

English

Requirements:

Continuous enrollment in English, grades nine through twelve.

Grade 9 English 9 (ENGL 210)

Grade 10 English 10 (ENGL 220)

Grade 11 English 11 (ENGL 310)

Grade 12

- ☐ Senior Electives (ENGL 320)
- ☐ The New Community Project (ENGL 330)
- ☐ Seminar in Literary Studies: Man's Search for Meaning through Literature and Film (ENGL 410.02)
- ☐ Seminar in Literary Studies: Critical Theories of Gender, Race, Sexuality, and Ability (ENGL 410.03)

English

Horace Mann's Department of English trains students to be strong readers: of texts, of the world around them, and, ultimately, of themselves. From ninth grade on, our students develop their analytical skills through the study of a broad range of challenging texts, lively and probing seminar style discussions, and focused, challenging critical and creative writing assignments.

"Show don't tell" is a familiar refrain in our classrooms, shorthand for our emphasis on working from particulars to a general theory. In that sense, we foster a culture of evidence rooted in the practice of close reading. We assign fewer texts in order to emphasize attention to the details that give a work of literary art its richness and complexity. Seminar style classes put students' critical engagement with the texts at the center of our praxis. Such an approach also fosters our students' ability to empathize with, and truly listen to, a diversity of voices beyond their own. Furthermore, the department's continuing partnership with the Royal Shakespeare Company offers students opportunities each year to engage in rehearsal room techniques that revitalize their understanding of the ways in which their own lived experiences are intrinsically connected to human lives from across the centuries.

Grades nine, ten, and eleven have no strictly required reading but rather fluid curricula with specific texts determined by the teacher of each course. Senior electives, including intensive one-semester and year-long courses thoughtfully designed by faculty, culminate the study of English at Horace Mann.

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In grades nine through eleven, the course of study in English is organized around the major literary genres: poetry, drama, and prose fiction. Increasingly, students read works of nonfiction as well (recent examples include James Baldwin's *The Fire Next Time* and Ta-Nehisi Coates' *Between the World and Me*). In their senior year, students may take semester electives focused on authors, literary movements and themes, or creative writing; they are also offered a variety of year-long course options. In the year-long courses freshman through junior year, faculty members develop their own curricula at each grade level and for each literary genre with an eye to including a diversity of literary voices from a broad range of traditions, time periods, and cultures. This approach not only expands students' awareness of literature's rich scope, but also helps students identify key connections between complex, seemingly disparate works.

In past years, students have studied Shakespeare's *The Tempest* alongside Aimé Césaire's *A Tempest*, Genesis with *The Odyssey*, and *Frankenstein* with *The Turn of the Screw* and *Benito Cereno*. These juxtapositions broaden our awareness of the shared concerns and multifarious approaches to human phenomena across different literary traditions. Such exposure to multiple traditions, we believe, presents students with numerous ways of defining and engaging with a literary canon.

All seniors take either two semester-long electives or one year-long elective (Seminar in Literary Studies or The New Community Project course, the latter of which combines literary study and analysis with richly rewarding, real-world opportunities for service learning).

ENGL 210 - English 9

Full credit, meets 4 days/week

Prerequisites: None

All ninth graders begin their work in English with a structured writing unit that serves to welcome them into the vigor and vivacity of the English language. Students write every day, in class and at home, and in a variety of styles, ranging from dramatic dialogues to lyric poems, and from microfictions to longer personal narratives. Daily writing is accompanied by daily feedback. We teach writing as a continual process, one that is always “in progress.” The writing unit occupies the first quarter of the ninth grade year and is ungraded—taken pass/fail—a practice which allows us both to keep the focus on the students’ work and the teacher’s feedback, and to offer students space for risk-taking and experimentation with writing and revision. The rest of the year involves the close reading and analysis of literary texts—*Frankenstein*, *Annie John*, *Purple Hibiscus*, and *Julius Caesar* are but a few examples—and the study of grammar.

ENGL 220 - English 10

Full credit, meets 4 days/week

Prerequisites: English 9 (ENGL 210)

Students in tenth grade continue their literary studies in courses designed by their teacher. Tenth graders experience greater independence in their engagement with texts, a fact reflected in the bolder, more energetic analytical and imaginative writing expected of them during the year. Tenth grade students study drama, poetry, prose fiction and, increasingly, nonfiction—all with a continued, intentional focus on close reading; typical texts include *Twelfth Night*, *Othello*, *The Great Gatsby*, *The Odyssey*, *Chronicle of a Death Foretold*, *Song of Solomon*, *Between the World and Me*, and *Sing, Unburied, Sing*. Tenth graders continue our grammar curriculum with an increased focus on the constructive uses of grammar in the context of their writing and thinking.

ENGL 310 - English 11

Full credit, meets 4 days/week

Prerequisites: English 10 (ENGL 220)

In English 11, literary study intensifies with extensive units on the major genres, particularly lyric poetry. Additionally, all English 11 students complete a major research project that brings together skills they have been working to cultivate since the ninth grade: close reading, building from evidence to argument, comparative analysis, and independent critical thinking. Depending on the class, research engages students in comparative literary-critical analysis, individual author studies, or New Yorker-style profile pieces. Regardless of the project, students work step by step, from searching for, sorting, and synthesizing a range of primary and secondary sources to developing an extended critical-analytical study of their own from that material.

ENGL 320 - Senior Electives

Full credit, meets 4 days/week

Prerequisites: English 11 (ENGL 310)

With the permission of the Department, senior electives may be taken by eleventh grade students in addition to English 11.

Students have a good deal of freedom in choosing their electives. The offerings each semester cover a diverse range of literary periods and movements, themes, and genres. Some courses stress expository or analytic writing; others engage students in writing original poems or short stories. The Department varies its electives according to its own evolving interests and to its understanding of the needs of our students.

A sampling of semester-long senior electives recently offered:

Literature of Puzzles, Games, and Mysteries

Psychological Realism: George Eliot and Virginia Woolf

How to Do Things with Books

Intro to Translation Studies

Toni Morrison

Satire

Short Masterpieces of Russian Literature

Shakespeare On Its Feet

British Romanticism: Visions and Revisions

Money in American Literature

Short Fiction: A Writing Workshop

Emily Dickinson

Reading Chang-Rae Lee

Melville's *Moby Dick*

Writing Nature, Writing Ourselves

The Serious Pleasures of Detective Fiction

The Poetics of Hip-Hop

Poets of Moment: Billy Collins, Pablo Neruda, and Naomi Shihab Nye
Literature and Film: the Art of Redemption
Bad Girls: Exploring Female Misbehavior
Youth in Revolt: Social, Cultural, and Political Resistance in American Fiction
Posthumanism: Freaks and Cyborgs

ENGL 330 - The New Community Project

Full credit, meets 4 days/week

Prerequisites: English 10 (ENGL 220)

The New Community Project is a year-long social justice course that uses the study of literature as the foundation for understanding, analyzing, and making meaningful impact on our local communities. Specifically, we will partner with a local non-profit organization that addresses a pressing community need and analyze them as a “living text.” We will ask: *What are our non-profit partner’s passions, motivations, and ambitions? Who are their main characters? Who is the antagonist? In what ways does setting impact the conflict? Does the story have a clear resolution? Where do we see the intersectionality of race, class, gender, religion, sexuality etc?* We will also read traditional texts (novels, short stories, poetry, films, & songs) with themes that are relevant to our partner. By having “living texts” in conversation with traditional texts, we will practice the language of empathy for the complex human concerns that shape and continue to shape the spaces around us. At the end of this process, we will propose and develop tangible projects that will aid our partner non-profit organization’s mission. In this way, this course hopes to inspire and empower young people to tangibly impact their communities through critical thinking, mindful collaboration, and meaningful action.

ENGL 410.02 - Seminar in Literary Studies: Man’s Search for Meaning through Literature and Film

Full credit, meets 5 days/week

Prerequisites: English 11 (ENGL 310), departmental approval, submission of a written Statement of Intent

Seminar in Literary Studies is a year-long senior elective open to all seniors interested in an *intensive* study of literature and literary scholarship. SLS is designed with the most inquisitive and committed English student in mind, the reader for whom extended, year-long study of a particular literary and critical approach or set of texts appears as a thrillingly liberating prospect rather than as a graduation requirement to be satisfied.

Some distinctive aspects of every SLS course include, but are not limited to, the following:

- *Year-long immersion in the literary field/s of a teacher's careful design;
- *Four essays (at least two of 5+ pages) and one longer presentation or group project required *per semester*;
- *Required reading of literary criticism and/or theory.

If “Poets are the unacknowledged legislators of the world,” as Percy Bysshe Shelley declared, then it took more than The Emancipation Proclamation to end slavery in the United States. The 21st century offers not only literature but also cinema as a powerful instrument for the promotion of ethical behavior and social change. “No art passes our conscience in the way film does, and goes directly to our feelings, deep down into the dark rooms of our souls,” declared director Ingmar Bergman. In this course we will read a selection of texts and experience films that wrestle with the aesthetics, anxiety, and moral necessity of bearing witness. We will explore works that focus on “the banality of evil,” whether oppressors are made or born, “Man’s Search for Meaning,” and the triumph of the will to do the right thing. Discussions will focus on film and literary theory related to: *Eurocentrism, Multiculturalism, Orientalism, Systemically ingrained-bias, Hollywoodization, Gender Identity, and Reflexivity*, among other topics. Philosophical and practical questions to be posed will include: Does an adaptation need to be “faithful” to its original in order to do justice to it? To what extent do literature and cinema borrow from each other? Is a text’s profundity necessarily compromised when turned into a film—or does the addition of visual, aural, and other dimensions compensate for the loss of literary nuance? Moreover, we will explore how the word and the digital image have entered into a reciprocally irrevocable dialogue. In addition to analytical papers, (one to be research-based), students will be encouraged to discover what is most meaningful to them—a creative project such as a screenplay, film, or adaptation.

ENGL 410.03 - Seminar in Literary Studies: Critical Theories of Gender, Race, Sexuality, and Ability

Full credit, meets 5 days/week

Prerequisites: English 11 (ENGL 310), departmental approval, submission of a written Statement of Intent

Seminar in Literary Studies is a year-long senior elective open to all seniors interested in an *intensive* study of literature and literary scholarship. SLS is designed with the most inquisitive and committed English student in mind, the reader for whom extended, year-long study of a particular literary and critical approach or set of texts appears as a thrillingly liberating prospect rather than as a graduation requirement to be satisfied.

Some distinctive aspects of every SLS course include, but are not limited to, the following:

- *Year-long immersion in the literary field/s of a teacher's careful design;
- *Four essays (at least two of 5+ pages) and one longer presentation or group project required *per semester*;
- *Required reading of literary criticism and/or theory.

“Critical Theories” is an introduction to some foundational works of critical and literary theory, especially as they intersect with issues of race, class, gender, sexuality and ability. The goal of the class is to use these texts to give students a vocabulary to speak about important cultural issues and a lens through which to consider works of literature, art, and cultural entertainment. The class consists of modular units centered around particular “isms” such as Marxism, Psychoanalysis, Gender Studies, African-American Literary Theory, Post-colonialism, Queer Studies, and Disability Studies. In each modular unit, the class will read a number of critical essays and excerpts, and we will apply these theories to a number of different cultural texts. One text we will return to throughout the year will be Kafka’s *Metamorphosis*, applying each of the theories we read to this novella as practice in close reading through a critical lens. Some other texts we will consider might include films such as *Paris is Burning*, *The Silence of the Lambs*, or *Moonlight*; television shows such as *Black Mirror*; and even advertisements, memes, artworks, and viral images. Written work for the class will comprise an ongoing online message board, literary-criticism essays, a research paper on one theorist’s work, and more creative engagements with the theories we encounter.