

Classical Conversations and Advanced Placement Exams

Taking the AP

One of our many goals at Classical Conversations is to encourage home schooling parents to prepare students to do well at any college or university. Hopefully, some of our students will actually attain a university level of skill and knowledge while still in high school. One proof of the level of knowledge achieved in specific subjects is passing the Advanced Placement Exams (AP) administered by the College Entrance Examination Board. A student who passes any of their exams is almost always awarded college credit at any institution.

There are two ways home school students can take the exams. "Any secondary school may participate in the AP Program by having its principal complete a Participation Form and appoint an AP Coordinator... Students at nonparticipating schools may take the exam at any participating school. Students should make arrangements in advance so that enough exams are available." *A Guide to the Advanced Placement Program*, May 1998. Visit www.collegeboard.org for more details.

As Classical Conversations grows, we hope to include other home school students and offer the Exams ourselves. Until we get to that point, we suggest you take the exams at a local high school. You must let the local high school know before February of the year you will take exams. All exams are offered in May and have a significant fee per exam, so check with the testing school. This fee is expensive enough to dissuade unprepared students from trying to earn an easy credit and yet very inexpensive compared to a college course fee.

If you are seriously interested in the AP exams, please call the College Board and introduce yourself as a high school principal (Remember, you are the principal of your private home school) who is interested in learning more about the AP exams. They will send you a lot of free information along with specifics on a couple of exams that you may want to mention by name.

Besides ordering AP materials, it is beneficial to check out one of the many AP preparation books at the library or in bookstores. In fact, they are a great way to design a home high school course, as the texts are very detailed and concentrate on the most important points in a subject.

At Classical Conversations, we are interested in helping students take the AP exams, but you must remember a critical point - we can't do it all in an hour a week. The student must be motivated to do extra on their own and parents may have to pay for extra materials or tutoring. The point of the exams is not to see if the student has completed a high school course, but to see if they have gone beyond and completed college level work.

Classical Conversations is not interested in encouraging students to just pass a test. We want students to be able to study and learn any information and express it clearly and intelligently to others. Our goal is to foster rhetorical skills that lead to true wisdom rather than just head knowledge. If you want to just pass an AP exam there are better preparation sources than our seminars. On the other hand, if you are willing to work very hard at home we can help you are by guiding you to resources and providing AP level assignments to complement our regular seminar work.

These are the names of the specific exams. The AP information will give you a complete description of each topic.

Biology (25% Evolution)

Calculus AB (Saxon's Calculus) and BC
Chemistry
Computer Science A and AB
Economics: Macro and Micro
English Literature (Emphasizes American & British Lit)
English Language (Emphasizes English Grammar)
Environmental Science
European History
French Language and Literature
German
Government & Politics: Comparative
Government & Politics: United States
History of Art
Latin Literature
Latin: Virgil
Music Theory
Physics B (Saxon's Physics) or C
Psychology
Spanish Language and Literature
Statistics
Studio Art
US History

The address is www.collegeboard.org

Classical Conversations' AP Preparation

British Literature or English Language - Passing both of these AP exams should be in reach of most diligent students who take Challenges I and II, and all who take I, II, and III. Latin I and II provide a good review of English grammar along with increasing vocabulary skills. American Literature teaches the student to write a concise essay on a literary topic. Studying The Taming of the Shrew provides a thorough introduction to Shakespearean language and should enable students to understand most of his other writings. In British Literature, we continue to work on essay writing but include more of the vocabulary associated with literature analysis. In the American Drama seminar, we will look at modern play writing. All these topics and skills are on the English AP exams. During Challenge III, we will study poetry and Shakespearean works in a broad manner, completing all that is on the Exams. If your child is already a prolific reader and can write well, we suggest you get an English AP preparation book as it will reveal to you any gaps that you might want to work on in order to take next year's exam(s) if you are not continuing with Classical Conversations.

Calculus- If a student does well in the Saxon Calculus book, Saxon assures you that you will be prepared for the Calculus AB exam in May. In fact, the book is specifically shorter than their other texts so you can complete it by May and be ready.

Physics- The above applies to the Saxon Physics text we will be using.

Latin Virgil or Cicero- Henle Latin I and II are meant to be only high school Latin courses. In order to take the AP in either Latin exam, you need to spend a year translating either Cicero or Virgil and some other prominent Latin authors. Meanwhile, interested students could always spend summers or an extra year at home moving onto translating Latin literature, using the AP book as a guide.

Biology - We will be studying Biology during Challenge II. Most high schools have their biology students learn about cell, plant, and animal anatomy, which are about 1/2 the AP Biology exam. We will be doing the same in our Biology text and labs. The AP is also 1/4 Evolution. Classical Conversations does not teach evolution as fact or worry about the grammar associated with the subject. On the other hand, we have looked at the theory very closely through our research papers on Defeating Darwinism during Challenge B. This work should enable the students to answer a number of questions from the AP Exam. The other 1/4 of the exam covers biological processes such as mitosis and osmosis and the environmental impact on biology. Keep in mind the exam is very anti-Christian and will be sure to indicate that man is only a burden and never an asset to life on earth. Generally, AP Biology students take a second year of biology in order to pass the exam. We believe a motivated student can finish the work in one year. To accomplish this through Classical Conversations' Biology Seminar, we will study the usual high school biology topics and lab work, including 2 AP labs. Plus, each week there will be an AP topic to research as an optional assignment. Students who just want the high school credit can earn it, but those who want to do more will be directed in how to proceed.

American History - Preparation for the AP American History Exam will come through many of our seminars. The American Literature Seminar introduced the students to most of the major periods in American History. Economics covered how American's have incorporated Free Market theory and socialism into our lives, and American Government covered all the important documents that established and maintain our executive, legislative, and judicial systems. During Challenge III, we will study all of American History as a whole, using a text that prepares students for the AP. Again, our philosophy is to encourage rhetorical skills from a Christian perspective so some of the post-modern aspects of American History are examined through our policy debate preparations and Theology Seminar (Challenge IV).

We must reiterate our main concern - these exams are hard and you cannot depend only on Classical Conversations to prepare students. The home school principal/teacher must be involved with their child. We will provide you with materials, information, and direction along with weekly help in the context of a rhetorical education while at least helping you give your student an opportunity to have a better than average high school education. Each student has different talents and interests, and only so much time. Each parent can put in different amounts and types of guidance and instruction. All this will affect a student's progress and so it is up to the home school to put forth the effort needed to pass an AP Exam.