HARROW
SCHOOL

SIXTH FORM ELECTIVES

2024-25

SIXTH FORM ELECTIVES

Electives are unexamined courses which boys choose either to complement or to contrast with their A-level subjects. They provide boys with an opportunity to explore areas of study beyond the confines of any examined syllabus, with a focus on independent learning, extension work, lateral thinking and problem-solving.

Electives form an integral part of the Harrow Diploma, which requires boys to follow a certain number of courses during their two years in the Sixth Form. The majority take eight or more courses, with an expectation that they choose at least one Elective from each of the five subject groups: Individuals and Societies; Maths, Science and Technology; Literature and the Arts; Life Skills and Wellbeing; and Interdisciplinary Courses.

As with the main A-level curriculum, the Elective programme as a whole aims to promote certain skills, grouped together under three 'key literacies' that the School has identified: social, cognitive and digital.

Most Electives are short courses consisting of eight lessons, although there are also a few longer courses, which comprise 24 lessons and last a whole term.

Boys register their preferences in the first week of the Autumn term, and the lessons begin in Week 3.

This document contains brief descriptions of all the Electives courses that are being offered in 2024–25.

A D Todd
Director of the Super-Curriculum

GROUP A: INDIVIDUALS AND SOCIETIES

THE MODERN MIDDLE EAST

Course duration: short course (8 lessons)

As a natural land bridge connecting the continents of Africa, Asia and Europe, the Middle East has been of importance throughout human history. Events there continue to dominate our news screens. Why does the region look as it does today? Why is it so turbulent and volatile? This course gives boys a balanced and broad overview of the complex dynamics at play in the region by looking at the conflict between Israelis and Palestinians, the development of Arab nationalism and the rise of political Islam.

Key skills

Social: discussion and debate; respecting different viewpoints; cultural awareness
Cognitive: critical thinking; evaluation of sources; speaking and listening skills
Digital: effective use of search engines

THE CIRCULAR ECONOMY

Course duration: short course (8 lessons)

The circular economy is a model of production and consumption that involves sharing, leasing, reusing, repairing, refurbishing and recycling existing materials and products for as long as possible.

This course examines examples of the circular economy (including Ikea, Harrow Community Kitchen, Powerday and Avedøre Danish power station). We consider whether transitioning the whole economy to a circular economy is possible or desirable. Might this be the most effective solution to the climate crisis?

Key skills

Social: sustainability
Cognitive: debate
Digital: data analysis and interpretation

EXPLORING THE SILK ROAD

Course duration: short course (8 lessons)

The Silk Road was in many ways the first glimpse of the globalised world we are unable to escape today. East met West as cultures, goods, religions and diseases were disseminated from far-flung corners of the globe along a network of trade routes. This short Elective will analyse these historical flows and connections through the lens of the contemporary geopolitical structure of Eurasia, the cities that rose and fell as a result, and the overland routes that are available to travellers today.

Key skills

Social: cultural awareness; collaboration; discussion and debate
Cognitive: comprehension, collaboration; evaluating sources
Digital: effective use of search engines; PowerPoint

CULTURAL GEOGRAPHY AND ANTHROPOLOGY

Why are Tibetan monks setting themselves on fire? Is the world becoming ever-more American, moving towards one global culture? How do we solve the problem of nurdles in our oceans? Why does disease flourish in Africa? Is collaborative consumption the solution to climate change, or does the secret lie with the Elder Brothers in the Sierra Madre? The study of geography is intimately tied to the study of people, place, landscape and culture; our collective actions shape the world and are, in turn, shaped by cultural paradigms of which we may be unaware. This course will help you answer these questions and develop an awareness of some of the core issues arising from the study of cultural geography and anthropology.

Key skills

Social: discussion and debate; values and positive behaviour; cultural awareness
Cognitive: research; critical thinking; reading and assimilating information
Digital: effective use of search engines; OneNote

WITCHES, WITCHCRAFT AND WITCH HUNTS

Between 1450 and 1750, more than 100,000 people, three-quarters of them women, were prosecuted in different parts of Europe for acts including murder, cannibalism, black magic and devil worship.

Some 50,000 were executed, usually by being burnt at the stake. Why did these trials take place? Why did they suddenly proliferate at this particular time in European history? Why were more witches prosecuted in some countries than others? Who were the accused and who were their accusers, and why, after more than 200 years, did the trials eventually come to an end? These are some of the key questions that this course will address.

Key skills

Social: discussion and debate; respecting different viewpoints; cultural awareness

Cognitive: critical thinking; evaluation of sources; speaking and listening skills

Digital: effective use of search engines

THE MAFIA: REALITY AND FICTION

In January 2023, the boss Matteo Messina Denaro was arrested after 30 years on the run. The capture of the 'last godfather' of the traditional Mafia opened up the debate on the existence and form of this and other criminal organisations in the contemporary world. To properly reflect on these issues, however, it is necessary to take a step back and look at the origins of the Mafia, its evolution, and especially the image of it that was created over time by newspapers, politics, literature and cinema. Distinguishing fact from fiction and history from stereotypes is the aim of this course.

Key skills

Social: discussion of ethics and social issues; values and positive behaviour; cultural awareness
Cognitive: comprehension; problem-solving; critical analysis of scientific data
Digital: effective use of search engines; PowerPoint; referencing skills

POWER AND POLITICS: EXPLORING US GOVERNMENT

Using a comparative approach, this course focuses on the institutions and processes of US government. You will acquire an insight into the origins and purpose of the US Constitution, and you will study the theory and practice of the Separation of Powers. Case studies on the workings of Congress, the power of the Presidency, the role of the Supreme Court and the relationships between branches will cast light on how power works within the US system of government. We will also look at the politics of the USA's electoral processes.

Key skills

Social: the value of democracy; discussion and debate; cultural awareness
Cognitive: critical thinking; debate; evaluating sources
Digital: data analysis and interpretation

GROUP B: MATHS, SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

ENRICHED PHYSICS

This course, aimed at boys hoping to apply to study physical science or engineering subjects at university, explores physics beyond the A-level curriculum, using full mathematical rigour. Beginning with some essential mathematics (complex numbers and differential equations), we move on to classical particles and waves before introducing quantum theory and Schrödinger's equation. This course is only suitable for those taking A-level Physics and Mathematics.

Key skills

Social: collaboration; communication; taking responsibility
Cognitive: problem-solving; lateral thinking; innovation
Digital: Wolfram Alpha; OneNote; effective use of search engines

AN INTRODUCTION TO ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE

Artificial intelligence (AI) is rapidly permeating all industries and having a profound impact on many aspects of our existence. This course is designed to give you a firm understanding of what AI is and its applications. You will become acquainted with terms like machine learning, deep learning and neural networks, and understand how to program basic AI machines. By the end of the course, you will have had hands-on interactions with several AI environments and applications and will have built and deployed some simple AI models and intelligent machines. This course is of intermediate difficulty and will require some Python programming skills.

Key skills

Social: discussion of ethics and social issues; communication; speech and language skills
Cognitive: research; innovation; critical analysis of scientific data
Digital: artificial intelligence and machine learning; coding and Python; referencing skills

A THEORY OF DIGITAL INFORMATION

Information theory is the study of the quantification, storage and communication of digital information. In this course, we discuss the nature of information and how it manifests in four separate realms: the mathematical, physical, biological and sociological.

We will see that information is quantifiable and related to the amount of disorder in a system. By allowing a system to copy and alter information we can observe emergent phenomena, namely evolution, at work. From here, we consider society as an evolving entity, bringing us to the ultimate question of 'where are we heading?'

Key skills

Social: discussion and debate
Cognitive: conceptual thinking
Digital: data analysis and interpretation

HUMAN EVOLUTION: SEVEN MILLION YEARS OF CHANGE

This course is an exploration of changes in characteristics in the human species since our divergence from chimpanzees, focusing on consciousness, language, tool use and culture. How have those changes affected our identity as a species and our sense of ourselves as exceptional, and how can we use this understanding to project ourselves sustainably in the future?

Key skills

Social: collaboration; discussion of ethics and social issues; cultural awareness
Cognitive: critical analysis of scientific data; critical thinking
Digital: effective use of search engines

DIGITAL FILMMAKING

Course duration: short course (8 lessons)

By the end of this course, you will have produced a short film using the iMovie app. In preparation, you will examine various historical and critical approaches to cinema as an art form, exploring its artistic, cultural and political implications and how it evokes emotion through its direction. You will reflect on an eclectic mix of films.

Key skills

Social: discussion of ethics and social issues; emotional intelligence; role playing
Cognitive: presentation skills; creativity; independent thinking
Digital: film and video editing; audio editing

RECORDING AND SOUND TECHNOLOGY

Course duration: short course (8 lessons)

This course is an introduction to the recording process, covering the basics of acoustics, sound, production and working with a digital audio workstation. You will study the history of recording, sampling and synthesis, and produce your own track in the Recording Studio.

Key skills

Social: practical work
Cognitive: creativity
Digital: audio editing

GROUP C: LITERATURE AND THE ARTS

THE COLOUR BLACK: POWERFUL AND TIMELESS

Course duration: short course (8 lessons)

In this course, we explore how the colour black has stirred emotions, revolutionised design and altered the path of history. From 20th-century fashion and modern science to Benedictine monks, ancient Greek pottery and prehistoric cave paintings, we take an artistic stance in order to examine the powerful and timeless nature of the colour black.

Key skills

Social: emotional intelligence
Cognitive: creativity
Digital: effective use of search engines

MASTERS OF ITALIAN CINEMA

Course duration: short course (8 lessons)

In this course, we investigate the work of four internationally acclaimed Italian filmmakers (Roberto Rossellini, Federico Fellini, Sergio Leone and Roberto Benigni) and how their movies influenced the history of cinema. *Rome Open City* (Rossellini), *La Dolce Vita* (Fellini), *The Good, the Bad and the Ugly* (Leone) and *Life is Beautiful* (Benigni) are the four films that will be at the centre of this journey, but they will not be the only ones you encounter.

Key skills

Social: discussion of ethics and social issues; cultural awareness
Cognitive: reflection; research; conceptual thinking
Digital: PowerPoint; referencing skills

BLACK LITERATURE

Course duration: short course (8 lessons)

This course explores the works of some of the greatest Black writers from across the globe. Their writing has shaped the discourse around race for decades, and we reflect on the impact of their literature in the past and the present. Among the writers we look at are James Baldwin, Toni Morrison, Chinua Achebe, Frantz Fanon and Sam Selvon.

Key skills

Social: discussion of ethics and social issues; cultural awareness; empathy
Cognitive: critical thinking; reading and assimilating information; reading widely
Digital: effective use of search engines

THE ART OF THE SHORT STORY

Course duration: short course (8 lessons)

This course is about one of the oldest forms of literature in the world: the short story. We look at a variety of excerpts from modern novels and classic short stories, examining the techniques and styles that make them compelling, and we draw on guidance from some of the greatest authors in literary history, considering how they create vivid characters, build engaging drama, develop a unique voice, and construct a captivating plot. With a focus on analysing and understanding these elements through reading and discussion, we break down the components of successful short stories and novels, exploring what makes them resonate with readers.

Key skills

Social: speech and language skills
Cognitive: creativity
Digital: word processing

THE *TWIN PEAKS* PHENOMENON: A SURREAL MASTERPIECE

Course duration: short course (8 lessons)

Dive into the enigmatic world of *Twin Peaks*, the groundbreaking TV show that redefined the mystery genre. This course will guide you through the show's captivating narrative and complex characters, and the surreal style of writer and director David Lynch. Discover the themes, symbolism and cultural impact that have made *Twin Peaks* a timeless classic. Through episode analysis, discussions and creative exercises, you will gain a deeper appreciation for this iconic series and its lasting influence on contemporary television storytelling.

Key skills

Social: discussion and debate
Cognitive: creativity
Digital: film and video editing

SOUNDSCAPES OF CINEMA: MUSIC, SOUND AND THE MOVING IMAGE

Course duration: short course (8 lessons)

The relationship between music, sound, film and television is fascinating and has developed enormously since the first silent movies were released in the early 1900s. This short and non-technical course will trace developments in that process from live music at the beginning, through the Golden Age of orchestral film music and the introduction of jazz and pop styles to more recent uses of music technology, as well as considering sound effects more generally. It will look

at different techniques used, such as leitmotif, and will examine the emotional power that music and sound bring to the whole genre of film.

Key skills

Social: discussion and debate; cultural awareness; active listening
Cognitive: presentation skills; research; speaking and listening skills
Digital: effective use of search engines

MUSIC OF THE AMERICAS

Course duration: short course (8 lessons)

This course will give you an insight into how American music has become what we know today and how it has made its mark on the global music scene. It covers the music of Latin America and its many dance styles, along with a multitude of North American genres from bluegrass to jazz and hip hop. Along the way we consider the historical and social impact of the music.

Key skills

Social: discussion of ethics and social issues; emotional intelligence; active listening
Cognitive: comprehension; speaking and listening skills; research
Digital: effective use of search engines

MINDFULNESS AND MEDITATION

Course duration: short course (8 lessons)

In a time of busyness and stress, it is more important than ever to have methods of recentring and refocusing oneself. While they are often associated with religious practices, mindfulness and meditation can have positive clinical psychological effects. This course explores the practices, both historically and in the present day, and how they could be used to have a positive benefit in School and in wider life.

Key skills

Social: personal discipline
Cognitive: reflection
Digital: digital hygiene

PERSONAL FINANCE

Course duration: short course (8 lessons)

This course aims to provide you with some of the knowledge and skills required to manage your personal finances effectively. You will learn how to perform some financial calculations using Excel, and we will cover a range of topics that might include: shares; bonds; forward contracts, future and options; annuities and perpetuities; ISAs; student loans; credit cards; and taxation. There will be flexibility to take the course in directions of particular interest to the boys in the division.

Key skills

Social: collaboration; communication
Cognitive: research; comprehension
Digital: Excel

CRITICAL THINKING

Course duration: short course (8 lessons)

Reasoning is the everyday process that we all use to draw conclusions from facts or evidence. To think critically about what you read and hear is a vital skill. This course will help you to analyse the reasoning in books, articles or speeches, to identify flaws in arguments and to approach any topic with the ability to reason clearly and think critically. In the age of fake news, these skills have never been more important.

Key skills

Social: respecting different viewpoints
Cognitive: critical thinking
Digital: effective use of search engines

THINKING, FAST AND SLOW

Course duration: short course (8 lessons)

Our minds are tripped up by error and prejudice (even when we think we are being logical). This course investigates strategies and techniques that enable you to make better decisions at School, at home, in the workplace, and in everything you do. The central thesis is a dichotomy between two modes of thought: 'System 1' is fast, instinctive and emotional; 'System 2' is slower, more deliberative and more logical.

Key skills

Social: values and positive behaviour; emotional intelligence; public speaking
Cognitive: presentation skills; research; peer teaching
Digital: PowerPoint; effective use of search engines

AROUND THE WORLD IN EIGHT DISHES

Course duration: short course (8 lessons)

Culture and food are inseparable concepts; they inform, strengthen and celebrate each other. This course explores a range of exceptional dishes from all over the globe, as we learn more about their history, their cultural significance, and some of the many variations that have been developed over time. We will also try each dish we study so that we can truly appreciate the array of regional flavours and ingredients that are so readily available to us here in North London. From

Afghan aushak to Somali rice, you are sure to find something new and exciting to consider the next time you head out for dinner.

Key skills

Social: cultural awareness; discussion and debate
Cognitive: presentation skills
Digital: effective use of search engines; PowerPoint

NEURODIVERSITY

Course duration: short course (8 lessons)

Have you ever wondered what makes our brains unique and how different ways of thinking can change the world? Let's embrace the power of different minds and explore what neurodiversity means and learn more about autism, ADHD and dyslexia. This course will also provide opportunities to reflect on topics such as identity, empathy (the ability to understand the feelings of others) and belonging. The course will help you boost agency (the power to be an active agent in your own learning) and will equip you with valuable skills, such as self-efficacy, in life and for any career choice.

Key skills

Social: respecting different viewpoints; taking responsibility; leadership; collaboration; emotional intelligence
Cognitive: reflection; research; peer teaching; innovation
Digital: PowerPoint; podcast, video etc; effective use of search engines; data collection; data analysis

THE WRITING ARTIST

Course duration: short course (8 lessons)

This course aims to develop an understanding of the ways artists have philosophised. We will explore a history of art written by the artists themselves – manifestos, artist-texts, diaries and stories – to see how artists have turned to writing to think about key philosophical elements of artmaking. This course is interactive and discussion led, and will challenge the way you think about art.

Key skills

Social: discussion and debate
Cognitive: evaluating sources; art appreciation
Digital: effective use of digital reading aids

GAME THEORY

Course duration: short course (8 lessons)

Game Theory is the study of strategic interactions among rational agents and has applications in many different fields. Game Theory enables us to model all sorts of scenarios, from crime to politics to penalty shootouts. It also allows us to have some fun playing the games ourselves, and seeing how closely the outcomes match up to what we would predict in theory.

Key skills

Social: collaboration; discussion of ethics and social issues
Cognitive: problem-solving; critical thinking; lateral thinking
Digital: data analysis and interpretation; Excel

A BLUEPRINT FOR THE FUTURE: SOLUTIONS FOR A SUSTAINABLE PLANET

Course duration: short course (8 lessons)

This course focuses on sustainability and consists of a series of lessons on the main issues our planet is facing, why it is important for us to solve them, and the solutions that currently exist. You will design a 'blueprint for the future' that addresses a number of these issues synoptically. You might come up with a blueprint that could save our planet.

Key skills

Social: sustainability; values and positive behaviour; public speaking
Cognitive: research; critical thinking; innovation
Digital: PowerPoint presentation; referencing skills

BOB DYLAN

Course duration: short course (8 lessons)

A towering figure in American culture and a global icon, the singer-songwriter Bob Dylan has chronicled and interpreted many of the cultural upheavals in America since the Second World War and was awarded the Nobel Prize for literature in 2016. In this course, we trace the evolution of Dylan's writing, examine his credentials as a songwriter and performer and explore his engagement with some major themes, including love, fame, politics and religion.

Key skills

Social: discussion of ethics and social issues; emotional intelligence; active listening
Cognitive: comprehension; speaking and listening skills; research
Digital: effective use of search engines

HARMONIES OF GENIUS: DECODING THE *ST MATTHEW PASSION*

Course duration: short course (8 lessons)

This course involves lots of listening – to J S Bach's *St Matthew Passion*, one of the most wonderful and extraordinary pieces of music ever written. We will explore Bach's combination of creative genius and intellectual flair by examining his use of reflective poetry alongside scripture, his integration of Lutheran hymns, the role of the soloists, orchestra and chorus, and what might be described as the 'mathematical' structure of the work.

Key skills

Social: active listening; cultural awareness; discussion and debate
Cognitive: creativity; speaking and listening skills
Digital: numeracy

THE 450 MILLION DOLLAR PAINTING

Course duration: short course (8 lessons)

This course is about a very famous and beautiful Renaissance painting, *Salvator Mundi*, usually attributed to Leonardo da Vinci. Everything about this work of art is controversial. Who bought it? Who endorsed it? Who restored it? Who decided its market value? And even who painted it? This course will look at some of the ethical issues in the art world that this painting, and its sale, force us to confront.

Key skills

Social: discussion and debate; the value of democracy
Cognitive: debate; lateral thinking; reflection
Digital: effective use of search engines

CYBERPUNK FICTION

Course duration: short course (8 lessons)

Depicting a bleak but increasingly plausible vision of a technologically enhanced near-future, cyberpunk blends elements of detective fiction and dystopia to create a more realistic counterpoint to the optimism of earlier sci-fi. While a select few ascend towards a rarefied, post-human existence, the majority must scavenge resources and repurpose whatever hardware or software they can acquire. In a toxic and corrosive environment, technology eventually falls apart; in overcrowded and corrupt cities, so does society. This course introduces and explores some of the key texts in the genre, along with the films, TV shows, video games and music influenced by cyberpunk literature.

Key skills

Social: emotional intelligence
Cognitive: creativity
Digital: effective use of search engines

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