments that miss the deadline will receive a **50%-off** penalty. Work that is over one day late will not be awarded a grade. If a student leaves campus early in the day and misses class, it is expected that the work be turned in beforehand. Late work will not be accepted more than 24 hours past the due date. In the case of absence, work may be submitted online or emailed in on the due date. If a student has an excused absence or a legitimate emergency, he or she must immediately consult the teacher to discuss their options.

## Computers

Throughout the school year, students will need regular access to an internet-connected computer for both online research and written work. If a student does not reliably have at least once-a-week access to an internet-connected computer, the student must notify the teacher of this reality within the first week of the course so that accommodations can be made. Students are also encouraged to access the class website at [www.bentonenglish.com](http://www.bentonenglish.com) for immediate access to the class agenda and downloadable handouts. Mr. Benton's email address is [bentonro@pcsb.org](mailto:bentonro@pcsb.org); students are urged to rely on his easy accessibility through both email and the Remind app.

## Tutoring

Mr. Benton is available after school (exact days and times TBA) for tutoring. By signing this syllabus, the student acknowledges the availability of tutoring and agrees to make use of the teacher's time if this course causes academic concerns.

## Supplies

While other items that do not appear in this list may be required intermittently throughout the course by teacher request, the following materials are required of all AP Seminar students on a daily basis:

- **Notebook paper** (college rule preferred)
- **Blue or black pens** (pencils aren't allowed on some assignments)
- **Highlighters** (up to four multiple colors are helpful for marking texts)
- **Folder/binder** (to neatly store research, handouts, notes, graded work, etc.)
- **USB flash drive** (to ensure a way to save work when there are connection troubles)
- **Index cards** (size/color does not matter)

## Plagiarism

The College Board mandates that, to the best of their ability, all AP Seminar teachers ensure that students understand ethical use and acknowledgement of the ideas and work of others, as well as the consequences of plagiarism. The student's individual voice should be clearly evident, and the ideas of others must be acknowledged, attributed, and/or cited.

According to the College Board's rules, a student who fails to acknowledge the source or author of any and all information or evidence taken from the work of someone else through citation, attribution or reference in the body of the work, or through a bibliographic entry, will receive a score of 0 on that particular component of the AP Seminar Performance Task. In AP Seminar, a team of students that fails to properly acknowledge sources or authors in a Performance Task will receive a group score of 0 for that component of the Team Project and Presentation. The College Board also states that a student who incorporates falsified or fabricated information (e.g., evidence, data, sources, and/or authors) will receive a score of 0 on that particular component of the AP Seminar and/or AP Research Performance Assessment Task. In AP Seminar, a team of students that incorporates falsified or fabricated information in the Written Team Report will receive a group score of 0 for that component of the Team Project and Presentation.

In light of these policies, outside of the Performance Tasks (in Mr. Benton's class), academic dishonesty includes all forms of cheating – giving or receiving – and plagiarism as outlined in SPHS's AP Honor Code. If a student turns in an assignment, it is a personal guarantee that it is an idea of his/her own creation. Even closely imitating the language, thoughts, ideas, or expressions of another human (whether he or she be a classmate or an anonymous denizen of the internet) and submitting those words as one's own original work without giving due credit or using proper MLA citation is an intellectual, academic, and moral failure. See [plagiarism.org](http://plagiarism.org) and the Plagiarism Notes provided in the first weeks of class for more information. Aside from possible removal from this AP course, the following consequences are also considered reasonable and will be the **expected results** in any case of a student's academic dishonesty: a permanent **zero** on the assignment, disciplinary **referrals** for plagiarism, probation/banishment from **NHS** and other honor societies, blacklisting by legitimate **universities**.



## Student Info

Email address:

Your phone:

() -  -  (optional)

Who is your current English teacher?

Why are you enrolled in AP Seminar?

What clubs/organizations/teams/crews/cabals/posses/cults are you currently involved with at SPHS?

What are your current plans after graduation?

What (aside from a high grade and AP exam score) do you hope to get out of this class?

Explain your biggest motivation(s) to do well in school this year.

Do you have reliable access to an internet-connected computer at least once a week? If not, please elaborate.