

## AP4CTE AP Seminar: Building a Dynamic Workforce

### *Research Strategies for Innovating and Problem-solving Across Career Paths*

#### AP4CTE Purpose Statement

Career Technical Education pathways provide students direct and practical skills, building bridges between high school and post-secondary education and career plans. AP4CTE is a nonprofit providing open-source educational resources to schools looking to join CTE programs and AP coursework for their student populations. Doing so provides students equal access to high-level programs for career *and* college-readiness, putting students in the unique position to not only *do* the work of industries, but to innovate, collaborate, and problem-solve through critical thinking, research, and the design of products and systems which address *real*, emerging needs in today's workplaces

#### The College Board's AP Capstone Program: an Introduction

*AP Capstone* is a two-year, skills-based interdisciplinary program developed by *The College Board*. Both years of the program are meant to supplement and enhance the learning already happening in and between the various subject-based AP courses and other content-based programs happening in secondary schools. The two-year program combines research and analytic skills, critical thinking and reading, and an inquiry-based model where students delve deeply into special topics of college and career relevance, providing students a place to focus on areas of personal interest. *The College Board* approach to the program rests heavily on the QUEST method: **Q**uestion and explore, **U**nderstand and analyze, **E**valuate multiple perspectives, **S**ynthesize idea, **T**eam/Transform/Transmit—in the process, students investigate real and academic problems through a variety of lenses, including cultural and social outlooks, philosophical and ethical approaches, political examples, historical events, economic impacts, scientific/mathematical/medical practices, artistic mediums, and so on. Students who complete both years of the program will have significant bodies of work in their areas of research, which may provide them access to college and career internships, further research opportunities, and can be used for scholarship applications at the collegiate level.

#### AP Seminar CTE Course Description and Learning Objectives

AP Seminar is a year-long preparatory course, and serves as a prerequisite to year two--AP Research. The content of the course is flexible, taking on a multidisciplinary, cross-curricular approach to inquiry-based learning which makes it an easy companion to CTE Pathways. The course is designed to showcase for student the overlapping and

interdependent nature of the content knowledge of their content-based courses , while also introducing them to skills for analysis, interpretation and evaluation of technical and complex argumentation, and preliminary research practices consistent with the problem-solving and skill-based approaches in career-technical programs. Over the course of the year, students are expected to complete the following high-stakes tasks:

- Task 1: Team Project and Presentation (20% of AP Score)  
*Includes IRR (Individual Research Report) and Team Presentation and Oral Defense*
- Task 2: Individual Research-based Paper (35% of AP Score)  
*Includes IWA (Individual Written Argument) and Individual Presentation and Oral Defense*
- End-of-course Exam (45% of AP Score)  
*Includes Argument Analysis (Part A) and Written Argument (Part B)*

#### Introduction to this AP4CTE Thematic Focus: An Overview

Writers throughout the modern age have looked for ways to define and dissect the ubiquitous concept of “The American Dream.” Much of the prevailing sentiment narrows down to the desire for Home (both owned and lived in) and the desire for meaningful Work. In 1973, American poet and activist Marge Piercy published her poem, “To Be of Use” echoing such a sentiment:

*The people I love the best  
jump into work head first  
without dallying in the shallows  
and swim off with sure strokes almost out of sight.  
They seem to become natives of that element,  
the black sleek heads of seals  
bouncing like half-submerged balls.*

*I love people who harness themselves, an ox to a heavy cart,  
who pull like water buffalo, with massive patience,  
who strain in the mud and the muck to move things forward,  
who do what has to be done, again and again.*

*I want to be with people who submerge  
in the task, who go into the fields to harvest  
and work in a row and pass the bags along,  
who are not parlor generals and field deserters  
but move in a common rhythm  
when the food must come in or the fire be put out.*

*The work of the world is common as mud.  
Botched, it smears the hands, crumbles to dust.  
But the thing worth doing well done  
has a shape that satisfies, clean and evident.  
Greek amphoras for wine or oil,  
Hopi vases that held corn, are put in museums  
but you know they were made to be used.  
The pitcher cries for water to carry  
and a person for work that is real.*

Today's students overwhelmingly echo this sentiment—to provide meaningful skills to the workplace, and have earnings reflect that worth to society, are both desired products of their hard work as students and civilians in today's America. However, it is also widely acknowledged that today's work in America is *dynamic*, and to do well today requires workers to be able to think, problem-solve, and teach themselves beyond the basic job description. The America of today *is* multi-disciplinary, and based in not just efforts during the specified work day, but on the ability to seek opportunities to develop new ways of innovating.

This course will provide students a way not only to continue learning the basic skills of their desired career-technical pathway but also the basic research skills to seek out real-world issues in the workplace. Course content will simply introduce issues broadly across American labor, giving students a chance to follow lines of reasoning to more narrowed issues of personal interest. Over the course of the study, students will learn how to develop focused inquiry questions, dissect complex academic and technical published literature, apply research to synthesized responses, collaborate with peers to tackle research projects, and present focused arguments in light of the research to an audience of academic peers.