

## **Advanced Placement Program Information and FAQs**

### **About Advanced Placement (AP)**

AP can change a student's life. Through college-level AP courses, students enter a universe of knowledge that might otherwise remain unexplored in high school. Through AP coursework and exams, students have the opportunity to earn credit or advanced standing at most of the nation's colleges and universities.

### **Why Participate?**

- Gain the Edge in College Preparation
  - Get a head start on college-level work.
  - Improve writing skills and sharpen problem-solving techniques.
  - Develop the study habits necessary for tackling rigorous course work.
- Stand Out in the College Admissions Process
  - Demonstrate maturity and readiness for college.
  - Show willingness to take the most rigorous courses available.
  - Emphasize commitment to academic excellence.
- Broaden Your Intellectual Horizons
  - Study subjects in greater depth and detail.
  - Engage in intense discussions, solve problems collaboratively, and learn to write clearly and persuasively.

### **Are you the right student for an Advanced Placement course?**

Before enrolling for an AP course, ask yourself the following questions:

- Am I ready for the rigors of a college level course?
- Does my schedule allow for me to devote 2-3 hours each day to do additional reading and homework?
- Am I able to engage in analysis?
- Do I excel at technical writing?
- Am I able to work independently?
- Do I have a strong work ethic?
- Do I attend school regularly (very few absences)?
- Do I regularly participate in class discussions?
- Am I willing to commit to a demanding reading load (for specific classes)?
- Are the grades in my current classes high?
- Am I ready for a challenge?
- Am I determined to take the AP exam in May in an effort to earn college credit?

If you can answer "yes" to these questions, then an AP class is for you! Just remember, expectations are high, and one should examine all commitments before deciding to take an AP course.

### **How many colleges accept AP grades?**

Most colleges and universities have a policy granting incoming students credit, accelerated placement, or both, for qualifying AP exam scores. The best source of specific and up-to-date information about an individual institution's policy is its catalog or website.

### **Why should I take a more difficult course and risk getting a lower grade?**

The grade you receive may be as good as or better than one you would have earned in a less challenging course because of the 10 points added to the final average for AP courses in Gwinnett County. Additionally, college officials know that all courses are not equal. Their evaluation of students' grades focuses as much on the rigor of the course as on the grades received, especially with respect to honors and scholarship programs.

An AP course gives students an opportunity to learn a subject in greater depth and helps them develop skills that will be critically important to success in college.

### **How does AP affect HOPE?**

Students receive 10 extra points for AP courses. In calculating GPA for HOPE, these 10 extra points are subtracted for calculation on the 4.0 scale and, instead, .5 is added to the converted grade. For example, if a student receives a grade of 92 in the course, the grade becomes an 82. On the 4.0 scale for HOPE, the grade for the course is 3.0. Then the student will receive an extra .5 for its being an AP course, resulting in a final grade of 3.5. Another example would be if a student receives a 104 in the course. The 10 points are subtracted giving the student a 94 in the course with a 4.0. When the .5 is added, the final grade for HOPE would be 4.5.

### **Are AP courses difficult?**

- Compared with regular high school courses, AP courses are more demanding.
- Depending on the subject, you may engage in more challenging reading, writing, and problem solving and more in-depth analysis, evaluation, and synthesis of material.
- Most AP classes are comparable to college courses, so they aren't easy, but they're not impossibly difficult either.
- The intellectual skills and interests you can develop will equip you for lifelong learning.

### **Are there summer assignments?**

Some courses will require students to complete assignments over the summer. Please check with individual teachers about this requirement and what it entails.

### **Do I have the preparation?**

- Students who are enrolled in gifted or honors classes prior to the AP class usually have the best preparation for success in AP classes.
- Successful students have discussed AP classes with their previous teacher(s).

### **Do I have the time?**

Excellent organizational and time management skills are essential for successful AP students. AP classes require the ability to balance school work with extracurricular or job schedules. If an AP student must work, jobs should be limited to a few hours per week. The ability to identify priorities is useful.

### **I'm not sure I am ready for an AP course examination. What do I need to succeed?**

You need to be willing and you need to be able. "Willing" means motivated to study and learn on the college level. If you are committed to participating actively in an AP class and to doing the out-of-class assignments, you have met a major prerequisite for success. "Keeping up" is a basic practice for any college-level course. The courses move rapidly and cover a lot of ground. Successful students are those who keep up, or better, stay a little ahead of the required reading. You must also be able to do the work. Your record in earlier courses is the most obvious indicator of that ability.

### **Can I drop the AP course if I decide I don't like it after a couple of weeks?**

In short, no. We go to a great deal of effort to give you information about AP classes and the subsequent expectations up front so that you make your decision accordingly. Additionally we set our master schedule in the spring and hire teachers based on your decision. Therefore, you will not be allowed to drop an AP class after the registration/schedule confirmation process.

## **What is the AP Application Process at Collins Hill High School?**

- 1. In January, applications will be available from specific locations and on the school's web site.**
  - Students may pick-up applications before school and after school. See below for where applications can be picked-up.
  - Teachers' classes should not be interrupted to ask questions about an AP class. Do this before and after school.
  - Please note that these applications are to be used for AP courses only.
  
- 2. All applications include a teacher recommendation form.**
  - Students will deliver the application with their part completed to the teacher who will complete the teacher recommendation form (last page) recommending the student for the AP course. The student will not receive the AP application back from this teacher.
  - The recommending teacher will return the completed application to the correct AP teacher.
  
- 3. AP Selection Criteria:** The items listed below will be reviewed in order to best determine student eligibility for placement in the AP program. However, please understand that the AP committee, consisting of AP teachers in each subject area, reviews the application in its entirety. Incomplete applications are not processed.
  - PSAT or SAT score (must be included with application)
  - Current grade in the subject area of the AP course
  - Teacher recommendation
  - Quality of application essay(s)
  - Attendance record
  
- 4. Students and parents are expected to sign a contract if accepted into an AP class.**
  - If students do not return a signed contract, they will NOT be allowed to register for the AP class.
  - Once a student signs a contract and is registered for a class, he or she will remain enrolled in the class.
  
- 5. Students must meet minimum requirements for each course area (see next page).**
  
- 6. REMEMBER THAT STUDENTS ARE SIGNING UP FOR YEAR-LONG SCHEDULING!**
  
- 7. Locations for students to pick-up applications.**

Students need to pick-up applications before or after school. There is a general application, AP English application and an AP Music Theory application. All will be available in the two locations below:

  - Dr. Bell's Room: 3.015
  - Front/Main Office

## DESCRIPTION OF AP COURSE OFFERINGS

**Biology (rising 11<sup>th</sup> or 12<sup>th</sup> grade students):** This course is designed to be the equivalent of a two-semester college introductory biology course. It should be taken by students after the successful completion of a first course in high school biology and one in high school chemistry. It aims to provide students with the conceptual framework, factual knowledge, and analytical skills necessary to deal critically with the rapidly changing science of biology. Eleventh grade students who opt to take this course must also be enrolled in Physics.

**Calculus (AB and BC; rising 11<sup>th</sup> or 12<sup>th</sup> grade students):** An AP course in calculus consists of a full high school academic year of work that is comparable to calculus courses in colleges and universities. The AP Program includes specifications for two calculus courses. Calculus AB devotes the year to topics in differential and integral calculus. Calculus BC is a full-year course in the calculus of a single variable. It includes all topics covered in Calculus AB plus additional topics. Both courses are challenging and demanding. Students need strong Algebra and Trigonometry skills to be successful.

**Chemistry (rising 11<sup>th</sup> or 12<sup>th</sup> grade students):** This class is designed to be the equivalent of the general chemistry course usually taken during the first college year. Students will attain a depth of understanding of fundamentals and a reasonable competence in dealing with chemical problems. Laboratory experiences are an important part of this course.

**Computer Science (rising 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> grade students):** This is an introductory course in computer science. Because the development of computer programs to solve problems is a skill fundamental to the study of computer science, a large part of the course is built around the development of computer programs or parts of programs that correctly solve a given problem. The course also emphasizes the design issues that make programs understandable, adaptable, and, when appropriate, reusable. In addition, an understanding of the basic hardware and software components of computer systems and the responsible use of these systems are integral parts of the course. Eleventh grade students should have taken at least Algebra II before applying.

### **English:**

\*Students who apply and are recommended to pursue AP English at the end of their freshman year will skip sophomore language arts and will take 11<sup>th</sup> Grade American Literature and Composition as sophomores. They will then be enrolled in a 2-year course sequence integrating AP English Language, Literature, and Composition during their junior and senior years. Students who apply and are recommended to pursue AP English at the end of their sophomore or junior year will chose between AP English Language Composition and AP English Literature and Composition as their senior language arts course.

**\*English Language and Composition (Track Course):** This course focuses more on nonfiction and rhetoric. Students will engage in becoming skilled readers of prose written in a variety of periods, disciplines, and rhetorical contexts, and in becoming skilled writers who compose for a variety of purposes including analysis, synthesis, and argumentation.

**\*English Literature and Composition (Track Course):** This course focuses on the student of literature of various genres including fiction and nonfiction, novels, short stories, poetry, and drama. While the composition involves synthesis of various sources and argumentation, it focuses primarily on literary analysis. This course is for students who are interested in studying literature of various genres and using this wide reading knowledge in discussions of literary topics. Students are taught the elements of rhetoric: writing with a purpose, addressing and appealing to an audience, creating effective text structures, and affecting an appropriate style.

**Environmental Science (rising 11<sup>th</sup>, or 12<sup>th</sup> grade students):** The goal of this course is to provide students with the scientific principles, concepts, and methodologies required to understand the interrelationships of the natural world, to identify and analyze environmental problems both natural and human-made, to evaluate the relative risks associated with these problems, and to examine alternative solutions for resolving and preventing them. Environmental science is interdisciplinary and includes such subjects as geology, biology, environmental studies, chemistry, sociology, economics and geography.

**French Language (rising 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> grade students):** Students who enroll in this course should have a good command of French grammar and vocabulary and have competence in listening, reading, speaking, and writing. The course emphasizes the ability to understand spoken and written French in various contexts. Prerequisites are Honors French III and/or Honors French IV.

**German Language (12<sup>th</sup> grade students):** The course takes a holistic approach to language proficiency and recognizes the complex interrelatedness of comprehension and comprehensibility, vocabulary usage, language control, communication strategies and cultural awareness. The course strives to promote both fluency and accuracy in language use.

**Human Geography (rising 9<sup>th</sup> grade students only):** The purpose of this course is to introduce students to the systematic study of patterns and processes that have shaped human understanding, use, and alteration of Earth's surface. Students employ spatial concepts and landscape analysis to examine human social organization and its environmental consequences. They also learn about the methods and tools geographers use in their science and practice. No prerequisites are required.

**Macroeconomics (rising 12<sup>th</sup> grade students):** This course can be used to satisfy the Economics requirement for graduation. The purpose of this course is to give students a thorough understanding of the principles of economics that apply to an economic system as a whole. Such a course places particular emphasis on the study of national income and price-level determination, and also develops a students' familiarity with economic performance measures, the financial sector, stabilization policies, economic growth, and international economics.

**Music Theory (rising 10<sup>th</sup>, 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> grade students):** The ultimate goal of an AP Music Theory course is to develop a student's ability to recognize, understand, and describe the basic materials and processes of music that are heard or presented in a score. The course will instill mastery of the rudiments and terminology of music, including hearing and notating pitches, intervals, scales and keys, chords, metric organization, and rhythmic patterns.

**Physics B and C (rising 11<sup>th</sup> (B) or 12<sup>th</sup> (C) grade students):** The aims of these courses are to develop students' abilities to do the following: read, understand, and interpret physical information; describe and explain the sequence of steps in the analysis of a particular physical phenomenon or problem; use basic mathematical reasoning; and perform experiments and interpret the results of observations, including making an assessment of experimental uncertainties. Physics B satisfies the Physics graduation requirement. Students taking Physics C must have had an Honors Physics class or AP Physics B. Also, students in Physics C must be concurrently enrolled in AP Calculus or have already passed the course. Physics C alone does not satisfy the Physics requirement for graduation.

**Psychology (rising 12<sup>th</sup> grade students):** This course is designed to introduce students to the systematic and scientific study of the behavior and mental processes of human beings and other animals. Students are exposed to the psychological facts, principles, and phenomena associated with each of the major subfields within psychology. They also learn about the ethics and methods psychologists use in their science and practice.

**Spanish Language (rising 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> grade students):** This course is intended for students who wish to develop proficiency and integrate their language skills, using authentic materials and sources. Students who enroll should already have a basic knowledge of the language and cultures of Spanish-speaking peoples and should have attained a reasonable proficiency in using the language.

**Spanish Literature (Any student that has passed AP Spanish Language):** This course is comparable to a third-year college introduction to Hispanic literature course. It is based on a required reading list which includes works of literary significance and represents various historical periods, literary movements, genres, geographic areas, and population groups within the Spanish-speaking world. The objective of the course is to help the student learn to interpret and analyze literature in Spanish.

**Statistics (rising 11<sup>th</sup> or 12<sup>th</sup> grade students):** The purpose of the AP course in statistics is to introduce students to the major concepts and tools for collecting, analyzing, and drawing conclusions from data. Students are expected to master four conceptual themes: exploring data, sampling and experimentation, anticipating patterns, and statistical inference.

**Studio Art (2-D Design, 3-D Design, and Drawing; rising 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> graders):** Before applying, a student must have taken a year of Drawing and Painting and/or Sculpture and have teacher approval based on a portfolio review. AP Studio Art is actually three separate courses. Students will consult the instructor to choose which is best for them. The course is not based on a written exam; instead, students submit an extensive portfolio for evaluation at the end of the school year. The class is designed for students who are seriously interested in the practical experience of art.

**United States Government and Politics (rising 12<sup>th</sup> grade students):** This course can be used to satisfy the Political Systems/Government requirement for graduation. Students completing this course will know important facts, concepts, and theories pertaining to U.S. government and politics. Students will also learn about the typical patterns of political processes and behavior and their consequences, and they will be able to analyze and interpret basic data relevant to U.S. government and politics.

**United States History (rising 11<sup>th</sup> grade students):** This class can be used to satisfy the U.S. History requirement for graduation. This course is designed to provide students with the analytic skills and factual knowledge necessary to deal critically with the problems and materials in U.S. History. The students will learn to assess historical materials—their relevance to a given interpretive problem, reliability, and importance—and to weigh the evidence and interpretations presented in historical scholarship.

**World History (rising 10<sup>th</sup> grade students):** This AP course satisfies the World History requirement for graduation. The purpose of this class is to develop greater understanding of the evolution of global processes and contacts in interaction with different types of human societies. The course builds on an understanding of cultural, institutional, and technological precedents that, along with geography, set the human stage.