



# NIGHT COURSES:

## 1. “A Terrible Beauty Is Born”

Wednesday Night

Joseph McGeary

Ireland—land of saints, sages, and poets—enjoys a glorious history of written expression since well before its experience of colonial rule under the British empire. This tiny island (about the size of Indiana, with a population of 6 million) has boasted numerous great writers—Jonathan Swift, Oscar Wilde, James Joyce, William Butler Yeats, Edna O’Brien, Seamus Heaney, and, in our own time Sally Rooney, Anna Burns, Colm Toibin, and so many more. It is also a divided geopolitical space, not only in terms of its bifurcation into the Republic of Ireland in the South and Ulster (a province of the United Kingdom) in the North, but also in terms of its vexed history of violent partisan struggle between Protestant and Catholic, between loyalists to the British crown and advocates of the removal of British rule. This course will deal in this dual identity of Ireland—the “terrible beauty” described by W.B. Yeats in his anthemic poem “Easter 1916.” “The Troubles,” as this struggle has been euphemistically called by the Irish themselves, has produced a rich trove of great works of poetry, drama, fiction, and memoir. We will undertake to examine this terrible beauty, this vexed history, through a literary lens. For those interested in great literature in a wide variety of genres, this course provides much to treasure. For students interested in geopolitics, history, and postcolonial studies, this course provides an opportunity to explore subject matter rarely covered in American schools, yet pertinent to America’s own experience of division and struggle for freedom, justice, and peace. Possible texts: the story collection *Sweet Home* by Wendy Erskine; the memoir *Say Nothing* by Patrick Radden Keefe; poetry by W.B. Yeats, Seamus Heaney, Medbh McGuckian, and Paul Muldoon; and the play *Ourselves Alone* by Anna Devlin. Assessments will include literary analysis, creative writing, and (perhaps) dramatic performance.

*Joseph McGeary holds a Ph.D. in English from Duke University. He has taught in the English Department at Germantown Friends School since 2005.*

## 2. Literature and Disability

Monday Night

Becky Lu

Do you wish the books you read had better and more complex representations of disability, or that your classes created more space to talk about how disability figures in your texts? In this class, we will pair concepts and readings from the field of disability studies with literary and cultural texts to explore, deepen, and complicate our understanding of notions like normality, disability, health, and disease. The texts in this course will aim to cover a spectrum of physical, sensory, psychological, and intellectual disabilities, as well as neurodiversity and chronic pain and illnesses, prioritizing the voices and lived experiences of writers and scholars who experience a wide range of body/mind variabilities. Possible primary texts might include poetry by Molly McCully Brown; essays by Susan Sontag, Eula Biss, and Virginia Woolf; and fiction by William Faulkner, Flannery O'Connor, and Betty Quan. Assignments will include an analytical essay as well as short pieces of creative fiction and nonfiction.

*Becky Lu is a new member of the English Department at Germantown Friends School. She most recently studied English literature at Cornell, where she specialized in Renaissance poetry and prose. She enjoys Victorian novels, books with unconventional formats, and zombie movies.*

## 3. Writing with Friends: A Short Story Workshop

Monday Night

Alex Levin

In this course, we will study the craft of fiction writing with the help of Russian short stories chosen by celebrated author George Saunders in his new book, *A Swim in a Pond in the Rain: In Which Four Russians Give a Master Class on Writing, Reading, and Life*. Saunders' book invites us to glean lessons in fiction writing from Anton Chekov, Leo Tolstoy, Nikolai Gogol, and Ivan Turgenev. What do these 19th Century Russians have to teach us about pacing, tone, and voice, and how can we apply their lessons to our own work? According to Saunders' introduction, "For a young writer, reading the Russian stories of this period is akin to a young composer studying Bach. All of the bedrock principles of the form are on display." Working in cohorts, students will write two short stories. Each story will be revised and developed with input from both the instructor and peers. We will read and discuss Saunders' book, the stories he shares and his analyses of these texts. Come prepared to share your writing with others and reimagine the writing process as one filled with joy and a sense of discovery.

*Alex Levin (Class of '93) is an English teacher and serves as co-chair of the English department. He enjoys writing and thinking in the comic mode, reading obscure books, and collaborating with friends on writing projects.*

## 4. Studies in Modern Feminism

Wednesday night

Becca Burnett

The word "feminism" conjures a host of associations. For some, it is a rallying call to political action, inciting people of all genders to take to the streets and march for women's rights. For others, it's a sexy label to claim, raising images of Beyoncé concerts. Some believe we are beyond feminism, no longer needing a political movement to help advocate for gender equality. Others believe the term has historically excluded and/or continues to exclude too many from its ranks: men, women of color, lesbian, bi, and trans women, women from lower socio-economic classes, and genderqueer and gender non-binary individuals. For these people, it has almost become a "dirty word"—a label to be rejected or avoided at all costs. In this class, we will examine the history of the western feminist movement using literature to explore what feminism means, how it has evolved since the Suffragist movement, whom it serves, and whom it fails. We will read works by Wendy Wasserstein (*An American Daughter*) and Alice Walker (*The Color Purple*) and short pieces by Audre Lorde, Margaret Atwood, and Peggy Orenstein. Students will engage with some informal writing, a paper on *An American Daughter*, an in-class essay on *The Color Purple*, and a final presentation.

*Becca Burnett is the Chair of the Upper School English Department at Germantown Academy, where she has taught for the past 19 years. A student of literature, society, and human nature, she enjoys exploring the ways in which texts can help us understand and read the world around us.*

## 5. Medieval Literature: Present, Past and Future—*Beowulf* and *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*

Monday Night

Pierce Buller

*Beowulf* and *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* are two foundational works of the medieval period; standing alone, they are exceptional pieces of literature that offer a tantalizing and important glimpse of past histories, mythologies, and meaning. In this class, we will first consider and enjoy the original texts, appreciate their fantastic literary qualities and rollicking stories, and visit the University of Pennsylvania's medieval manuscript collection to get a first-hand sense of thousand-year-old folios; but we'll quickly turn to current translators and critics, and thus consider this exceptional literature both in its own time and in ours. What have we lost, and what have we gained from each text and translation? From Toni Morrison to John Gardner, from Kazuo Ishiguro to Maria Dahvana Headley (who begins her *Beowulf* translation with "Bro!"), from graphic novels to film, we'll consider how modern and medieval interpretations each inform the other, and how texts from the early and high medieval periods spoke to their audiences - and yet still speak to us. As we enjoy this literature together, we'll write about it, too: an essay, a creative piece, and some brief reflections on our readings, and perhaps try our hand at Old or Middle English poetry as well.

*Pierce Buller has taught Essentially English classes since 2013. He has an undergraduate degree in English and history from Colgate University, and a Master's in medieval history from the University of Pennsylvania.*

## 6. Jorge Luis Borges: A Journey into the Labyrinth

Monday Night

Alexander Guevarez

An experiment in intensive, author-based reading, this course studies the life and art of the Argentine *hombre de letras* Jorge Luis Borges (1899-1986). We will start with his early poetry, *Fervor de Buenos Aires*, which trots out the principle themes that would occupy him for the next half century: the enigma of time and memory, the metaphysics of Schopenhauer and Berkeley, the now-familiar figure of puzzles, mirrors, and mazes. Special attention is paid to mid-career works, *Otras Inquisiciones* and *Ficciones*. To his notion that there are two Borges—the one who exists in his work, and the warm, living identity felt by the man who sets pen to paper—we will add a third: his shape-shifting afterlife in the magical realism and science fiction that influenced successive Latin American generations. There will be frequent creative exercises in these modes, a short paper, and a longer one in conclusion. The course will be conducted in English.

*Alexander Guevarez teaches English at GFS. He also moonlights as poetry editor for The Norton Anthology, and constructs crosswords (the easier American kind). His interests include poetry, especially 20th and 21st centuries, rhetoric, and literary biography.*

## 7. The Personal Essay in the time of COVID

Wednesday Night

June Gondi

Writing is one way to make sense of a world thrown into confusion by a pandemic. Students will explore the art of the personal essay as they read Gina Kolata's *Flu: The Story of the Great Influenza Pandemic of 1918 and the Search for the Virus That Caused It*. In addition to discussing the readings in class, we will also learn about the writing process and how to craft a personal essay. Students will submit numerous short personal responses to the material, culminating in a personal essay in which students will explore their own experiences during the Covid pandemic.

*June Gondi has been at GFS for over a decade. Outside of school, you can find her traversing the Appalachian Trail. If she's at home, she's probably listening to a true-crime podcast, writing a crime story, or FaceTiming with her toddler nephews, who predictably ignore her attempts to get their attention.*



## 8. Existentialism's Final Act?

Monday Night  
Adam Hotek

Is there a causal relationship between Existentialism and Postmodernism, or are these movements disparate—two intellectual trains, two zeitgeists passing in the night? This course explores the relationship between these two movements. This inquiry will be launched by reading some of the famed proponents of literary Existentialism, such as Albert Camus, Jean-Paul Sartre, and Simone de Beauvoir. The class will then move to such so-called Postmodernist authors as Don DeLillo (*White Noise*), Thomas Pynchon (*The Crying of Lot 49*), and Rivka Galchen (*Atmospheric Disturbances*). Along the way, we will explore how these writers synthesize (or decisively don't synthesize) a web of concepts, such as identity, gender, race, nationality, economics, family, and political agency. How do Existentialist and Postmodern texts turn identity and various forms of social reality “inside out” or “upside-down?” What can we learn about ourselves and our world by reading these creative texts that are at times stoic, surreal, phantasmagoric, or experimental? Students will write response pieces, submit a formal essay, and produce a “postmodern” artifact in this course.

*Adam Hotek is a veteran teacher in the Essentially English program. He has pondered the elusive meaning of life in empty phone booths and the undulating deserts of his soul. His interests include mid-to-late 20th-century philosophy, Afro-American studies, Modernism, and culture studies.*

## 9. The Moral Injury of American Warfare

Wednesday Night  
Peter Yeomans

What is your responsibility to American combat veterans or to people overseas who have been affected by American military intervention? Who is responsible for the wars conducted by our government? Under what circumstances might you serve in the military, and in what capacity? With a focus on the emerging concept of “moral injury,” this course aims to explore dimensions of moral responsibility in relation to American warfare (since 1965), and to help students clarify their own moral obligations to these complex issues. We will use fiction, non-fiction, film, and military veteran guest speakers to explore the struggle to uphold personal moral values while serving in and recovering from war. The course will include attending (by zoom) a community moral injury healing ceremony at the VA Medical Center in Philadelphia. Our reading list may include Fountain's *Billy Lynn's Long Halftime Walk*, Karl Marlantes' *What It Is Like to Go to War*, and excerpts from Wallace Terry's *Bloods: An Oral History of the Vietnam War by Black Veterans*, as well as other excerpted passages and short articles. Writing assignments will include journal responses to film clips and readings, one longer paper, and one piece of creative writing.

*Peter Yeomans is a member of Germantown Monthly Meeting and a parent of three children at GFS. He is the program director of the outpatient PTSD clinical team at the Corporal Michael Crescenz VA Medical Center.*

## 10. Screenwriting

Monday night  
Kathleen Van Cleve

This is a workshop-style course for those who have thought they had a terrific idea for a movie but didn't know where to begin. The emphasis will be on storytelling and how to best communicate your story using the tenets of classical dramatic structure as a backbone for your screenplay. Best part: reading and watching films like *Knives Out*, *Do The Right Thing*, *Juno*, and *Finding Nemo* (among others)—and figuring out why they work. By the end of the course, each student must complete at least 25 pages of a screenplay.

*Kathleen Van Cleve is a novelist, screenwriter, and Senior Lecturer at the University of Pennsylvania, where she teaches in the Creative Writing and Cinema & Media Studies programs.*

# 11. Into and Out of the Woods: A Journey Through the Realm of Fairy Tales

Wednesday night

Jenny Gellhorn

Once upon a time, in all the dark corners of our world, on mountain tops high and in valleys down low, on ships out at sea and on vast beachy coasts, fairy tales were told and imaginations were captured. These tales, if you look for them, are still being told today in new and exciting ways. Writers, filmmakers, and playwrights ceaselessly adapt them to suit the needs of any given time and place, for the “uses of enchantment,” to borrow Bruno Bettelheim’s phrase, are many. In this course, we will examine the various practical uses these stories have, as well as how they have been repurposed over time to reflect such cultural movements as surrealism, psychoanalysis, and feminism. In addition to writing several short analytical pieces, we will have the opportunity to repurpose a fairy tale of our own, imagining how various fairy tale elements might work in our lives today. Our reading list will include the classic fairy tales of the Brothers Grimm, Charles Perrault, and Hans Christian Andersen, as well as modern retellings by such authors as Oscar Wilde, Louisa May Alcott, Anne Sexton, Neil Gaiman, A.S. Byatt, Angela Carter, and Helen Oyeyemi. The critical writings of Bruno Bettelheim (*The Uses of Enchantment*) and Maria Tatar will guide us.



*Jenny Gellhorn teaches Upper School English at Springside Chestnut Hill Academy. She has an undergraduate degree in English and Philosophy from Lehigh, a Master of Arts in English from Middlebury College, and a Masters in Teaching from the University of Washington.*

# 12. The Practice of the Wild: Ecological Reading and Writing

Monday Night

Ted Rees

In Anna Lowenhaupt Tsing’s *The Mushroom at the End of the World*, she summarizes our predicament as humans when she writes that “we are stuck with the problem of living despite economic and ecological ruination. Neither tales of progress nor of ruin tell us how to think about collaborative survival.” In this course, we will explore writings that focus on how we might build networks of collaborative survival during our era of ecological crisis, giving special attention to works that emphasize embodiment, local ecologies, and the act of noticing. Readings will range across the landscape of contemporary writing, including selections from works such as Annie Dillard’s *Pilgrim at Tinker Creek*, Aldo Leopold’s *Sand County Almanac*, Mike Davis’ *Planet of Slums*, Cody-Rose Clevidence’s *Beast Feast*, Kate Soper’s *Post-Growth Living*, Gary Snyder’s *The Practice of the Wild*, and Winona Laduke’s *All Our Relations*, among others. Through an experience paper, short presentation, and essay, students will engage with both the environment of Philadelphia and current conversations in ecological writing.

*Ted Rees (Class of 2003) is a poet, essayist, and editor. His third book of poetry, Dog Day Economy, will be published by Roof Books just before Essentially English classes begin. His previous book, Thanksgiving: a Poem, was a finalist for a 2021 Lambda Literary Award. He has taught creative writing workshops and literature courses at Temple, La Salle, and through the Blue Stoop literary community, and also runs his own seasonal program of online poetry workshops.*

# 13. Unlocking Shakespeare: Exploring *All's Well That Ends Well*

Wednesday night

Josh Hitchens

In this course, students will participate in intensive workshops on unlocking Shakespeare's texts, learning how to read and perform his plays out loud in a way that brushes away all the cobwebs and confusion and reveals them to be accessible and relevant to all of us right now in the 21st century, no matter what your level of experience with Shakespeare is. After these workshops, students will explore in great detail the text of one of Shakespeare's later plays, *All's Well That Ends Well*. For centuries regarded as one of his "problem plays," *All's Well* has become celebrated for its beautiful language, vividly complex characters, and incredibly modern ambiguity. As we read through each act of this play, students will be asked to write their own works in the voices of Shakespeare's characters in *All's Well That Ends Well*, both as monologues and as poems. As a final assignment, students will be asked to write their own piece about what they think will happen after the cliffhanger ending of this funny and fascinating Shakespearean masterpiece.

*Josh Hitchens is a Philadelphia director, actor, playwright, and educator who specializes in site-specific productions of Shakespeare, Ibsen, and Chekhov. He is the Theater Program Manager of Allens Lane Art Center and the Creative Director of the Ebenezer Maxwell Mansion.*

# 14. Emily Dickinson

Wednesday night

Sam Sullivan

Emily Dickinson wrote some of her poems on the back of envelopes. Lines of verse trace the gummy seams in triangular patterns. Little symbols, asterisk-esque, next to words refer to places on the paper where she lists alternatives. These objects pose many questions to those who encounter them. What is the difference between a message and its envelope? Do others ever truly receive the messages we send? Does publication 'complete' a poem or does it auction it off, foreclosing on its possibilities, desecrating a personal, spiritual practice? How does language grate and squirm against its contexts? This class is an exploration of these questions through the poems of Emily Dickinson. We will read biographical criticism, do close readings of her poetry, and write some poems of our own. This is a class for people who take poetry seriously—who understand it as a sacred practice. People who take this class should enjoy reading complex and difficult writing about 19th-century New England. Students should expect to produce weekly close reading responses, a thorough analytical essay, and a group of poems that take up and explore Dickinson's themes.

*Sam Sullivan likes browsing for hours in used book stores and five and dimes. He has been teaching English at GFS for six years. He writes poems and plays in a family band.*

# 15. Peer Writing Advising Training

Wednesday Night

Robin Friedman

Are you invested in good writing? Do you want to improve your writing skills while helping others get better at theirs? This course trains you to work as a peer writing advisor during the 2021-2022 school year. Peer tutoring is a constantly shifting field with a rich history of research and technique. This cohort will join the ranks of what many high schools and colleges are doing across the country. In preparation, we will read articles on "peer tutoring" and role-play various scenarios. We will ask the timeless questions: What kind of feedback is worth giving? What is the difference between critique and criticism, editing and correcting? This is a different type of course. First of all, it is only open to current tenth and eleventh graders. Second of all, there is a slightly extended enrollment process. If you are interested, please contact Robin Friedman to schedule a brief meeting before the date when your Essentially English registration form is due.

*Robin Friedman grew up in Washington, DC, and has lived in New York City, Seville, Spain, and San Salvador, El Salvador, where she worked with a women's organization. In her free time, she enjoys getting lost in the woods, reading, and writing poems.*

# DAY CLASSES

## 16. The Art of Persuasion

Day Classes E, F, G, H  
Alexander Guevarez

How do words make things happen? What happens when they take on meanings other than intended? What is the relation

between language and human action? This course is an introduction to the theory and practice of rhetoric, the art of persuasive writing and speech. We will discuss three vital aspects of classical rhetoric—argument, arrangement, style—with readings of treatises by Aristotle and J.L. Austin, soliloquies by Shakespeare and Milton, and oratory by Martin Luther King, Margaret Chase Smith, and Frederick Douglass. We will also consider the rival tendencies in contemporary poetry between work meant to persuade on moral or political issues and work that privileges beauty and literary autonomy. Our aim is to help students discover strategies and tactics of argumentation; analyze and apply effective presentation and organization of discourse; develop power, grace, and felicity in their written expression; and provide a grounding in the history of rhetorical principles. By the end of the course, students will perform the *Progymnasmata*, a sequence of 14 classical composition exercises from the patristic age up through the Renaissance.

*Alexander Guevarez teaches English at GFS. He also moonlights as poetry editor for The Norton Anthology, and constructs crosswords (the easier American kind). His interests include poetry, especially 20th and 21st centuries, rhetoric, and literary biography.*

## 17. The Sonnet

Day Classes: E, F, G, H  
Becky Lu

Come explore the long history of this very short and versatile poetic form! Sonnets are best known for expressing romantic love, and we will read many delightful and surprising love poems, but poets have also used sonnets to think about time, mortality, politics, faith, nature, and the human condition. We'll begin by building a solid grounding in the structures and conventions of the sonnet, which will allow us to follow its evolution over more than 500 years of literature in the works of authors like Petrarch, Shakespeare, Milton, Wordsworth, Keats, Barrett Browning, Yeats, McKay, and Hayes. Along the way, we'll stay curious about questions like: Who is considered part of the sonnet tradition and who has been erased from it? What is the place or use of the sonnet in contemporary life and politics? In our assignments, we'll do a combination of creative and analytical approaches to our poetry. By the end of the class, you will be a sonneteer with a small portfolio of sonnets.

*Becky Lu is a new member of the English Department at Germantown Friends School. She studied English literature at Cornell, where she specialized in Renaissance poetry and prose. She enjoys Victorian novels, books with unconventional formats, and zombie movies.*



## 18. Make It New: Literary Modernism

Sections E, F, G, H

Adam Hotek

Ezra Pound once told his fellow artists to “Make It New.” This slogan encouraged authors to write in ways that challenged notions about what literature “should be” and how it could represent a rapidly changing world. In this class, we will examine how T.S. Eliot, Hilda Doolittle, Langston Hughes, William Faulkner, Jean Toomer, and Gertrude Stein transformed language and explored new ways of telling stories as means to mirror the vast complexity of “modern” existence. We will consider how these writers represented the impact of new technologies, changing notions about race and gender, and the historical wake of World War I. The texts we will read in this course are the collected poetry of Hughes, Eliot, and Doolittle, Stein’s *Three Lives* (1909), *Toomer’s Cane* (1922), and Faulkner’s *As I Lay Dying* (1930). In addition to carefully surveying these writers’ modernist visions, we will also look at early 20th-century paintings. Students will submit a formal essay, write response pieces, and produce a “the person in parts” piece that will explore how painters and writers construct the human body and identity in their work.

*Adam Hotek is a veteran Essentially English teacher. The courses he has taught in this program include Jazz Literature, Modernism, African-American Fiction, and Fyodor Dostoyevsky.*

## 19. East Goes West

Day, sections E, H

Sam Sullivan

“It would not be the first night I had slept roofless in a large city,” reflects the protagonist of Younghill Kang’s 1937 novel *East Goes West*, “But in the inner lining of my cap, I had four dollars, all I had left, in fact, after my long gestation by boat and by train. I decided to get myself the birthday present of a room.” Novels written by outsiders have a way of perceiving us better than we perceive ourselves. These books tease out the inconsistencies in our myths and promises. These truths alienate those who have access to them. Younghill Kang’s *East Goes West* is one of these stories, a piece of Korean American fiction before that category even existed, and a book that blends a representation of immigrant life in America with heady, existential fire. Our class will take the form of a deep dive into this novel, as we engage some of the critical problems that surround the text. We will read supplementary materials, and speak to people who have studied this book. We will write papers that synthesize what we discover as a group.

*Sam Sullivan likes browsing for hours in used book stores and five and dimes. He has been teaching English at GFS for six years. He writes poems and plays in a family band.*

## 20. Race and Politics in Detective Fiction

Day Classes: Day F, H

June Gondi

If you are in search of a mystery with a social conscience, then this is the class for you. We will read *The Cutting Season* by Attica Locke, *American Spy* by Lauren Wilkinson, and *Blanche on the Lam* by Barbara Neely. Even though these narratives are wildly divergent, they all share things in common: they tackle thorny social issues, such as race, politics, and class, and they all have African American female protagonists. In this class, students will engage in discussions and write short response papers. The final project will be an essay exploring how a text grapples with an issue raised during class discussions.

*June Gondi has been at GFS for more than a decade. Outside of school, you can find her traversing the Appalachian Trail. If she’s at home, she’s probably listening to a true-crime podcast, writing a crime story, or FaceTiming with her toddler nephews, who predictably ignore her attempts to get their attention.*



## 21. Reading and Writing the World: Contemporary Short Stories

Day Classes: E, F, G, H

Robin Friedman

*“When we read a story, we read with the same mind we use to read the world.”* –George Saunders

In this course, we will read contemporary short stories written in the last 10 years by an eclectic group of writers, including Danielle Evans, George Saunders, Carmen Maria Machado, Anthony Veasna So, Lorrie Moore, Viet Thanh Nguyen, and Nana Kwame Adjei-Brenyah. Each class, we will focus on a particular aspect of craft, including plot, character, mood, tone, atmosphere, and dialogue. What makes a story sing? What makes a narrator believable, sympathetic, real? What details build tension and create momentum? Together we will engage in prompt-based exercises. Students will submit short stories of their own to workshop. We will also share and discuss inspirational book passages, songs, paintings, and movie excerpts so that we can better understand our inspirations and goals. Each student will write multiple drafts of a short story and will leave class with polished work. In addition to maintaining response journals, students will also write a short essay.

*This is Robin Friedman’s ninth year at GFS. In that time, she has taught a number of Essentially English classes, including Memoir Writing, Lives on the Margins: Creative Nonfiction, Literary Pairs in Poetry, and the poetry workshop, Can Poetry Save Us? She has studied writing with Marie Howe, Cornelius Eady, and Pam Houston.*

## 22. My Favorite Books Ever, Volume 1: *The Waves* by Virginia Woolf

Day Classes: E, F, G, H

Alex Levin

Woolf’s experimental novel is difficult to decode in many ways, and quite wonderful and fulfilling in other ways. An intellectual puzzle that requires solving, *The Waves* traces a group of friends over the course of their lifetime through a series of personal triumphs and devastations. Woolf’s writing rings out with poeticism and more than a touch of sorrow. According to Kronenberger’s 1931 review of the novel in *The New York Times*, “The texture of the prose is a warp of sensory impressions woven into woof of poetical abstraction. As prose it has very often a high distinction—it is clear, bright, burnished, at once marvelously accurate and subtly connotative.” Kronenberger, as it turns out, did not love reading the novel. If you are wondering why, it may be that there is some work to be done as one reads the text, and we will have some fun deciphering the novel together. Students interested in experimental form, literature that intersects with art, and early 20th-century expressions of existential dread will likely appreciate the text. In addition to reading, students will write short responses to the text, one longer paper, and a formally adventurous short story. Come prepared to embrace confusion and the intellectual challenge of a difficult book.

*Alex Levin, co-chair of the English department, studied Woolf, amongst other Modernists, in graduate school. He appreciates authors and readers with adventurous spirits.*



Art & Design by Annie McLaughlin

## 23. Antinomians: Woman as Outlaw in American Fiction

Day Classes: E, F, G, H

Joseph McGeary

In this course, we will read and discuss three great American novels that investigate a trope of nonconformity—call it the American antinomian spirit—by focusing on strong women protagonists who resist and, in some cases, defy authoritarian and oppressive cultural norms. *The Scarlet Letter*, Nathaniel Hawthorne’s magisterial work of the mid-19th century American Literary Renaissance, spins the tale of Hester Prynne, a woman who is marginalized and scapegoated under the oppressive and hypocritical morality of Puritan society in 17th century Boston. Toni Morrison’s electrifying novel, *Sula*, published in 1973, tells the saga of a Black woman whose vitality and defiance of limits placed on women, and especially women of color, causes her to be unjustly viewed as trouble, as outlaw, as pariah. Dana Spiotta’s breathtaking new novel, *Wayward* (2021), relates a fascinating story of mothers and daughters with its focus on Sam Raymond, a 53-year-old wife and mother in Syracuse, New York, who experiences a midlife reckoning in the aftermath of the election of 2016. *Wayward* is an unforgettable novel about women’s minds, women’s bodies, about motherhood and mortality, about the polarization(s) of present day America. Within this framework, Spiotta evokes the utopian wishes and radical dreams that have, throughout our American history, stood in opposition to authority, conformity, and the crushing of our collective aspirations of freedom and self-making. These are all magnificent and engrossing novels that ought to be read in our present national moment. Assessments will include an essay and a piece of original creative fiction inspired by these texts.

*Joseph McGeary is a member of the English Department at Germantown Friends School and has taught numerous courses on American Literature and cultural studies. He is particularly interested in the literature of social protest.*

# ADULT REGISTRATION INFORMATION 2022

**COVID-19 PROTOCOLS** Please note that all Essentially English participants must meet current GFS COVID-19 mitigation requirements including proof of vaccination, routine health screenings, and masking at all times.

**ESSENTIALLY ENGLISH** at Germantown Friends School offers literature and writing courses in the months of April and May that are designed to bring people of different ages together in the classroom. Adults are invited to join these courses, which are composed primarily of our tenth through twelfth-grade students who must take one English elective each spring. We believe that sharing varied perspectives generates a special kind of learning, exciting for all participants. For both literature and writing courses, adults are expected to complete the reading and to participate in class discussions, but to do the writing only if they are enrolled in a writing course.

**EVENING COURSES** meet once a week for eight weeks, on either Mondays or Wednesdays, beginning on Monday April 4th. The last evening class will be on Wednesday, May 25th. Classes start promptly at 7:00 and run until 9:30 p.m., with one short break.

**DAYTIME COURSES** meet for 5 class periods in an 8-day cycle, with the first cycle beginning on Monday, April 4th and the last day of classes on Thursday, May 26th. Some courses are offered in one section only; others are offered in two or three. They will be taught in the section or sections in which there is the most demand. If you are interested in a daytime course, please indicate on the form which section you prefer.

## DAY SECTIONS, ESSENTIALLY ENGLISH 2022

Section E	Section F	Section G	Section H
Day 2, 11:50-12:45	Day 1, 2:15-3:15	Day 2, 2:15-3:15	Day 1, 9:10-10:10
Day 3, 1:15--2 :15	Day 3, 11:50-12:45	Day 4, 11:50-12:45	Day 3, 2:15-3:15
Day 5, 8:15-9:10	Day 4, 1:15-2:15	Day 5, 1:15-2:15	Day 5, 11:50-12:45
Day 6, 9:10-10:10	Day 6, 8 :15-9:10	Day 7, 8:15-9:10	Day 6, 1:15-2:15
Day 8, 2:15-3:15	Day 7, 9:10-10:10	Day 8, 9:15-10:15	Day 8, 8:15-9:10

**TO REGISTER** fill out the form below, and send to:

Karen Barbarese, Germantown Friends School, 31 West Coulter Street, Philadelphia, PA 19144.

**FEE FOR ADULTS** is \$350.00 per course. Enclose a check payable to "GFS Essentially English." If a course is oversubscribed or canceled, you will be notified in time to choose another. After sign-up is completed, a first assignment and information about books you will need to purchase will be sent to you by your course's instructor before the beginning of spring break. **Adult registrations are due no later than February 25th.** Later registration may be possible if there is space available in a class.

**FOR FURTHER INFORMATION**, email Karen Barbarese at [kbarbarese@germantownfriends.org](mailto:kbarbarese@germantownfriends.org).

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## ADULT REGISTRATION FORM 2022

NAME \_\_\_\_\_ Email \_\_\_\_\_

(Please print legibly.)

ADDRESS \_\_\_\_\_

HOME PHONE \_\_\_\_\_

WORK PHONE \_\_\_\_\_

Circle one: Current Parent    Alumnus/Alumna    Faculty    Friend

Your Child's Name \_\_\_\_\_

COURSE CHOICE (Number and Title)

FIRST CHOICE \_\_\_\_\_

SECOND CHOICE \_\_\_\_\_

Germantown Friends School  
31 West Coulter Street  
Philadelphia PA 19144

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