

English

Requirements:

Continuous enrollment in grades 9 through 12.

Grade 9 **English 9 (ENGL 210)**

Grade 10 **English 10 (ENGL 220)**

Grade 11 **English 11 (ENGL 310)**

Grade 12

- Senior Electives (ENGL 320)
- Seminar in Literary Studies: Interactive Literature (ENGL 410.4)
- Seminar in Literary Studies: Russian Literature (ENGL 410.5)

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 complex 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 rich complexity. Seminar-style classes put students’ critical engagement with the texts at the center of our practice. 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.

In grades 9 through 11, 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. 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 rich diversity of literary voices from a broad range of traditions, time periods, and cultures. This approach not only expands students’ awareness of literature’s vast scope, but also helps students identify key connections between complex, seemingly disparate works. In their senior year, students may take semester electives focused on authors, literary movements and themes, and creative writing; they are also offered a variety of intensive year-long course options.

In past years, students have studied Shakespeare’s *The Tempest* alongside Césaire’s *A Tempest*, Genesis with *The Odyssey*, and Whitman’s “Song of Myself” with Rankine’s *Citizen*. 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, interrogating, and engaging with a literary canon.

Requirements:

Continuous enrollment in grades 9 through 12. Seniors take either two semester-long electives or Seminar in Literary Studies.

HORACE MANN SCHOOL

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 routine 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 student work and teacher feedback and to offer students space for fruitful risk-taking and experimentation with writing and revision. The rest of the year involves the close reading and analysis of literary texts—*Frankenstein*, *Klara and the Sun*, *Purple Hibiscus*, *The Metamorphosis*, 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*, *Passing*, *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 its understanding of the needs of our students.

A sampling of semester-long senior electives recently offered:

Absolutely Fabulist: Literature of Cognitive Estrangement

Literature of Puzzles, Games, and Mysteries

Passages to India

New Community Project

Kafka and the “Kafkaesque”

Why Look at Animals?

Toni Morrison

Bridging the Divide: The Modern American Identity

Short Masterpieces of Russian Literature

On Trial

British Romanticism: Visions and Revisions

What We Talk About When We Talk About Love

Short Fiction: A Writing Workshop

Emily Dickinson

20th Century African-American Literature

Writing Nature, Writing Ourselves

The Serious Pleasures of Detective Fiction

Things Fall Apart

History of the English Language

Speculative Fiction and the Power of Language

Poets of Moment

Literature and Film: the Art of Redemption

The Alien: Stories and Theories of Contact

Youth in Revolt: Social, Cultural, and Political Resistance in American Fiction

Posthumanism: Freaks and Cyborgs

HORACE MANN SCHOOL

ENGL 410.4 - Seminar in Literary Studies: Interactive Literature

Full credit, meets 5 days/week

Prerequisites: English 11 (ENGL 310) and departmental approval based on the following criteria: submission of a written Statement of Intent, English grades that average A– or higher for all years and class citizenship. Students with English averages higher than B+, but not A–, will be considered on an individual basis; more weight will be given to grade averages in years 10 and 11.

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;
- *Longer essays and more intensive group work;
- *A yearlong or “capstone” project to be designed with the teacher’s approval (e.g., a major research paper);
- *Required reading of literary criticism and/or theory.

When a reader untangles a riddle, solves a mystery, figures out a puzzle, or plays a game, they don’t passively receive information; instead, they actively participate in an experience. This course will ask: How does this kind of reader engagement change literature? What happens when the reader becomes a participant, sleuth, player – or even co-author?

We’ll study traditional print and film texts that call upon readers to solve them, such as Agatha Christie’s mysteries and early English riddle-poems. We’ll then turn to more overtly interactive texts that offer to readers (or viewers, players, etc.) different paths and even different endings: *Choose Your Own Adventure* descendants like Ryan North’s *To Be or Not to Be*, videogames like Deck Nine’s *Life is Strange: True Colors*, and branching films like David Slade’s *Bandersnatch*. We’ll focus especially on hypertext literature (navigated by clicking on options) and text-parser literature (navigated by typing commands), especially the works of Emily Short.

Our supplementary readings will address intersections between interactive literature and theories of (1) identity and subjectivity, (2) authorship and readership, (3) gamification, (4) adaptation, and (5) rhetoric. In addition to writing critical essays and a research paper, each student will adapt an existing literary work into an interactive medium and create their own original interactive text. Some assignments will use coding skills that we will learn as we go; no coding experience is required to take the class.

ENGL 410.5 - Seminar in Literary Studies: Russian Literature

Full credit, meets 5 days/week

Prerequisites: English 11 (ENGL 310) and departmental approval based on the following criteria: submission of a written Statement of Intent, English grades that average A- or higher for all years and class citizenship. Students with English averages higher than B+, but not A-, will be considered on an individual basis; more weight will be given to grade averages in years 10 and 11.

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.

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- *Required reading of literary criticism and/or theory.

Whether propelled by passionate love affairs or political intrigue, whether set in salons and balls or labor camps and battlefields, whether inspired or alarmed by utopian dreams and disgusted or enamored with irreducible provincialism, Russian literature has never been embarrassed to be caught in the act. Caught in the act of consorting with philosophy, politics, and religion in its pursuit of "big questions"—but also caught in the act of improvisation, of striving before our very eyes to invent its own paths and purposes against the totalizing forces of autocratic regimes. In this reading-intensive seminar we will immerse ourselves in major and minor works of the Russian canon—the novels, plays, and stories of Pushkin, Gogol, Turgenev, Tolstoy, and Chekhov, as well as the poetry of Tsvetaeva, Akhmatova, Mayakovsky, and Mandelstam. We will pay particular attention to the radically experimental work of the Revolutionary era (in music, film, dance, and the visual arts as well as in literature) and to the diverse strategies of resistance artists explored in countering state terror, surveillance, and dogma. Our second semester will be devoted to Dostoevsky's *The Brothers Karamazov*, "the supreme summit of all literature" (according to Albert Einstein) and "the most

magnificent novel ever written” (according to Sigmund Freud). We will pair our reading with the theoretical work of Mikhail Bakhtin, who draws his vision of the “dialogical” potential of art to disrupt hegemonic structures from the novels of Dostoevsky. Because *The Brothers Karamazov* conducts such rich and continual dialogue with both its literary predecessors and heirs, it will serve as not only the capstone but the fulcrum of our course. Written work will include analytical essays, a research paper, ongoing posts to discussion boards, and creative engagements with our material.