CATALOG

New and Notable

ACADEMIC Course Catalog

2025
2026

EAGLE HILL SCHOOL | 242 Old Petersham Road, Hardwick, MA 01037 | 413.477.6000

New and Notable Courses 2025-2026

COMPUTER SCIENCE

Unsolved Problems in Computer Science

Thousands of problems in computer science have very inefficient solutions. Some of these problems are the following. How do you find the shortest route for a truck to deliver all of its packages? How do you load up a truck with boxes of various sizes so that they take up the least amount of room? These and thousands of other problems have no efficient solutions. There is room for people with creativity and puzzle-solving skills to come up with new ideas to solve these problems more efficiently. We will first learn to calculate the run-time of algorithms to determine whether or not they are efficient or inefficient. Then, we will try to create efficient solutions for some of the problems. Along the way, we will program a few of these problems in Python to see whether their actual run-time matches our calculations.

DIVERSITY AND SOCIAL JUSTICE

Make a Difference

This class builds on the foundations of the Social Construction of Identity exploratory course and the school's community service program to offer an opportunity for students who are interested in developing their agency in a meaningful way that culminates in a strategic and organized plan of action which can be put into place on campus or in their home community. The course's content will incorporate the theory of social capital which includes three dimensions: interconnected social ties or social participation, levels of trust that characterize these connections, and benefits that are both gained and transferred by virtue of these connections and social participation. Students will use these elements to build a plan for a project that harnesses their interests.

ENGLISH

Crafting Digital Writing

Social media continues to play a significant role in our daily lives, and its impact on the interconnection of our world extends far beyond the confines of the internet. It is therefore increasingly important for students to know how to write and analyze various digital media content. In this course, students will learn how to write a wide range of online articles including but not limited to blog posts, feature articles, and opinion editorials. Students will experiment with creating various forms of digital media such as podcasts, video blogs, and advertisements, as well as, how to analyze and interpret the social media content that surrounds them. Students will also have opportunities to create writing projects by way of ideation and iteration, participatory design, physical computing, and radical collaboration.

Greco-Roman Drama

Pride, anger, joy, wisdom, madness—the drama of classical Greece and Rome captures the best and worst of the human condition. From Aeschylus and Sophocles to Seneca and Terence, the class reads the great tragedians and charts the evolution of drama from hillside festival to civic spectacle. The course

explores modern interpretations, and also studies the conditions of classical performance in Eagle Hill's amphitheater. Evaluation is based on reading, class discussion, and writing assignments both brief and long. This class fulfills part of the requirement for the Certificate in Classical Studies - Literature Track.

Murder, Mystery, and the Detective Novel

Since their inception, detective stories and crime fiction have captivated audiences the world over with their use of suspense and mystery, their memorable yet flawed protagonists, and their sly and unexpected plot developments. In Murder, Mystery, and the Detective Novel, we will trace the evolution of the detective novel from some of its earliest renderings in the work of Edgar Allan Poe and Sir Arthur Conan Doyle; to Agatha Christie and the Golden Age of Detective Fiction during the Roaring Twenties and subsequent Depression; to Dashiell Hammett, Raymond Chandler, Walter Mosley, and other authors whose stories formed the "pulp fiction" or hard-boiled movements that took Europe and the United States by storm. Students will also explore other regional sub-genres and "literary offshoots" that have grown out of this literature's sustained and pervasive popularity over the past few centuries. In this course, students will not only have the opportunity to read and discuss a collection of diverse stories: they will also analyze the characteristics and literary devices that separate detective stories and crime fiction from other forms of narrative and experiment with them in their own writing.

1999: The Year That Changed Movies Forever

1999 featured ground-breaking movies, such as Fight Club, The Matrix, Office Space, The Sixth Sense, and Star Wars Episode 1: The Phantom Menace, among others. This class will formally analyze these films while placing them in the cultural context of the Y2K era. Coursework will include long and short written assignments, discussion, and outside research..

Our Search for Meaning: Spirituality Across Humanities

This interdisciplinary course delves into the rich intersection of spirituality and the humanities, offering students a unique opportunity to explore the profound ways in which spiritual beliefs and practices shape, and are shaped by literature, art, philosophy/ethics, and culture. Through a combination of lectures, discussions, and experimental writing projects, students examine diverse spiritual traditions and their expressions in various humanistic disciplines. Students read, research, and write about friendship, love, forgiveness, visiting the sick, welcoming guests, repairing the world, and middot (soul traits). Students also consider and practice as knowledge-making activities Lectio Divina, the kabbalistic tree of life, and meditation and mindfulness practices as methods for invention of ideas and arguments. Participants in this course read theories and practices developed by Victor Frankl, Hannah Ardent, Lawrence Kushner, Thomas Merton, Richard Rohr, and Ticht Nacht Hanh.

Video Game Analysis

For decades, video games and the culture surrounding them have been deeply intertwined with the written word. With over two billion players worldwide, video games generate a vast range of literary content, from scripts and dialogue to interviews, reviews, and story adaptations. The language used to discuss games and their constituent parts offers an excellent springboard to a common lexicon upon which students can build in their future literary studies. This course offers a critical exploration of how video games contribute to and interact with other forms of media. Students analyze the narratives within games and their broader cultural impact, considering how gaming shapes and is shaped by the written word. Coursework consists of written assignments, discussions, and research projects.

Voices of Color

Voices of Color focuses on the study of literature written by people of color belonging to various cultural traditions and nationalities, as well as covering a wide range of genres and reading levels. Potential author offerings include Toni Morrison, Chinua Achebe, Haruki Murakami, Sherman Alexi, Khaled Hosseini, and more. From memoir to poetry to fictional narratives, students study these texts both as individual pieces and as elements of a literary tradition of works by people of color. Historical and societal contexts will also be examined to help students conceptualize texts and their place in literary history, as well as to develop an understanding of the multitude of cultural experiences that contribute to each writer's unique perspective.

Writing on Monsters, Ghosts, Freaks and Aliens

This course provides a forum for the development of creative and academic writing. Units of study focus on the elements of the writing process and acquisition of writing skills. While students will read literature about monsters, ghosts, aliens, and other creatures to critique different approaches to writing, this course is focused on writing persuasive, informative, and narrative texts. Topics of discussion and writing include: we define a monster, what makes something "alien," what makes us human, and the paranormal. Students will write about real and imagined experiences using descriptive details and well-structured event sequences. Students will conduct research projects in cryptozoology to grapple with the concept of what is "natural." Possible projects and assignments include: creating an original monster or alien species, creating an encyclopedia of monsters or alien types, writing short horror stories about encounters with the supernatural, and writing analytical critiques of other horror stories.

Young Adult Literature

The Young Adult Literature course explores the vibrant and evolving genre YA literature, examining its themes, stylistic elements, and cultural impact. Students will read and analyze a diverse selection of YA novels, short stories, and graphic narratives that address issues such as identity, coming of age, relationships, and social justice. Through discussions, critical essays, and creative projects, students will engage with the ways YA literature reflects and shapes the experiences of young people. Student will also consider the historical development of the genre and its influence on contemporary literature and media.

HISTORY

Discover Vietnam

This one-term course will introduce students to the history, culture, and unique geography of Vietnam. The course will focus on the stark contrast between the northern cities of Hanoi and De Nang which are steeped in a more traditional and conservative culture of Vietnam with the busy, westernized version of Vietnam found in the south in Ho Chi Mihn City. While some history of the war with the United States will be covered to give context to the differences we see between the north and south, the course will mainly focus on the geopolitical scenarios that exist in Vietnam today. Students will explore Vietnam's culture, including its traditions, cuisine, and language.

Learning History through Fiction

Some approaches to teaching history can be dull—lists of names, dates, and events are challenging to connect with and understand. However, learning of past events through historical fiction can provide immersive learning about other cultures and times as well as encourage empathy for those who lived through the event. A well-crafted historical novel can provide students with excitement, adventure, along

with a good story, and, when written in a way that incorporates historical accuracy in detail and theme, it can provide the necessary elements of a meaningful historical exploration. These books draw students' attention, promote greater interest and understanding of the story, and greater knowledge of historical events. The aim of this class is to tie works of historical fiction to primary source documents from an event or time period to study the relationship between the two text types and to evaluate the contribution that historical fiction can make in the understanding of an event or an era in history.

MATHEMATICS

Chess

In this course, students learn the basics of chess. Chess is one of the oldest and most popular board games. Two opponents play on a checkered board with specially designed pieces of contrasting colors, commonly white and black. The objective of the game is to capture the opponent's king. Chess teaches better concentration, boosts self-confidence, stimulates creativity, and enhances patience and resilience. Each player has the potential to create an analytic and abstract strategy to capture the opponents king piece.

READING

Understanding Informational Texts

The Understanding Informational Text course explicitly teaches methods in a multi-sensory, sequential way to assist students in understanding and applying information from expository text about various topics. Students will learn about different organization structures of informational text and the unique features that are encountered when reading a nonfiction passage, text, or article. Students will be able to navigate information and have a better understanding of the content. Students will practice reading with curiosity, resilience, and empathy. This course is for students that need support in collecting, synthesizing, and studying information from nonfiction academic texts. This course may be taken in combination with the Close Reading Strategies for Fiction course or taken singly.

SCIENCE

Pre-IB Chemistry/Physics

This course is a full-year introduction to the major topics of chemistry and classical physics. Throughout the course, students will develop analytical skills and apply mathematical techniques and concepts to solve problems involving physical and chemical processes and phenomena. Students will also develop practical laboratory skills including the collection, organization, and analysis of data obtained in laboratory experiments and activities.

Robotics

The robotics course uses a hands-on approach to the construction and programming of autonomous mobile robots. This course covers a variety of multidisciplinary topics necessary to understand the fundamentals of designing, building, and programming robots. The course uses mainly the VEX Robotics components and programming environment.

SOCIAL EMOTIONAL WELLNESS

Sociology II

The Sociology II course builds on the foundation of Sociology I, delving more deeply into the ways social stratification impacts various groups, including but not limited to those defined by gender, age, race, and ethnicity. A central focus of the course is on social change and collective behavior, exploring both theoretical frameworks and contemporary social issues. Students will critically analyze topics related to the equitable distribution of resources and opportunities, fostering a nuanced understanding of societal dynamics. The course employs a variety of instructional methods, including engaging lectures, collaborative group work, in-depth discussions, and hands-on scientific research to encourage active participation and critical thinking.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS

Advanced metal work

This class is designed for students that have explored basic metal working techniques and would like to develop or continue with metal working projects. The techniques practiced in previous classes will guide students through individual projects such as metal sculpting, casting, and silversmithing.

Music Exploration

In Music Exploration, students develop a beginning to intermediate understanding of music theory while exploring a variety of instruments, musical genres, and music history. This course introduces students to the variety of ways that melody and harmony function throughout music. Students also explore the latest in electronic music, music technology, and music from around the world. Class practice, discussion, and presentations are used to evaluate the exploration and understanding of each musical topic.

Musical Theater Repertoire

In Musical Theater Repertoire, students work with Eagle Hill's music director and choreographer to learn songs and dances from popular musicals throughout history. They are introduced to the history of musical theater on Broadway and around the world. Students are expected to perform the numbers worked on in class. Performances may include monthly Open Mic Nights on campus, concerts, or other school events. This course is designed for students interested in developing their singing and dancing skills, while working in an ensemble setting—all important skills for succeeding in the performing arts.