

2025 SR DECATS Course Descriptions

In addition to declaring a Major area of study and specialization, each DECATS Scholar chooses two “Minors,” one for each of the first two weeks of DECATS. Minors are classes that meet for one week only. DECATS Scholars will choose one Major in which to study for three weeks and two Minors in which to study for one week at a time.

Senior DECATS MAJOR Course Offerings

Culinary Arts

Culinary means “of or relating to a kitchen or to cookery,” while art is described as “human effort to imitate, supplement, alter, or counteract the work of nature.” Put these two words together and you start to see that the Culinary Arts really involve creating something unique and beautiful – and something that is completely edible! It is called Culinary Arts for a reason: Not just anyone can create delicious and inventive masterpieces. This Major covers the basics of chopping correctly, methods of preparation, techniques in presentation, as well as the nutrition and chemistry involved in cooking. Further, careers in Culinary Arts will be explored. Try out your skills on family as well as the DECATS community. This Major is lots of work, but also lots of satisfaction.

Drama

The Drama Major presents a fully-produced play each summer. Scholars in the Drama Major are part of the cast and/or crew of a theatrical production who rehearse and perform their play live for the DECATS audience in the final week of the program. Scholars in the Drama Major learn about set design, costuming, and props, in addition to theatrical performance.

Film (aka “Rock Opera”)

This popular Major produces an original, from-out-of-thin-air movie each year. Filmmaking scholars learn about brainstorming, storyboarding, film editing, set design, music composition, acting on film, and playing and recording music. Ultimately, the Filmmakers/“Rock Operarians” will premier their film for the DECATS community in the final week of the program, as well as posting their film to YouTube, to be enjoyed forever.

Math/STEM

Imagine learning to create algorithms for better music playlists, or prototyping and manufacturing a new running shoe. Traditionally, training for careers in Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math (STEM) has focused on college students. But at DECATS our goal is to encourage more scholars to pursue STEM-related careers, by providing hands-on activities, challenging each other with STEM-related games, and exploring the implications of STEM adventures.

Mock Trial

Mock Trial scholars fully enact and perform a live trial using a curriculum uniquely adapted for our Sr. DECATS scholars, based on the real-world Federal Rules of Civil Procedure and Evidence. From the first to final day, Mock Trial students will work on a fun case based on a matter relevant to their middle school lives, as plaintiffs, defendants, and witnesses. Scholars will learn how the legal system works, using real-world examples and will be introduced to the day-to-day life of an attorney, as well as given advice on how to pursue a legal education in the future. Mock Trial scholars will also hone their skills in creative writing, public speaking/acting, and professionalism.

Psychology

Have you ever wondered how the brain functions? Or how our memory can be enhanced? You may have been feeling stressed and overwhelmed and need to know how to cope. Well, look no further: Psychology is here to save the day. You will learn about your personality type, along with how biological, social cognition, social influence, and cultural factors interact to determine humans' amazing capacities for complex emotions and behavior.

Science

Welcome to the fascinating world of Crime Scene Investigation! This course is designed to introduce students to the basics of forensic science and the exciting field of Crime Scene Investigation. Students will engage in hands-on activities, simulations, and projects that mimic real-life CSI scenarios. Students will learn how to secure a crime scene, collect various types of evidence, and work in teams to solve mock cases using the principles of CSI.

Visual Arts

Visual Arts scholars will work in a variety of mediums, including paint, sculpture, ceramics, and photography. Scholars will have studio time to build and showcase their creative skills and improve their spatial reasoning. Artists will also work together to create a gallery show that will be on display during the last week of the program.

2025 Senior DECATS Minor Course Offerings

Because there were restrictions on the number of characters that could be used on the ACTIVE platform, some names and descriptions were altered. Please make sure and read the more detailed descriptions listed below.

1 Artsy Craftsy

Do you love being creative and crafty? In our crafting studio students will learn about the historical relevance and creative possibilities of craft-making through a combination of structured learning and independent thinking. While developing their technical skills, students will experience working in the styles of artists and art movements from ancient history to the present day. We will explore lots of different art mediums - drawing, painting, sculpture, collage, and print-making - as well as their tools and techniques. Students will keep a sketchbook for original ideas and observational drawings.

2 Shark Tank

Shark Tank celebrates the entrepreneur in all of us. Can you convince others that your idea is marketable, useful, and profitable? Brainstorm an idea, create the prototype and advertising campaign, as well as devising a business plan to lure investors to choose your product. The competition is vicious.

3 Sew Easy I

Harness your inner designer to combine sewing and interior design! Students will learn about and operate a sewing machine as well as sew and create a garment. Additionally, students will explore interior design floor plans and learn to use basic interior design software and techniques. Enjoy the week in both the sewing room and the computer lab. It really is SEW EASY!!

4 Sew Easy II

You already know the basics, so expand and explore your abilities as a designer. Take on some of those more challenging projects. Imagine it, create it and wear it home! Strike a pose for your community, family, and friends. You've got this!

5 History Alive!

We don't get the more controversial, intriguing, and complicated aspects of history from reading a textbook. Get into the nitty gritty and look at history under a microscope. Students will participate in simulations, debates, and research to analyze which decisions impacted societal changes. Consider if they were necessary, successful, and if these changes impact our lives today.

6 Screenwriters, Storytellers, and Songwriters, Oh My!

Students will discover the art of telling stories through the use of film, stage, poetry, prose, or song. Scholars will read, watch, and discuss examples of great storytelling and will enjoy time to create their own original stories/poems/songs/short films. Students will have the opportunity, if they so choose, to share their work with the class community and invite their encouragement and constructive feedback. Humans are storytellers; it is who we are. Let's dive in and add our unique stories into the mix.

7 Community Service

Do you find yourself thinking about the major challenges facing our world today and how you can impact the world around you? Then put your energy, skills, and talents to use in the Community Service Minor. Engage in helping Dallas-area agencies with community service tasks, working with friends, and earning credit towards graduation and service requirements all at the same time.

8 SNLU

Live from DECATS, it's...well, it might not be SNL, but it'll be an impressive emulation and tribute. And it will be FUN! Use satire to tackle the news of the day. Write and perform a live skit. Be the musical guest. Write and film a commercial parody or an SNL Short film. There's a role for everyone: behind the scenes, in front of the camera/audience. Or, better yet: BOTH! Let's spend some time laughing and being creative: What better use of time could there be?

9 Las Vegas and More

Students will explore different types of games involving odds, strategy, gamesmanship, and luck. Roulette, poker, blackjack, craps, horse racing, and sports will be introduced and analyzed through play. In addition, students will take part in a ping pong tournament, engage in board games, and have a chance to participate in lifelong sports and recreation.

10 Instrument Instruction

Just learning to play music and interested in learning more? Then, join the band! No instruments or prior experience necessary. Students will experience basic and beginner guitar and drum techniques. A preselected collection of songs will be provided so that students can choose what they learn.

11 Film Workshop: Rock Opera (mandatory for all students in the Film Major)

During the 2nd week of DECATS, all Film/"Rock Opera" scholars are required to take the Film Workshop MINOR. This helps to make the final production a success, and gives scholars the opportunity to edit, improve, and "tweak" their film.

12 Serious Science

DECATS Scientists will experience a broad spectrum of activities, including proper science lab techniques, exploration of science topics, and hands-on scientific discovery. Examples of projects created in this class include the DECATS Major Case Squad (DMCS), which focuses on crime labs and basic genetics; the creation of a breakout room for fellow investigators to solve; as well as exploration of natural disasters, which include earthquakes, tsunamis, volcanic eruptions, landslides, flooding, hurricanes, tornadoes, and climate change. Investigate, explore, and interpret.

13 e-Sports

The next big dream is not to be a millionaire playing on the field, but rather one who never has to leave the comfort of their room! In this course students will learn about the rise of e-sports, discuss their favorite e-sports, and possibly attend a field trip to UTD, one of the best e-sports collegiate programs in the nation!

14 To Improv or Not?

Develop expressiveness while learning to create strong characters in detailed situations. Practice the principles of improvisation. Learn and practice comedic timing.

15 Playing Around

Basic playwriting, character creation, story structure, dialogue, props, and staging are all parts of this new minor. Scholars will create their own unique play.

16 Python

This course is designed for students interested in learning about coding and computer science, but who aren't sure where to start. We will cover the basics of Python, learn about the best coding practices, and put your knowledge to the test with fun coding challenges. While intended for beginners, those more experienced are also welcome.

17 Podcasting

Podcasts have become more and more popular over the last few years. There are many styles of podcast: talk shows, educational, and, of course, narrative. Narrative podcasts are fictional stories told through the form of audio. In this course, students will work together to create one episode of a narrative podcast by becoming writers, voice actors, and audio editors. We will explore both the creative and technical process.

18 Engineering

Give me S.T.E.M. (science, technology, engineering and mathematics)!

Let's have some FUN doing STEM activities. Creative hands-on projects that will keep you coming back for more. Weight, mass, volume, speed: all tested for distance, durability and strength. Whether it is flying objects or crashing models, you will be off your feet and determining the effectiveness. Build, test, destroy, or use - you are in charge.

19 Social Media

Social Media dominates our lives. But what is social media, who is social media, why is social media, and how is social media? All of these questions--and more--will be answered in this DECATS class. Scholars will learn about the rise of social media, how it has come to shape our world, and how our world has come to shape it. In looking at modern history, film and TV, the law, and social media itself, students will come away with a newfound understanding and perspective on our online lives. They will also gain respect for the nature of social media, with all of the benefits and consequences that it has on our daily lives.

20 STEM Games

Be logical, practical, and analytical with limited resources AND have some fun in challenging tasks. You will fully appreciate different thinking styles and teamwork as you strive to come out a winner in this minor. Show that applied knowledge and figure out a better way to do things. All of the activities will involve Math, Science, and Engineering aptitude and skills. You're up for the challenge!

21 Soundstage

Calling musicians ready to create, perform, and record music that may be featured in the Film/"Rock Opera" Movie. Explore musical styles, sound design, environmental recordings (foley), and promote musical creativity. Open to anyone (not just Film Majors)! Join in and explore that musical side of you.

22 Landform Builders: Create, Design & Explore!

Get ready to dig in and shape the world—literally! In this hands-on course, you'll create, design, and build your own 3D landforms using fun materials like clay, sand, and papier-mâché. From towering mountains to erupting volcanoes, you'll bring Earth's landscapes to life while learning about the forces that shape them. Whether you're carving canyons or crafting coastlines, this course is the perfect mix of science, creativity, and adventure. Let's build the world—one landform at a time!

23 Musical Theatre/Dance

Students will learn about historical context of dance in relation to musical theatre and performance. Students will then learn a short phrase of choreography to perform. If you are a performer, you are welcome to record the choreography to add to your professional reel or portfolio.