

ENGLISH

The curriculum of the English Department stresses the development of skills in reading, writing, speaking, and thinking. Small classes – on average, 12 students – provide an environment for lively discussions in which students learn to analyze challenging literature as well as to articulate their thoughts, reactions, and interpretations. A broad range of literature exposes students to ideas and experiences from around the world. Frequent and varied writing assignments demand from students a strong foundation in grammar and composition. Writing assignments train students to express themselves clearly, cogently, and confidently, while engaging in thoughtful investigation, reflection, and analysis.

– Ellen Devine, Department Head

THE SEQUENCE

In the third, fourth, and fifth forms, a student takes English 100, 200, and 300 respectively. In the sixth form, students may choose from a variety of electives. The English Department also offers one interdepartmental course: American Studies (EN375 and HI375HO), a full-year, double-period interdisciplinary survey of American culture, which earns three course credits in both English and history. American Studies fulfills the EN300 and HI310 requirements.

THIRD FORM ENGLISH

INTRODUCTION TO LITERATURE

Year; 3 course credits
EN100

Introduction to Literature introduces students to the critical reading of short stories, novels, poems, and plays. This course strives to expose students to a variety of genres, perspectives, and voices and to familiarize them with particular foundational texts. The required texts for this course include *The Odyssey* and selections from the Bible (primarily Genesis and Exodus). Examples of the other works that may be studied are *Romeo and Juliet*, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, *Their Eyes Were Watching God*, *Jane Eyre*, *Purple Hibiscus*, and selected poems and short stories. Students develop their writing skills by composing paragraphs and essays on various topics and also through their study of vocabulary and grammar.

Note: Refer to p. 29 for the writing workshop electives in English open to third formers.

FOURTH FORM ENGLISH

COMPOSITION AND LITERATURE

Year; 3 course credits
EN200

Composition and Literature teaches students to write correctly and to read analytically. While training students to write both descriptively and critically, teachers emphasize grammar, usage, punctuation, sentence construction, and paragraph organization. The literature includes short stories, plays, novels, and poems.

Required texts include one of Shakespeare's plays.

Note: Refer to p. 29 for the writing workshop electives in English open to fourth formers. In rare cases, particularly gifted fourth formers who have demonstrated enthusiasm for and talent in creative writing, and who have completed the writing workshops available to third and fourth formers, may request departmental approval to enroll in the sixth form single-term electives Reading and Writing Poetry (EN408) or Reading and Writing Fiction (EN441) in the spring term of their fourth form year. These electives will not fulfill the minimum elective requirement for the sixth form year.

FIFTH FORM ENGLISH

AMERICAN LITERATURE AND COMPOSITION

Year; 3 course credits
EN300

American Literature and Composition introduces students to the rich and varied multicultural heritage of American literature. Students read a broad range of works that gives voice to diverse perspectives on being American. The balance of contemporary and traditional readings enhances students' knowledge of literary techniques and movements. We also emphasize close reading and critical writing skills.

AMERICAN STUDIES

Year; 3 course credits
EN375 (must be taken with HI375HO)

This interdepartmental course for fifth form students presents a detailed study of American history, literature, and culture and fulfills the American literature and United States history requirements. The course is taught in double periods and earns three credits in both English and history. A student must meet the honors standard for the History, Philosophy, Religion, and Social Sciences Department to be enrolled in American Studies.

Note 1: Fifth formers are eligible to take a variety of electives concurrently with their fifth form English course. Fifth formers interested in enrolling in sixth form single-term electives, must be granted departmental permission to enroll in one of those courses. Single-term electives taken in the fifth form year will not fulfill the minimum elective requirement for the sixth form year.

Note 2: Fifth formers are also eligible to enroll in Screenwriting and Playwriting (TA270); enrollment in TA270 does not require departmental approval.

SIXTH FORM ENGLISH

In the sixth form year, students choose from a wide range of electives. Students may complete their three credits of English in several ways: by taking one year-long elective, or one two-term elective and one single-term elective, or three single-term electives.

The year-long electives offer students the chance to engage in a prolonged study of material that is thematically cohesive and multidisciplinary in approach. Students who wish to take a year-long course must complete all three terms of the course in order to earn English credit in the sixth form year.

The two-term elective, Advanced Creative Writing, requires the creation of a substantial body of original work that has undergone significant workshopping and revision. By nature, this process requires significant time both for writing and revising, which is why the course is two terms long. Students who take Advanced Creative Writing may not take Reading and Writing Poetry (EN408) or Reading and Writing Short Fiction (EN441) as their single-term elective in the spring.

The single-term electives provide students variety in their study of literature throughout the year by offering a diversity of courses. Students may not repeat a single term elective within their sixth form year. Though every effort is made to accommodate student course requests for English electives, it is not always possible to schedule sixth formers into their first choice English courses and all of their other requested courses. Therefore, students must indicate at least two choices per term when requesting electives, in order to ensure appropriate scheduling of all courses and students.

Note 1: A student who has maintained a minimum average grade of A- during the first two terms of the sixth form year is allowed to waive the spring term if the student has the approval of the current teacher, the department head, and the student's college counselor.

Note 2: A student who has been away from campus for a term is not eligible for a waiver.

Note 3: Students who wish to consider this waiver option should discuss those plans during the course selection process during the fifth form spring; see pp. 4-5 for details.

YEAR-LONG ELECTIVES

The year-long courses offer students the opportunity to engage in a sustained and multidisciplinary study of a thematically cohesive topic. Students who are English enthusiasts are welcomed to concurrently enroll in a single term elective while taking a year-long course, but the single term elective may not replace one of the terms of the year-long course.

THE CLASSICAL TRADITION

Year; 3 course credits
EN405

In this year-long course, students explore the influence of classical Greece and Rome as the foundation of western civilization, and how the surviving works of antiquity have shaped and informed culture from the Renaissance to contemporary times. Through the study primarily of literature, but also of historical, philosophical, and artistic works, students are introduced to some of the most influential writings of Western civilization. Special attention is paid to the following themes: What does it mean to be human? To be male or female? How should we live—what are the ideals of human conduct (ethics/morality) and why should we observe them? Why is attaining self-knowledge necessary and arguably the goal of a meaningful life? How much of our lives are determined by powers beyond our control? Does free will exist, or is it merely a necessary illusion? If the gods exist, what should our relationship with them be? Is there cosmic justice? If not, how important is human justice? How is human consciousness both a gift but also an ordeal? If to be civilized means to repress our animal instincts,

what are the costs/consequences of this repression for us? Though the pacing and focus of each term may differ somewhat between sections, the course proceeds chronologically; therefore, the course investigates classical Greek and Roman works throughout the fall and much of the winter, and then moves to the revival of the classical world in the Renaissance and beyond by exploring works of art that directly or indirectly echo the themes of the classical period. Texts studied throughout the year may include: *The Iliad* (excerpts), *The Homeric Hymns*, Herodotus' *Histories* (excerpts), Thucydides' *History Of The Peloponnesian War* (excerpts), Aristotle's *Poetics* (excerpts), *Agamemnon*, *Antigone*, *Medea*, *Oedipus Rex*, *The Bacchae*, *Lysistrata*, *Symposium* (Plato), *The Apology* (Plato), *The Republic* (Plato) (excerpts), *On Happiness* (Aristotle), *Nicomachean Ethics* (Aristotle) (excerpts), *The Rise And Fall Of Athens: Nine Greek Lives* (Plutarch) (excerpts), *The Aeneid* (excerpts), selected poems of Ovid and Horace, *Letters From A Stoic* (Seneca), Dante's *Inferno*, *Antony and Cleopatra* (Shakespeare), *King Lear* (Shakespeare), Shakespeare's *Dark Lady Sonnets*, *Essays* (Montaigne), "The Wasteland" (T.S. Eliot), *Equus* (Peter Shaffer), *The Invention of Love* (Tom Stoppard), and *Metamorphoses* (Mary Zimmerman).

THE HUMANITIES COURSE: THE CULTURE OF THE WEST FROM THE ROMANTIC REVOLUTION THROUGH THE AGE OF ANXIETY

Year; 3 course credits
EN480

Beginning with the Romantic revolt against the Enlightenment in the late 18th to mid 19th centuries, continuing with the Modernism's "shock of the new" in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, and ending with the "Age of Anxiety" of the post World War II era, this year-long course investigates the great cultural revolutions of the past 200 plus years. Each term, students will explore the zeitgeist—the spirit of each age—through some characteristic works of literature, art, music, film, philosophy, and social theory with the goal of coming to a deeper understanding of the modern sensibility. Literary works will include such novels as Goethe's *The Sorrows of Young Werther*, Shelley's *Frankenstein*, West's *The Return of the Private*, Gide's *The Immoralist*, and Kafka's *The Metamorphosis*; lyric poetry of the Romantic and Modernist periods; plays such as Ibsen's *A Doll's House* and Sartre's *No Exit*; films such as *The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari*, *Modern Times*, *The Triumph of the Will*, and *Dr. Strangelove*; musical works from composers such as Beethoven, Chopin, Debussy, Stravinsky, Miles Davis, Joni Mitchell, and Bob Dylan; philosophical works from such thinkers as Nietzsche and Freud; and art from such movements as Romanticism, Impressionism, Cubism, Expressionism, Post Expressionism, and Pop Art. While students who have knowledge of or are involved in the arts are encouraged to sign up for this course, all students who have a sincere interest in the multidisciplinary approach of a humanities course are welcomed.

POST-COLONIAL LITERATURE

Year; 3 course credits
EN485

By the end of the 18th century, various European powers were competitively pursuing the growth of their own empires with unprecedented eagerness and enthusiasm. In a mad dash for resources, land, wealth and power, Europeans extended their reach

to continents that were far away and far different from their own. If the 18th and 19th centuries saw imperialism reach its peak, then the 20th century witnessed its dismantling. Throughout Africa, Asia, and the Americas, the countries and cultures that had existed under colonial rule rebelled, and the majority gained independence. In this course, students study the vast and diverse topics associated with the creation and eventual disintegration of the colonial projects of Europe. Through the study of literature, history, film, philosophy, theory, oral history and art, this course explores the inspiration, justification and manifestation of colonization as well as the resistance to this project. Using post-colonial theory as a lens to understand the literary and cultural legacies of European imperialism, students examine works produced by both the colonizing and colonized cultures. Students develop familiarity with theoretical terms and concepts (e.g. Hybridity, Orientalism, Cosmopolitanism) and employ them to understand the tension reflected in the works studied, and to gain insight into the lasting effects for the contemporary global landscape. *This course fulfills the requirement in contemporary global studies.*

JOURNALISM AND NONFICTION STORYTELLING

Year; 3 course credits

MD375

Nonfiction storytelling, whether it is daily journalism, long-form magazine writing, personal essays, opinion pieces, radio broadcasts, or another variety, is invariably based in fact. The creator is circumscribed by what actually happened, and yet these works can be as gripping and nuanced as any work of fiction. Unlike a novelist, a nonfiction storyteller cannot invent a character or fabricate a cliff-hanging plot twist. Like a novelist, a nonfiction storyteller is free to experiment with form, detail, diction, syntax, metaphor, and the like. Understanding that dynamic is key to the work of this course. Students study the foundational elements of a fact-based story. What makes such a story compelling, provocative, or, simply, fun? How does one go about uncovering and relaying such a narrative? How can elements like rhetoric, structure, and data enhance a story? How can stories change the world? Students analyze short and long nonfiction, both contemporary and canonical, and work individually and collaboratively on storytelling projects that address current issues. They engage in a diversity of narrative forms—the written word, as well as infographics, podcasts, photojournalism, and video—and study a group of writers that likely includes James Baldwin, Joan Didion, Ian Frazier, Janet Malcolm, John McPhee, Dorothy Parker, David Foster Wallace, Tom Wolfe, and others. Students also practice accepted data-gathering techniques, employing statistics to strengthen the stories they tell. They should be prepared to share their work with their classmates regularly, providing and receiving appropriate feedback.

TWO-TERM ELECTIVES

ADVANCED CREATIVE WRITING

Fall and Winter terms; 2 course credits

EN490

This course offers students, who have experience with creative writing, the opportunity to craft a substantial body of writing while gaining experience in the demands and rewards of the

writing process. The course begins with the exploration of and experimentation with genre, as students identify, explore, and present specific types of writing they would like to share and explore with their peers. Genres may include but are not limited to slam/spoken word poetry, stream of consciousness, flash fiction, rhymed and metered poetry, dramatic monologues, short dramatic scenes, and personal essays. The workshop is the heart of the class: students are regularly required to read their work aloud and have their work critiqued in a structured, formal, and productive fashion. Students not only periodically lead workshops on their peers' manuscripts, but are also expected to edit, comment upon, and offer suggestions for improvement in every session. Students devote the last weeks of the fall and all of the winter term to composing and revising their final project. Students devise, plan, and work steadily on completing a portfolio of revised and polished writing that has incorporated the feedback received in the workshop. The portfolio may include short stories, a chapbook of poems, a novella, a play, or a combination of multiple genres. Students consult the instructor regarding their individual plans, but the final choice of what will be included in the portfolio is theirs. Throughout the course, students are encouraged to submit their work to publications, both on campus and beyond. The course culminates in a public reading in which students share portions of their work. This course is intended for sixth form students, but exceptional fifth form candidates will be considered on a case-by-case basis. Open to students who have successfully completed EN501, TA270, EN408, EN441, or who have earned departmental approval by submitting a sample of original creative work to the English department head.

SINGLE-TERM ELECTIVES

Students who wish to take single-term electives must enroll in a minimum of one elective per term. Students who are English enthusiasts are welcomed to enroll in more than one elective in any given term, but may not use the additional course to fulfill the minimum requirement for a different term.

ARABIC LITERATURE IN TRANSLATION

Spring term; 1 course credit

EN402

What do paganism, the Qur'an, and modern Arabic love songs have in common? What facts still pervading Arab culture should westerners know if they want to understand the Arab worldview? What remarkable things happened when Jews, Christians, and Muslims met in medieval Spain? What do the emerging voices of Arab women say about their world? This survey course of Arabic literature in English examines works ranging from poems of the pagan pre-Islamic world, the Qur'an and its profound linguistic influence, the writings of the cultured courts of Andalusian Spain, and folk stories such as "The Thousand and One Nights," to contemporary writings which critique dictatorial regimes and address both the violence and beauty of the Arab world. Students write essays and make short oral presentations. *This course fulfills the requirement in contemporary global studies.*

Note: This course is required for students in the Arabic and Middle Eastern Studies Program. Students may complete this course for the

sixth form English credit in the spring of their sixth form year.

READING AND WRITING POETRY

Fall, Spring terms; 1 course credit
EN408

This course is for those who know they enjoy reading and writing poetry as well as those who are new to this literary form. Students will study, discuss and write about various works of poetry as well as compose original work. Students will experiment with writing in strict poetic forms such as the sonnet, villanelle and sestina, as well as in some of the free forms of contemporary poetry.

THE PLAY'S THE THING: SHAKESPEAREAN DRAMA

All terms; 1 course credit
EN411

Four centuries after his death, Shakespeare and his plays continue to occupy a unique place in world literature, with readers and performers continuing to find them relevant and inspiring. In this course, students will read and explore plays that Shakespeare wrote, examining them in their historical context and also as living works today. Additional texts may include works of Shakespeare's contemporaries as well as recent plays, poems, films, and novels that were inspired by Shakespeare's writings.

CONTEMPORARY WORLD LITERATURE

All terms; 1 course credit
EN415

This course explores literature from around the world written since the year 2000. While reading texts from around the globe, students consider how the specifics of geography, ethnicity, language, gender, and economics combine to create compelling stories. What is distinctive about the experiences of these fictional characters from faraway places? What is universal? The course pays special attention to the real-world backdrop of each text studied and asks students to examine how their own cultural perspectives inform their understanding of the world in which we live. The texts studied may vary by section, but examples of works previously featured in this course include: *Half of a Yellow Sun* (Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie), *The White Tiger* (Aravind Adiga), *Kafka on the Shore* (Haruki Murakami), and *The God of Small Things* (Arundhati Roy). *This course fulfills the requirement in contemporary global studies.*

STAGED REALITIES: MODERN AND CONTEMPORARY DRAMA

All terms; 1 course credit
EN436

This course offers students the opportunity to learn about the dynamic nature of the theater from the late 19th century to today — from the rise of realism through the anti-realist movements of expressionism, surrealism, Epic theater, and absurdism, and to contemporary work about individual and communal identity. Students in this course read a play each week from a different theatrical moment or movement and examine the artistic, ethical, social, and political questions driving each playwright's work. Dramatists explore the realities and illusions that make up our lives, and students in this course consider the stage as a platform for these explorations. Students write scenes, critical essays, and a

paper of length for this course. Writers studied may include: Ibsen, Strindberg, Shaw, Jarry, Pirandello, Beckett, O'Neill, Brecht, Pinter, Albee, Wilson, Mamet, Stoppard, Wasserstein, Kushner, Williams, Hansberry, Miller, Churchill, Parks, and Nottage.

READING AND WRITING SHORT FICTION

Fall, Spring terms; 1 course credit
EN441

This course is designed for students who have an interest in the reading and writing of short fiction. Students will study, discuss, and write about various works of fiction as well as compose their own original work. Students will study theories of writing, read examples of various types of short fiction by published authors, and offer their own writing for examination and discussion by the class. Students will be encouraged to experiment with different styles while also working on strengthening their own creative voices. This class is intended primarily for students who are new to creative writing, though experienced creative writers are welcomed.

GREAT NOVELS

All terms; 1 course credit
EN475

From its 18th century origins, the novel has become the major literary form of the modern era. Stories that devote several hundred pages to revealing the intimate inner workings of fictional characters living fictional lives have played an outsized role in the literary landscape. Within the genre, particular novels have gained, or been granted preeminence, and, for a variety of reasons, are often referred to as "The Great Novels." In this course, students read a selection of "Great Novels" and encounter them both as individual works as well as texts that contribute to the notions and definitions upon which the genre, and this idea of greatness, are based. The texts studied may vary by section, but all sections tackle one or two great novels within the term. Titles studied in the course may include such varied and diverse weighty tomes as *The Brothers Karamazov*, *Infinite Jest*, *Ulysses*, *Pride and Prejudice*, *Moby Dick*, *Middlemarch*, *Midnight's Children* or *One Hundred Years of Solitude*.

NARRATIVE, POWER AND THE SELF: THE POLITICS OF AMERICAN IDENTITY

All terms; 1 course credit
EN476

This course provides students the opportunity to consider and explore the varied notions of American identity through the diverse contemporary literary landscape. Students read a range of authors whose texts investigate the relationship between literature, culture, and American identities. We consider the historical, political and cultural influences that have shaped how America is depicted as well as literature's role in the construction and representation of national, group, and personal identities. The class considers issues such as: What are the differences and similarities expressed in these identities? What do those similarities and differences indicate about the authors, their experiences, and America as a whole? Authors studied may include Julia Alvarez, Alison Bechdel, Ta-Nehisi Coates, Junot Diaz, Jeffrey Eugenides, Jonathan Franzen, Maxine Hong Kingston, Jhumpa Lahiri, Toni Morrison, and others

based on the interests of both the students and teacher.

SATIRE: LITERATURE OF PROTEST AND CHANGE

All terms; 1 course credit
EN477

Disruptive, uncomfortable, and often funny, satire provides keen commentary on the social, political and cultural context from which it originates. This course exposes students to a variety of satires from different historical and cultural contexts and questions whether satire has the ability to effect change. In addition, students also investigate the modes and tools of satirical texts—understatement, hyperbole, irony, metaphor, etc.—in order to gain a deeper sense of how satires are successfully created and executed. The course studies satire in a variety of forms and media such as novels, plays, television shows, movies, websites, and blogs.

PANDORA'S BOX: HUMANS AND MACHINES

All terms; 1 course credit
EN478

Human beings have always been interested in the impact of technology on human life. Even the Ancient Greeks imagined robots that would serve humans and free them from the drudgery of daily life. But they also imagined machines possessing consciousness, one of the defining traits of what makes us human. Thus, anxiety about the boundaries between humans and machines has a long history, though it has taken on new urgency today, as we constantly rely on and interact with machines. Examining fiction, non-fiction, and films, we will explore what it means to be human by asking two major questions: First, are humans just biological machines (or “neural computers”) with a complex engineering designed by evolution and ultimately with mechanical explanations of our mental lives? In other words, can human emotions be explained in terms of evolutionary selection as Steven Pinker argues? Or are we more than that because of consciousness and subjectivity? Second, as we see artificially designed and programmed machines that do more and more of what we do, what is the relationship between biological machines like us and the artificially built, non-biological machines that we create? Are we in danger of losing our humanity as technology takes over our lives, as genuine human interactions diminish and we lose contact with Nature? Will we become the tools of our tools as Thoreau once feared? Can powerful Artificial Intelligence systems be aligned with human values? Will AI evolve eventually into creatures who come back to haunt their creators? Are we on the cusp of an enhancement revolution where new technologies will soon allow people to control and fundamentally change their bodies and minds? Will the “Singularity,” predicted by futurist/inventor Ray Kurzweil, finally happen, where humans and machines merge into a new species some time in this century? What will be the impact of AI on the workplace, warfare, human relationships? These are all critical questions that will be addressed in the 21st century. Core texts and films may include: *Frankenstein* (Mary Shelley), *How The Mind Works* (Steven Pinker), *The Machine Stops* (E. M. Forster), *I, Robot* (Isaac Asimov), *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep* (Philip K. Dick), *Her* (2013 Spike Jonze film), *Ex Machina* (2015 Alex Garland film), *2001: A Space Odyssey* (1968 Stanley Kubrick film), and *The Matrix* (1999 Wachowski Brothers film).

INTENSIVE EXPOSITORY WRITING

All terms; 1 course credit
EN479

Intentionally broad in scope, Intensive Expository Writing offers students the opportunity to sharpen writing skills that they can apply in all academic disciplines and beyond the classroom. The course focuses on students' ability to hone writing skills while cultivating their powers of analysis, argumentation, description, and narration. Therefore, a major goal of the course is to provide students with various strategies that they can use to create desired effects with words. Students read a variety of short texts and use them as models for frequent and varied writing assignments. Close study of these texts helps students to become better critical readers and to apply professionals' strategies to their own writing process. Written assignments may include personal essays, reading responses, opinion pieces, cultural critiques, and formal arguments. Through regular revision and reflection, students develop a deeper understanding of themselves as writers and thinkers.

Note: Fifth form students may take the course with permission from the English Department head, and some students may receive specific recommendation from the department to take the course.

WRITING WORKSHOP COURSES

The focus in the writing workshops is the creation of original writing by each student and the regular exchange of feedback regarding that work among the participants in the class. While these classes may study short stories, novels, and poems by a variety of authors as examples and ideals of craft, the original writing created by each of the students serves as the primary text studied and discussed in class.

Note: Unless otherwise indicated, the writing workshop courses do not fulfill the English department graduation requirements.

INTRODUCTION TO CREATIVE WRITING

Spring term; 1 course credit
EN501

This term elective explores a variety of genres and introduces students to the craft of writing imaginative prose and poetry. Students are asked to examine the literature from the writer's perspective and to compose their own original poems, scenes, and stories incorporating the ideas and themes inspired by the texts. The class is frequently run as a workshop with students sharing and critiquing each other's work. The exact nature of this course and the texts studied in any given term will be shaped by the interests and inclinations of the students and instructor. Open to third and fourth formers.

PLAYWRITING AND SCREENWRITING

Spring term; 1 course credit
TA270

Students in this course learn how to write a story and transform it into a camera-ready script. Analyzing a range of produced screenplays, from *The City of God* to *Crash*, students investigate strategies for effective exposition, characterization, pacing, dialogue, and visual storytelling. Through writing exercises and

workshops of each other's materials in class, students expand their screenwriting techniques and develop their individual voices as writers. In seminar, students discuss the screenwriting process—from the outline and treatment through the draft and the pitch. As a final project, each student writes a 15-minute screenplay of professional standard, and pitches it to the class. Open to fourth, fifth and sixth formers.

Note: A primary purpose of this course is to prepare students who wish to participate in the annual Choate Fringe Festival; therefore, underform students have priority over seniors for enrollment in the class. With permission of the department, sixth form students may receive English credit for this course.