

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: Russian Literature (ENGL 410.5)
- Seminar in Literary Studies: British Romanticism:
Contemporary Contexts, Modern Legacies (ENGL 410.6)

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 challenging critical and creative writing assignments.

In our classrooms, we emphasize working from textual particulars to a general theory, and 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, collaborative, collaborative engagement with texts at the center of our practice. Such an approach fosters our students' ability to empathize with, and truly listen to, diverse voices. The department's continuing partnership with the Royal Shakespeare Company engages students in rehearsal room techniques that revitalize their approach to print texts and their understanding of how their own experiences connect to lives 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 prose 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; we also offer a set of advanced 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 experience across literary traditions. Exposure to multiple traditions, we believe, presents students with numerous ways of defining, interrogating, and engaging with a literary canon.

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 welcomes them into the vigor and vivacity of the English language. Students write every day, in class and at home, and in a variety of genres, 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 to offer students space for fruitful risk-taking and experimentation with writing and revision. The rest of the year involves the practice of analytical writing, the extension of imaginative writing, the study of grammar, and the close reading and analysis of literary texts-*Frankenstein*, *Klara and the Sun*, *Purple Hibiscus*, *The Metamorphosis*, and *Macbeth* are but a few examples.

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 more incisive, 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*, 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, often beginning with lyric poetry in the first quarter. 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 study of their own from their research and analysis.

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 choose separate fall and spring electives with a good deal of freedom. 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, short stories or literary nonfiction. 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

The Sonnet from Petrarch to Terrance Hayes

What We Talk About When We Talk About Love

Short Fiction: A Writing Workshop

Emily Dickinson

Creative Nonfiction

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

ENGL 410 - Seminar in Literary Studies

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 a history of positive 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 thrilling 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.

ENGL 410.5 - Seminar in Literary Studies: Russian Literature

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.

ENGL 410.6 - Seminar in Literary Studies: British Romanticism: Contemporary Contexts, Modern Legacies

British Romanticism is a relatively brief movement in art and thought whose radical focus on imagination, emotion, and everyday lives challenged orthodoxies of all kinds. That challenge reverberates through to the present day. In the literary arts, the movement is typically dated from 1798 to 1832—from the publication of William Wordsworth and Samuel Taylor Coleridge's *Lyrical Ballads* to the passage of the first Reform Act, which expanded voting rights in England. Aesthetic and political action are fitting bookends for this major shift in artistic expression that is often understood as coming out of these poets' witnessing the failure of revolution in France and the rise of Napoleon, shifting their focus from social change to a radical change in individual consciousness. Students will explore this radical, revolutionary literary landscape by reading closely the works of the poets associated with this movement, reviewing contemporary responses to their work, and exploring key aspects of the broader historical contexts within which they emerge. A crucial component of the course will be to examine a set of contemporary artistic productions. Is all art that follows just more Romanticism as several scholars and critics argue? Is Nicki Minaj a Romantic? Jeff Koons? We will test that theory of Romanticism's enduring legacy against our own favorite works of art, music, and literature from our time. The course will include writing assignments, both creative and analytical, periodic tests, and a year-long research paper.