



The Packer Collegiate Institute

2025-2026 Upper School Curriculum Guide

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WELCOME TO PACKER'S UPPER SCHOOL

Packer Upper School — Four-Year Overview

Packer's **Upper School** curriculum is designed to encourage each student to realize their highest level of achievement. Through an engaging academic program including a social and emotional focused curriculum, a vibrant community, and an array of artistic programs, athletics, and clubs, students are enabled to extend their interests and cultivate their talents. Freshmen and sophomore students enter a prescribed program to ensure that they are confident and capable in critical analysis, reading, writing, mathematics, research, language, computer literacy, and study skills. Junior and senior years provide multiple opportunities to apply these skills through elective courses in areas of particular academic and creative interests.

The **freshman year** is organized around a study of major literary works, ancient civilizations, and a computer science and/or fine art elective. Additionally, freshmen take an introductory physics course, a world language class, mathematics, physical education and a health course. Freshmen also participate in Packer's peer support program.

The **sophomore year** focuses on the *American experience* from both a historical and literary perspective. Chemistry, world language, mathematics, physical education and health complete the required course of study for the grade. Students may also choose to pursue an elective course in the tenth grade. (Do note that 11/12 grade students receive priority for electives.) Some students elect to enroll in a second world language, journalism, computer science, authentic science research through the multi-year "Independent Science Research Program," or a visual, dance, musical or theater arts course to round out their second year of Upper School.

The **junior year** features biology and a variety of electives in English and history. Students must complete at least one history elective designated as a global skills course. Two history electives are required over the course of the junior and senior years. Students are required to take two semesters of English in both their junior and senior years. Independent study, School Year Abroad, Chewonki Semester School, High Mountain Institute, and cultural exchange programs are just a few of the special opportunities available for eleventh and twelfth grade students.

Students in their **junior and senior years** have increased flexibility in their academic schedules. Advanced Topics (AT) courses and upper level electives enable students to pursue particular strengths and talents.

Graduation Requirements

- Eight consecutive semesters of English
- Six consecutive semesters of a World Language
- Six semesters of Mathematics (8 encouraged)
- Six semesters of History
- Six semesters of Sciences
- One semester of Computer Science
- Four semesters of Arts
- Eight consecutive semesters of Physical Education
- Four semesters Health completed in 9th & 10th grade
- Four sessions of Symposium
- Completion of the Community Engagement requirement
- Four semesters of Additional Coursework

Participation in Accelerated and/or Advanced Topic coursework

Students will be granted approval to participate in an accelerated and/or advanced topic course by the appropriate department head based upon the course prerequisites listed in the course description. This approval will be shared with the student prior to the course registration process.

A schedule of five academic subjects is required for most students. Given the rigor of our overall program and our students' dedication to significant co-curricular endeavors, juniors are counseled to take no more than two AT or advanced courses. Seniors are advised to take no more than three AT classes. A request to take additional AT classes requires dean and division head approval.

Students participating in a study abroad program may participate in Advanced Topics courses for the first semester. Non-traveling, qualified students who will be present for the full course will be prioritized over qualified study abroad students. Students studying away during the first semester will be unable to join a year-long Advanced Topics course for the second semester.

Special Programs

Advanced Topics and Accelerated Courses

Advanced Topics courses enable students to pursue subjects at the highest level of rigor offered at Packer. In addition to a student's grade record, the following attributes are used by teachers and department heads to make enrollment decisions for all Advanced Topics courses.

Attitude Towards Learning

Is open-minded and intellectually curious

Demonstrated interest and initiative to pursue additional challenge opportunities

Work Habits

Is proficient in organization and time management

Has a well-developed work ethic and is persistent

Takes initiative and ownership in learning

Membership in Learning Community

Listens and contributes

Demonstrates ability to work independently and collaboratively

Engages actively in the construction of knowledge

Competencies

Reads and writes with discernment and sophistication

Demonstrates strong analytical and problem-solving skills

Has strong oral presentation skills

Content Mastery in Related Discipline

Generates insights and connections independently

Demonstrates deep level of understanding of prerequisite content

Independent Study Program

Students in grades ten through twelve can participate in the Independent Study Program, in which students design a program for a specialized project or course of study over the period of one semester or an entire academic year. An independent study may not take the place of a course for academic credit in Packer's curriculum guide.

Every independent study has a faculty mentor who is available to assist the student with completing a project proposal; mentors and students are expected to meet on a regular basis throughout the duration of the project. The mentor's role is to serve as a guide and resource.

The emphasis in this program is on *independence*; it is the student's responsibility to meet the deadlines and obligations of his/her program of study and the Independent Study program's general guidelines.

Students who participate in the Independent Study Program are responsible for writing a narrative comment at the conclusion of the first and third quarter and keeping the Independent Study coordinator apprised of their progress. Students will present a synopsis of their project during the programmed Independent Study Share. At the end of the project, each student will determine, in conjunction with their mentor, if they have fulfilled the project's goals and determine a grade of pass or high pass.

Senior Thesis Program

Second semester seniors interested in pursuing a self-designed, in-depth study resulting in an important piece of original work may choose to participate in Packer's Senior Thesis Program. The purpose of the program is to promote the skills associated with independent, self-directed learning, and to reinforce essential behaviors linked to creative, original work. Students who participate in this program are afforded the opportunity to frame a research project based on their personal academic interests and area(s) of specialization.

Second Semester Course Load

Students are expected to carry four academic courses including an English course in addition to the Senior Thesis. The project will be the equivalent of one-half course credit.

Program Requirements

Senior Thesis Program participants will construct a research design that:

- utilizes both faculty and community resources;
- incorporates and considers printed material, multimedia resources, and internet/online databases;
- results in a 30-minute presentation of findings to their classmates and members of the school community.

Senior Thesis presentations take place during the first week of Senior Term. Throughout the spring semester, program members are required to attend weekly meetings with their mentor and thesis workshops as announced. In addition, Senior Thesis members are required to write a third quarter comment detailing the progress of their study and future plans.

All projects are exhibited during the last two weeks of the semester. Senior Thesis applications are **due in the fall of a student's senior year** and require the approval of the class dean and program coordinator. Senior Thesis projects receive academic credit and are evaluated on a high pass, pass, or fail basis.

Course Descriptions

The course descriptions that follow represent a complete listing of courses offered in the upcoming school year (2025-2026). Some elective courses are taught every other year to ensure the widest array of choices is available to Packer students. When the course title differs from the transcript title, the transcript title has been added in brackets.

Please note that whenever a grade average is specified for course enrollment, students' first semester and third quarter grades are used as the standard for admittance. Students may be granted provisional approval by department heads at the time of course registration. Provisional approvals will be confirmed or withdrawn after second semester grades have been published in June.

English

Department Head: Elissa Krebs

Through an intensive study of literature, the Upper School English curriculum seeks to instill in students an active curiosity about and appreciation for literature, human nature, and the world around them. Through close reading of works from a variety of genres and a range of time periods, students hone their critical reading, thinking, speaking, and writing skills. At each level, students write and revise often. The English Department is committed to teaching a range of literature that includes work by authors both within and beyond the traditional literary canon, reflecting diversity of identities and genres.

NYS AIS requires that students take English during every semester of their four years in high school. Ninth and Tenth Graders take yearlong courses focusing on age-appropriate literature and skills while Eleventh and Twelfth Graders enroll in two semester-long English electives each year, one in the fall and one in the spring. English Electives are categorized as either literature based or writing based, and all students are required to take at least one literature-based course each year and at least one writing-based course in either junior OR senior year. The fourth required English elective can be literature or writing based.

Yearlong Journalism is open to sophomores, juniors, and seniors and is taken **in addition to** required English courses.

[The English Scholars Program](#)

The English Scholars Program is a two-year program that runs through both the junior and senior years. It requires consistent high achievement in all English classes, additional coursework in English, and an independent pursuit culminating in a written and oral defense. Students apply for this program in the spring semester of their sophomore year.

English Courses

9th Grade

[Foundations of Form and Function](#)

10th Grade

[The American Experience](#)

11th & 12th Grade

Fall Electives

Literature-based Courses:

[African-American and Afro-Caribbean Literature](#)

[Asian and Asian-American Literature](#)

["Beauty" and the "Beast" in Literature: Complicating Concepts of Beauty and Ugliness](#)

[Cleopatra and the Caesars: Historical and Literary Perspectives](#)

[Feminist Literary Theory & Ancient Myth](#)

[Legacy and Identity in Literature](#)

[Literary Memoir](#)

[The Literature of Modern Drama: Playwrights of the Twentieth Century](#)

[Literature's Ghosts & Monsters](#)

[Modernism in Literature and Philosophy](#)

[Reconsidering Shakespeare](#)

Writing-based Courses:

[Creative Nonfiction Writing in the Digital Age](#)

[Creative Writing: Short Fiction](#)

[Persuasive Writing and Rhetoric](#)

[Literary Explorations of Scripts and Screenwriting](#)

Spring Electives

Literature-based Courses:

[Cleopatra and the Caesars: Historical and Literary Perspectives](#)

[Culture, Capitalism, and Conflict in Literature](#)

[Latin American Literature \(in translation\)](#)

[Literature of America's Rebels & Dreamers: Environment, Power, and Agency](#)

[The Literature of Modern Drama: Playwrights of the Twenty-first Century](#)

[Literature of Money, Power, and Corruption](#)

[Modern Journeys in Literature](#)

[New York City in Literature](#)

[Science Fiction as Literature](#)

[Time and Memory in Literature](#)

[Unconventional Narratives](#)

Writing-based Courses:

[Creative Writing: Short Fiction](#)

[Persuasive Writing and Rhetoric](#)

[The Art and Craft of Memoir Writing](#)

[Poetry](#)

Fall English Electives - Grades Eleven & Twelve

*Literature-based Course

African-American and Afro-Caribbean Literature*

[African-American and Afro-Caribbean Lit]

English

165

Fall

Credit: 0.5

From Homer to hip-hop, one can see the legacy of oral tradition throughout our culture. This course will explore this legacy through the lens of the African diaspora. We will seek to understand how the lasting legacies of forced migration have shaped our understanding of identity, home, and belonging. As we travel from slave ships to the front row at the Barclays Center, this class will explore how elements of Africa merge with other cultures to form African-American and Caribbean literature. We will examine folktales and narratives to witness that words have always been tools for survival. From novels and films, we will see how Black artists pull from the horror genre to craft ghost stories that raise questions about memory and generational trauma. We will also explore how various essays, poems, and songs have been used as tools of power and protest across different Black social movements. Our study of Afro-literary traditions in this class will ultimately ask us to make sense of one of the most significant social constructs in the modern world: race.

Some of the texts in this course will deal with mature themes and content.

Texts may include: *Beloved*, by Toni Morrison; *A Tall History of Sugar*, by Curdella Forbes; *Krik? Krak!* by Edwidge Danticat; *There's Always This Year: On Basketball and Ascension* by Hanif Abdurraqib; *Brer Rabbit*; film excerpts from Jordan Peele's *Us*; other African and Afro-Descended folktales and essays; poetry, rap, and hip-hop.

Asian and Asian-American Literature*

English

158

Fall

Credit: 0.5

This course will focus on the search for one's roots and identity as an Asian-American. As we survey classic and contemporary fiction, memoir, poetry, art, film, and theatre by Asian and Asian-American writers and artists, we will seek a deeper understanding of the tensions and triumphs that come with being an Asian immigrant or a child of immigrants in America. In every unit, students will write analyses of texts, engage in creative responses to the material, participate actively in discussions, and lead class activities.

Texts may include: *The God of Small Things* by Arundhati Roy; *The Best We Could Do* by Thi Bui; *Everything I Never Told You* by Celeste Ng; other select poems, short stories, and films.

“Beauty” and the “Beast” in Literature: Complicating Concepts of Beauty and Ugliness*
[“Beauty” and the “Beast” in Literature]

English

125

Fall

Credit: 0.5

In a time when social media influencers, social rebellion, and emphasis on individual expression are all vying for our attention, “beauty is in the eye of the beholder” is too pat a statement for us not to take a closer look. So what, then, does it mean to be beautiful or act beautifully across time, geography, race, class, gender, and culture? Does beautiful always mean “good”? And perhaps most crucially - what is the opposite of beauty? In this course, students will try to answer these questions through studying a diverse array of mediums. From an examination of Victorian English men to Japanese immigrants to Black womanhood, students will seek to understand the many facets of beauty’s social construction. Students will write analytically, utilizing argumentative and critical analysis, craft creative responses, and produce a personal essay or project. Guest speakers and museum visits are anticipated.

Texts may include: the novels *The Picture of Dorian Gray* by Oscar Wilde, *Sula* by Toni Morrison, *The Buddha in the Attic* by Julie Otsuka, and *My Year of Rest and Relaxation* by Ottessa Moshfegh; poetry by Lucille Clifton, Audre Lorde, Leila Chatti, Clint Smith, and others; various personal essays; television and film will include personalized options.

Note: Some texts deal with mature content.

Cleopatra and the Caesars: Historical and Literary Perspectives*

English

121

Fall

Credit: 0.5

In this one-semester course, students will explore the complex and intriguing facets of one of history’s most famous figures, Cleopatra VII. Students will find that Cleopatra and her legacy represent the culmination of historical and literary developments that stretch back thousands of years before her time. Using a wide variety of sources, both historical and literary, students will research the geopolitical landscape of the ancient Mediterranean, the diverse cultures and empires that laid the foundation for Cleopatra’s rise to power, and the lasting historical effects of her reign and image. Students will ultimately use their understanding to evaluate the legacy of Cleopatra—and other women in power—in the modern imagination, through literature, film, and art.

* Available to students for history or English credit.

Feminist Literary Theory and Ancient Myth*

English

164

Fall

Credit: 0.5

This class will teach students to use feminist critical theories as frames for analysis of ancient mythology. Students will read critics such as Simone de Beauvoir, bell hooks, and Judith Butler to learn about modern theories of gender, identity, and power. Students will read excerpts from modern translations and adaptations of ancient myth, including excerpts from texts such as Emily Butler's *Odyssey*, Madeline Miller's *Circe*, Linda Egenes' *Ramayana*, and a collection of global myths.

Students will learn to think about the ways power and identity shape narratives, and they will train their analytical ears for the silences associated with non-normative narratives within these ancient texts. In addition to assignments that call for close analysis, students will develop their own creative writing and visual art that centers female perspectives from within a story.

Legacy and Identity in Literature*

English

111

Fall

Credit: 0.5

The historical and social realities of our lives are written into the essence of our beings and inform how we exist in the world. In an exploration of the forces that shape our identity, we will engage in conversations about how we become the people we are, how the forces of our worlds and our families shape us, and how we deal with our pasts and the pasts of our parents and our nation as we try to construct our own presents and futures. Through the characters in the novels we will study, students will also have the opportunity to reflect on and address some of the larger questions about the contemporary realities that are facing them in their own lives.

Some of the texts in this course will deal with mature themes and content.

Texts may include: *The Vanishing Half*, by Brit Bennett; *On Earth We are Briefly Gorgeous*, by Ocean Vuong; *A Pale View of Hills* by Kazuo Ishiguro; various poems, short stories, essays, and film excerpts.

Literary Memoir*

English

153

Fall

Credit: 0.5

This course will explore the ever-expanding, often-maligned genre of memoir, in which authors test out the Socratic theory “An unexamined life is not worth living.” Unlike autobiography, a chronological retelling of one’s life, memoir is the act of shaping one’s personal history. Memoirists strive to bring focus to a particular aspect of their lived experience, and what they choose to leave out is often as important as what they include. As such, the line between memoir and fiction is sometimes blurred, and the best memoirs often read like novels. In addition to reading the three memoirs listed below, students enrolled in this course can expect to engage in a number of written assignments, including their own short memoirs (one being a graphic memoir), personal reflections, and an analytical essay.

Texts read (expect mature content): Hua Hsu’s *Stay True*, Safiya Sinclair’s *How to Say Babylon*, and David Small’s graphic memoir *Stitches*.

The Literature of Modern Drama: Playwrights of the Twentieth Century*

[Lit of Modern Drama: Twentieth Century]

English

170

Fall

Credit: 0.5

Perhaps you’re an avid theater-goer, or maybe the only production you’ve ever seen is your younger sister’s third-grade production of *Little Red Riding Hood*. No matter. This class will meet you wherever you are on this spectrum as we investigate the inherent tension between drama as both a performance and literary art. Going to a play is more than eating expensive candy in the dark while you escape life for a while. Each time the curtain goes up, the play begs you to ask yourself, *how is the playwright speaking to our current moment? What can I take from this drama unfolding before me?* While as a class we will attend two productions, either on or off Broadway, we will primarily be reading plays. Of course, reading a play asks something different of you. According to Pulitzer-Prize winning playwright Ayad Akthar, “[Theater] is a form that thrives on omission, which is why reading a play can have something of the thrill of detective work, clues emerging line by line, slowly rounding out the picture that is the deeper reason for the play itself.” Together, we will embark upon this detective work as we read and analyze major dramatic works of the twentieth century in order to explore the complexity of human relationships and how they offer a lens through which to view their respective societies. Written work will include personal responses, critical reviews, literary essays, and short scenes. For the final project, students will write their own ten-minute plays.

Texts may include (expect mature content): Tennessee Williams’ *A Streetcar Named Desire*, Arthur Miller’s *Death of a Salesman*, Thornton Wilder’s *Our Town*, Maria Irene Fornes’ *Fefu and her Friends*, August Wilson’s *Fences*, and David Henry Hwang’s *M. Butterfly*.

Literature's Ghosts and Monsters*

English

166

Fall

Credit: 0.5

Do you believe you're haunted? Are you fascinated by monsters, both real and imaginary? In this course, we'll turn our attention to the ghosts and monsters around the globe, from Victorian England to Trinidad to various places and spaces in America and more. What does reading and writing about ghosts and monsters do for us? What does it mean to be "haunted," and why does it happen? What is our fascination with the supernatural all about? Can ghosts play important roles in our corporeal lives? What are the terrors and twisted desires that continue to shape our personal and cultural identities? What truths can ghosts and monsters teach us? What actually creates or defines a monster? We'll consider these questions and more as we consider mad scientists, colonialism and crimes in Trinidad, and more. Students can expect to write analytically but also creatively across a variety of genres and engage in lively discussions, craft presentations, and explore multimedia analysis and creation.

Texts may include: *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* by Robert Louis Stevenson; various American and global ghost short stories including those by Isacc Bashevis Singer; Edith Wharton, Stephen Graham Jones, and others; *Hungry Ghosts* by Kevin Jared Hosein; and a sample of poetry and music.

Modernism in Literature and Philosophy*

English

130

Fall

Credit: 0.5

The turn of the twentieth century was characterized by rapid technological advancement, social upheaval, and global wars. In that historical moment, authors, artists, and philosophers wrestled with questions about purpose and meaning that still resonate today. This interdisciplinary class will examine a diverse set of authors and artists who reflect the Modern era's "crisis of representation," when old notions of realism and objectivity were cast aside for experimentations in cubism, surrealism, and nihilism. Essential questions include: "What is the purpose of literature?" ; "Can text capture the truth of human experience?" ; "How is the meaning of a text fundamentally shaped by the positionality of the reader?"; and "How is truth socially constructed?"

Primary authors will be: William Faulkner, Jean Toomer, Italo Calvino, and Claudia Rankine. Readings will be supplemented by the works of artists (including Pablo Picasso, Romare Bearden, Marcel Duchamp, and Charles Demuth), philosophers (including Friedrich Nietzsche, Michel Foucault, and Jacques Derridas), and musicians (including Laurie Anderson and Ornette Coleman).

Some of the texts in this course will deal with mature themes and content.

Reconsidering Shakespeare*

English

174

Fall

Credit: 0.5

Scholar Ayanna Thompson has confronted in her work the idea of Shakespeare's being "intellectual spinach": something that is good for us but that we don't necessarily enjoy. This course will challenge Shakespeare's canonical place in English literature through *Othello*, *The Merchant of Venice*, and *The Taming of the Shrew*, three plays that offer troubling and problematic views of Black people, Jews, and women, respectively. Through the lens of race, religion, and gender, we will explore the plays' historical contexts, their poetry, their insights into human nature, and their stature in a contemporary world.

Writing-based Electives

Creative Nonfiction Writing in the Digital Age

[Creative Nonfiction Writing]

English

152

Fall

Credit: 0.5

Print may not be quite dead, but there's no denying that digital publishing is our primary source of reading material. In this course, we'll create our own online magazine, packed with features that you'll write, research, design, and publish, all on topics of your choice. Interested in food? Write a restaurant review. Like sports? Pen an athlete's profile or argue for a rule change. Immersed in politics? Examine issues of local, national, or international importance. What we publish is up to you, and along the way, you'll learn every step of publishing on the internet, including the knotty world of copyright. You'll write as professional writers do: getting feedback, revising, and considering audience and purpose, and you'll learn advanced research methods along with literary techniques so that you can write absorbing, relevant, entertaining prose.

@

Creative Writing: Short Fiction

English

169

Fall

Credit: 0.5

In Creative Writing: Short Fiction, students develop their voices by studying the mechanics of fiction; engaging in various writing exercises, including mimicking styles of a diverse array of published authors; developing pieces based on prompts; writing in groups; writing on specific themes, etc.

The course is grounded in a workshop setting, with two 10-to-15 double-spaced page stories due, one per marking period, as well as written responses to peers' work throughout the semester. Class participation and timeliness of submissions are key to a smoothly running workshop. Students in Creative Writing: Short Fiction experience a productive atmosphere rooted in creativity, communal support, constructive criticism, and intellectual daring.

Literary Explorations of Scripts and Screenwriting

[Literary Explorations of Screenwriting]

English

198

Fall

Credit: 0.5

Literary Explorations of Scripts and Screenwriting explores the ways a screenplay provides the foundation for filmmaking by studying elements of dramatic structure; examining produced scripts and their corresponding films; and writing and workshopping students' own creative endeavors, culminating in two 15-to-20 page short film scripts, one per marking period, as well as script coverage of one another's work throughout the semester. Offering a balance of theory and practice, the course also incorporates hands-on exploration of film production: directing, cinematography, lighting, production design, editing, costume, and more.

*In this course, we will view R-rated films

** Students are encouraged to follow this class with Digital Video

Texts may include: Jordan Peele's *Get Out*, Celine Song's *Past Lives*, excerpts from Syd Field's *Screenplay: The Foundations of Screenwriting*; Blake Snyder's *Save the Cat!: The Last Book on Screenwriting You'll Ever Need*, among a variety of other instructive texts.

Persuasive Writing and Rhetoric

English

159

Fall

Credit: 0.5

This course addresses the power of persuasive writing and rhetoric in today's world. By analyzing iconic speeches, advertisements, stand-up comedians, spoken word artists, and political campaigns, students will learn the elements of persuasive writing and rhetoric. Through a study of voice techniques, stage presence, and nonverbal communication, students will then master the delivery of a memorable speech. Students will write and deliver persuasive speeches, write persuasive letters, design advertisements, write analyses of speeches, provide written feedback to peers, and submit a reflection on their own speeches and growth.

Texts may include: *Freeing the Natural Voice* by Kristin Linklater, *Presence* by Amy Cuddy, *Quiet: The Power of Introverts in a World That Can't Stop Talking* by Susan Cain, and various TED Talks, podcasts, and stand-up routines.

Spring English Electives - Grades Eleven & Twelve

Cleopatra and the Caesars: Historical and Literary Perspectives*

English

121

Spring

Credit: 0.5

In this one-semester course, students will explore the complex and intriguing facets of one of history's most famous figures, Cleopatra VII. Students will find that Cleopatra and her legacy represent the culmination of historical and literary developments that stretch back thousands of years before her time. Using a wide variety of sources, both historical and literary, students will research the geopolitical landscape of the ancient Mediterranean, the diverse cultures and empires that laid the foundation for Cleopatra's rise to power, and the lasting historical effects of her reign and image. Students will ultimately use their understanding to evaluate the legacy of Cleopatra—and other women in power—in the modern imagination, through literature, film, and art.

* Available to students for history or English credit.

Culture, Capitalism, & Conflict in Literature*

English

112

Spring

Credit: 0.5

Who benefits and who suffers in times of political or personal conflicts? What responsibility does the artist have to historical "truth"? What factors influence the way individuals confront conflict? We will explore these and other questions through the plays *Mother Courage* and *Ruined*, examining the conflicts that result from religious, economic, and cultural differences. You will learn advanced research techniques as you research the historical contexts of these works, prepare class presentations, analyze literature, and design your own creative assessments. We will study work that contains challenging and sometimes disturbing language and situations, including misogyny, racism, and racial & sexual violence.

Latin American Literature (in translation)*

English

145

Spring

Credit: 0.5

Latin American Literature explores both classic and contemporary Latinx voices in fiction, poetry, art, and even sports writing. The course examines themes such as the importance of family in Latinx communities, the role of corruption in beloved cultural expressions like soccer and dancing, reconciling tradition with social change, the human desire to belong, the immigrant Latinx journey, and the magical realism that shaped so much of Latin American literature.

Texts may include: works by Eduardo Galeano, *One Hundred Years of Solitude* by Gabriel Garcia Marquez, and a selection of poets and storytellers of the 20th and 21st centuries.

Literature of American Rebels & Dreamers: Environment, Power, and Agency*

[Lit of America's Rebels & Dreamers]

English

163

Spring

Credit: 0.5

Are you a rebel or a dreamer or somewhere in between? What does it take to be a rebel? In this class, we'll explore a plethora of voices from American literature, from the glamorous scandals of Gilded Age's 5th Avenue crowd, to Native Americans rebelling against boarding schools, to Black men seeking second chances in Pittsburgh, and families migrating from Colombia to America and back again, to discover what it takes to be a rebel or dreamer in America. We'll consider questions like: Why do people rebel in the first place, and what forms can rebellion take? When do people decide not to rebel and why? What makes people dream? To what extent are our dreams and rebellions shaped by our environment, agency, and power? What power do our dreams or rebellions have? Students can expect to write analytically but also creatively across a variety of genres and engage in lively discussions, guest speakers, and multimedia analysis and creation.

Texts may include: *The Age of Innocence* by Edith Wharton; selected pieces from *American Indian Stories and Legends* by Zitkala-Ša; *Joe Turner's Come and Gone* by August Wilson; *Infinite Country* by Patricia Engel; selected stories and poems.

The Literature of Modern Drama: Playwrights of the Twenty-first Century*

[Lit of Modern Drama: Twenty-first Century]

English

171

Spring

Credit: 0.5

Perhaps you're an avid theater-goer, or maybe the only production you've ever seen is your younger sister's third-grade production of *Little Red Riding Hood*. No matter. This class will meet you wherever you are on this spectrum as we investigate the inherent tension between drama as both a performance and literary art. Going to a play is more than eating expensive candy in the dark while you escape life for a while. Each time the curtain goes up, the play begs you to ask yourself, *how is the playwright speaking to our current moment? What can I take from this drama unfolding before me?* While as a class we will attend two productions, either on or off Broadway, we will primarily be reading plays. Of course, reading a play asks something different of you. According to Pulitzer-Prize winning playwright Ayad Akthar, "[Theater] is a form that thrives on omission, which is why reading a play can have something of the thrill of detective work, clues emerging line by line, slowly rounding out the picture that is the deeper reason for the play itself." Together, we will embark upon this detective work as we read and analyze major dramatic works of the twenty-first century in order to explore the complexity of human relationships and how they offer a lens through which to view their respective societies. Written work will include personal responses, critical reviews, literary essays, and short scenes. For the final project, students will write their own ten-minute plays.

Texts read may include (expect mature content): David Lindsay-Abaire's *Good People*, Branden Jacobs-Jenkins' *Appropriate*, Sanaz Toossi's *English*, Annie Baker's *The Flick*, and Jackie Sibblies Drury's *Fairview*.

Literature of Money, Power, and Corruption

English

162

Spring

Credit: 0.5

Money! In New York City, it seems to be on everyone's mind. This class will center texts in which money, and the pursuit of it, shapes individuals and societies. Students will read texts including *How to Get Rich in Rising Asia* by Mohsin Hamid, *Severance* by Ling Ma, *Topdog/Underdog* by Suzan-Lori Parks, "The Case for Reparations" by Ta Nehisi Coates, and "Blackberries in June" by Ron Rash. In addition to developing skills of literary analysis, students in this course will develop their knowledge of personal finances through a semester length project that teaches topics such as debit vs credit, personal finance, debt & interest, and personal investing. Assessments will include formal analytical papers, presentations, and personal reflections.

Modern Journeys in Literature

English

196

Spring

Credit: 0.5

The stories of heroes and their journeys have captivated human audiences for centuries. From *The Hunger Games* to classic Greek myths, the emotionally gripping and thrilling tales of heroines draw us in every time. We feel their successes just as deeply as we feel their failures. And for good reason! Transformation, an inherently human experience, lies at the root of all journeys. This class will examine classical retellings of journey stories that highlight heroines. We will begin with a modern retelling of *The Odyssey* that shifts the narrative's focus from Odysseus to Penelope and the twelve maids. We will then study a modern retelling of *Antigone* that asks us to consider how our experiences influence our moral reasoning. As we finish the semester with Jesmyn Ward's *Let Us Descend*, we will further explore the American experience through an enslaved woman's survival in the Antebellum South while navigating racism, family separation, queer love, and other parts of her journey. Students will write analyses, facilitate discussions, lead class activities, and have the chance to do personal and/or creative writing.

Some of the texts in this course will deal with mature themes and content.

New York City in Literature*

English

154

Spring

Credit: 0.5

New York City in Literature explores the evolution of the City's character through literary, social, and historical texts. Who are we as a people? Is there even such a thing as a "New Yorker"? What are New York's truths? Its myths? How are its values reflected in our art, our literature, our culture?

Through discussion, analytic and personal essay, creative expression, and epistle, together we will investigate the recurring themes of identity and personal journey in the New York experience.

A survey course predicated on examining an array of diverse New York voices, NYC Lit's curriculum offers the work of authors Colson Whitehead, Lenape Elders, Walt Whitman, James Weldon Johnson, Natalie Diaz, Chen Chen, Jacob Riis, and Emma Lazarus. Additionally, students will read the writing of Henry Roth, Virginia Woolf, Dorothy Parker, Claude McKay, Langston Hughes, Countee Cullen, Anne Spencer, Grace Paley, Toni Morrison, Suheir Hammad, Wisława Szymborska, Don DeLillo, Mia Alvar, and Weike Wang.

Longer texts may include Stephen Crane's *Maggie*, Edith Wharton's *The Old Maid*, Larry Kramer's *The Normal Heart*, Cruz Angeles's *Don't Let Me Drown*, among others.

Science Fiction as Literature*

English

146

Spring

Credit: 0.5

Imagine a world in which your laptop has feelings, and you can travel back in time and even resurrect the dead. Welcome to the world of science fiction. Though often viewed as a more contemporary fictional genre, in fact, science fiction has literary roots that go back centuries. In this course, we will trace the development of science fiction as a literary genre and also explore the myriad issues raised by the mixture of science and speculation. Fasten your seatbelts as we travel to warp speed with an obsessed Swiss scientist who seeks to reanimate the dead; a troubled young man who believes his dreams can change reality; and a computer that seemingly takes on a life of its own. In each of these narratives, and in all of the stories we will explore together, we will also examine the ways in which these narratives shed insight on our present-day world—in particular, how technology intersects with and informs the ways in which race, gender, class, and sexual orientation operate in a society.

Texts may include: *Frankenstein* by Mary Shelley; *The Lathe of Heaven* by Ursula LeGuin; "The Lifecycle of Software Objects" by Ted Chiang; short stories by Octavia Butler, Isaac Asimov, Samuel R. Delany, Nnedi Okorafor, and others. Viewing of *Black Mirror* episodes are anticipated.

Time and Memory in Literature*

English

176

Spring

Credit: 0.5

Imagine a world in which you must rely on photographs and tattoos in order to remember something that happened only minutes ago. Imagine an existence in which you not only wake up to a new time but in a new body and gender. Imagine being the 20th century descendant of enslaved Africans, only to be thrust back into the world of the Antebellum South. These are but a few of the characters and narratives that we will explore in this course. This class will consider the ways in which texts construct both a sense of time and a sense of how we remember events over time, using novels, films, short stories, and poetry to travel across centuries, cultures, and genres.

Some of the texts in this course, including rated R films, will deal with mature themes and content.

Texts may include: *Kindred*, by Octavia Butler; *The Midnight Library*, by Matt Haig; *Speak*, Memory by Vladimir Nabokov; *Never Let Me Go* by Kazuo Ishiguro

Unconventional Narratives

English

177

Spring

Credit: 0.5

How do we decide what's true when faced with different versions of the same event? How does the structure and genre of a text affect our interpretation(s) of it? In this course, we will study writers and works that depart from the traditional, exploring works that experiment with structure, storytelling, and perspective. You will experiment with writing that goes beyond traditional literary analysis, learn advanced research techniques, study how and why authors experiment with form, and consider how alternative narrative structures might affect your relationship with and perception of literature. Texts will include *Homecoming* (a scripted podcast), *Mrs. Dalloway*, and *Atonement*. We will study work that contains challenging and sometimes disturbing language and situations, including mental illness, racism, racial violence, and accusations of sexual assault.

Writing-based Electives

Creative Writing: Short Fiction

English

169

Spring

Credit: 0.5

In Creative Writing: Short Fiction, students develop their voices by studying the mechanics of fiction; engaging in various writing exercises, including mimicking styles of a diverse array of published authors; developing pieces based on prompts; writing in groups; writing on specific themes, etc.

The course is grounded in a workshop setting, with two 10-to-15 double-spaced page stories due, one per marking period, as well as written responses to peers' work throughout the semester. Class participation and timeliness of submissions are key to a smoothly running workshop. Students in Creative Writing: Short Fiction experience a productive atmosphere rooted in creativity, communal support, constructive criticism, and intellectual daring.

The Art and Craft of Memoir Writing

English

150

Spring

Credit: 0.5

Why is it that the idea of memoir writing often turns people's rhetoric violent? According to acclaimed American novelist Percival Everett, "If you're writing memoirs, your mother ought to beat you with a two-by-four." Mary Karr, whose book *The Liars Club* helped spur the memoir craze in the early '90s, claims that "In some ways, writing a memoir is knocking yourself out with your own fist, if it's done right." Is memoir writing really that bad? Or difficult? After all, isn't it simply the act of making sense of an event from your past, first for yourself and then for your reader? What's not to love about that? Together, we will embark upon a (peaceful!) study of the genre, reading short works by a number of writers in an effort to determine the techniques involved in successful memoir writing. In addition to daily journal writing based on given prompts, students enrolled in this course will write their own memoirs of various lengths, two of which will be workshopped for the class. Juniors can expect to spend the final two weeks of the course (once seniors have departed) revising one of their pieces with an eye toward their college essay.

Students should expect mature content in texts read, including works by such authors as Hanif Abdurraqib, Lynda Barry, Jo Ann Beard, Anthony Bourdain, Raymond Carver, Junot Diaz, Joan Didion, Annie Dillard, Lena Dunham, Ross Gay, Roxane Gay, Samantha Irby, Jonathan Lethem, Lorrie Moore, Maggie O'Farrell, David Owen, David Sedaris, Zadie Smith, Jia Tolentino, E. B. White, & Colson Whitehead.

Persuasive Writing and Rhetoric

English

159

Spring

Credit: 0.5

This course addresses the power of persuasive writing and rhetoric in today's world. By analyzing iconic speeches, advertisements, stand-up comedians, spoken word artists, and political campaigns, students will learn the elements of persuasive writing and rhetoric. Through a study of voice techniques, stage presence, and nonverbal communication, students will then master the delivery of a memorable speech. Students will write and deliver persuasive speeches, write persuasive letters, design advertisements, write analyses of speeches, provide written feedback to peers, and submit a reflection on their own speeches and growth.

Texts may include: *Freeing the Natural Voice* by Kristin Linklater, *Presence* by Amy Cuddy, *The Greatest Speeches of All Time* (audiobook), *Quiet: The Power of Introverts in a World That Can't Stop Talking* by Susan Cain, and various TED Talks, podcasts, and stand-up routines.

Poetry

English

193

Spring

Credit: 0.5

This course will immerse students in the study and craft of poetry. We will combine critical analysis with continuous creative practice. We will read different forms in our study of work by poets across time, place, experience, and perspective. Along the way, students will work together to create a class culture where everyone feels comfortable and where wild experimentation is the norm. Assessments will include analytical essays and a portfolio of original poetry.

Texts may include: *The Making of a Poem*, ed. Mark Strand and Eavan Boland, *The Essential Emily Dickinson*, *Nepantla: Queer Poets of Color*, and various selected authors.

World Languages

Department Head: Rich Pyrczak

The faculty of the World Language Department is committed to providing a curriculum through which students develop the skills necessary for comprehension and effective communication in Chinese, French, Latin, and Spanish. In addition, our faculty believes that the study of people and culture is a critical part of investigating the world, recognizing perspectives, and communicating ideas in another language. Therefore, appropriate historical and cultural material is integrated into the curriculum at each level of the program.

Packer requires students to complete three consecutive years of language study in either Chinese, French, Latin, or Spanish to fulfill the World Language graduation requirement. Each successive level of instruction is aimed at building upon the skills of the previous year. Please note the established prerequisites for each course beyond the introductory level.

Upon entering the Upper School, students are required to complete a placement examination that is used to determine their language proficiency. Students entering the ninth grade may opt to choose a new language if level one is offered and space permits.

Please note that Upper School students with a full evaluation recommending a language waiver or students who are at-risk of failing and are in the process of transferring out of a world language class may qualify for one or more of the following accommodations:

World Language Waiver: A World Language waiver releases the student from the school's World Language graduation requirement. This waiver may be requested at the beginning of any school year in which the student is enrolled in the Upper School, or by special permission from the Upper School administration. We ask that all ninth graders enroll in a language. All students granted a language waiver are expected to replace their language course with an additional academic course.

Pass/Fail Option: The pass/fail grading option allows a student to enroll in a language class for credit that will be granted on a pass/fail basis. Students pursuing the pass/fail option must fulfill the following expectations in order to pass the course:

- Students must make an effort to participate regularly in class.
- Students must consistently perform at Meeting or Approaching Expectations in all skills areas.

Included within this option are accommodations appropriate to the development of both oral and written work.

Course for Grade: Some Packer students with language-based learning differences will elect to enroll in a World Language class for a grade. It is important that students and families understand that when students elect to take a course for a grade, they will be assessed according to the same standards as other students in the class. They will earn a grade based on their mastery of the course content alone.

The routine accommodations of extended time, tests on computers and preferential seating will continue to be offered to students who qualify. Please take time to discuss each of these options with a member of the World Language Department, your child's dean, and a learning skills specialist in order to select the option that best fits your child's individual needs. All decisions are binding for the duration of the school year unless appealed to the Upper School Head.

[The Packer Classics Scholars Program](#)

The Classics Scholars Program is a two-year program that runs through both the junior and senior years. It requires enrollment in four years of Upper School Latin, consistently high achievement in all Latin classes, participation in Classics-related organizations, and additional coursework in an approved Classics-related elective in English or History. Finally, it requires an independent pursuit culminating in a written project and oral defense by the end of the senior year. Students apply for this program at the end of their sophomore year.

World Language Courses

Chinese

[Chinese I](#)

[Chinese II](#)

[Chinese III](#)

[Chinese IV](#)

[Chinese V](#)

[Advanced Topics in Chinese: Conversation and Culture](#)

French

[French I](#)

[French II](#)

[French III](#)

[French IV](#)

[French V](#)

[Advanced Topics in French: Francophone Cinema \(2025-26 SY\)](#)

[Advanced Topics in French: Francophone Maghreb \(2026-27 SY\)](#)

Latin

[Latin I](#)

[Latin II](#)

[Latin III](#)

[Latin IV](#)

[Advanced Topics in Latin: Poetry - Vergil \(2025-26 SY\)](#)

[Advanced Topics in Latin: Anthology of Latin Literature \(2026-27 SY\)](#)

Spanish

[Spanish I](#)

[Spanish II](#)

[Spanish III](#)

[Spanish IV](#)

[Spanish V: Cultures of the Spanish-Speaking Caribbean](#)

[Advanced Topics in Spanish: Human Rights \(2025-26 SY\)](#)

[Advanced Topics in Spanish: Literature and Culture \(2026-27 SY\)](#)

[Post AT Spanish Seminar: Language & Culture](#)

Chinese

Chinese I

Chinese **200** **Full-Year** **Credit: 1**

This introductory course aims to develop the student's basic language skills in listening, speaking, reading, and writing at an introductory level of the Chinese language. Students learn to use the phonetic system of Pinyin and to recognize and reproduce around one hundred and fifty Chinese characters. They will also learn to write in simplified characters. Dialogues and simple descriptive/narrative texts cover everyday topics, issues of interest, and idiomatic expressions.

There is no prerequisite; students elect to take this course or are placed in it based on their placement test scores.

By the end of Level I, students will have attained the Novice-Mid Performance Level of the ACTFL scale

Chinese II

Chinese **201** **Full-Year** **Credit: 1**

This course builds upon the fundamental skills mastered in Chinese I. Students will continue to use the phonetic system of Pinyin and will be able to recognize and reproduce an additional one hundred and fifty characters. Exercises and drills to recognize and reproduce tones will be given in every class to help the students sharpen their listening and speaking skills. Students will also use the computer to write dialogues and short passages that they will share with the class.

Available to students at an emerging Novice-High Proficiency Level on the ACTFL scale

Chinese III

Chinese **203** **Full-Year** **Credit: 1**

In this intermediate-level course, students will continue to develop their interpersonal, presentational, and interpretive communication skills. Students will also increase their ability to carry on a conversation in Chinese, exploring a wider range of topics, while building vocabulary and solidifying their knowledge of basic syntax.

Available to students at an Intermediate-Low Proficiency Level on the ACTFL scale

Chinese IV

Chinese

205

Full-Year

Credit: 1

This course provides a context for the continued development of language skills and cultural competency. Students will continue to develop the four main language skills: reading, writing, speaking, and listening. Students will expand their ability to carry out conversations on a wider range of topics and start to use more idiomatic expressions while building their vocabulary and solidifying their knowledge of sophisticated syntax.

Available to those who are High Intermediate-Low Proficiency Level students on the ACTFL scale

Chinese V

Chinese

207

Full-Year

Credit: 1

This advanced language class provides students with a variety of opportunities to improve language proficiency and to learn about the Chinese-speaking world while thoroughly synthesizing grammar and vocabulary that have been mastered in previous Chinese classes. Students will develop skills in vocabulary acquisition, oral production, reading, listening comprehension, and writing, in addition to being introduced to basic themes in contemporary Chinese society.

Available to students at an emerging Intermediate-Mid Proficiency Level on the ACTFL scale

Advanced Topics in Chinese: Conversation and Culture

Chinese

209

Full-Year

Credit: 1

Chinese Conversation and Culture is a full-year course intended for qualified students who are interested in completing Chinese language studies equivalent to a level 200 college course. The objectives are to refine and further develop students' abilities to conduct semi-formal or formal discussions about social-cultural issues, to increase vocabulary by making context-based guesses about the meaning of a new word, to write and present fully developed narratives and structured arguments, and to learn to appreciate Chinese literature. This course is conducted entirely in Chinese.

Available to those who are Intermediate-Mid Proficiency Level students on the ACTFL scale

Available to students who meet prerequisites:

- Chinese V or permission of Department Head

French IV

French

241

Full-Year

Credit: 1

French IV is designed to help students reach an advanced level of cultural competency and communication skills according to the ACTFL scale. Activities and materials relate to contemporary topics in the Francophone world : current themes, political movements, and historical events. This course gives a basis for exploring cultural comparison and analysis at a more advanced level and helps develop these skills via the sustained reading of articles and stories and cinematographic analysis, for example. There is an emphasis on the development of fluency and accuracy in oral and written communication, and students are expected to engage exclusively in the target language during class discussion.

Available to those who are Intermediate-Mid Proficiency Level students on the ACTFL scale

French V

French

251

Full-Year

Credit: 1

French V advances language proficiency while deepening students' understanding of modern France. Students explore perceptions of France both locally and globally, investigate aspects of its history, and evaluate possible future trends. The course incorporates a diverse selection of materials, including essays, novels, digital media, and films, to present multiple perspectives on French society and culture. Through personal essays, class presentations, and active participation in discussions and debates, students will critically engage with these topics and refine their communication skills. Taught entirely in French, this interactive and student-centered course encourages immersive learning and meaningful dialogue.

Available to students who are at an emerging Intermediate-high Proficiency Level on the ACTFL scale.

Advanced Topics in French : Francophone Maghreb (2026-2027)

French

270

Full-Year

Credit: 1

This class is designed to help students build upon the foundational skills they have gained by adding more accuracy and precision to their use of the language, and to help them deepen their understanding of the Francophone world, more specifically Francophone Africa. This class is an advanced course which will allow students to improve their French skills in reading, writing, listening, presenting and conversing. This class will focus on Francophone Africa, namely the Maghreb countries of North Africa. The goal of the class is to provide a better understanding of the culture and history of the region through films, texts, podcasts, interviews, and discussions. Class is taught exclusively in French, and designed to be highly interactive and student-centered.

Available to those students who are at an Intermediate-High Proficiency Level on the ACTFL scale

Available to students who meet prerequisites:

- French V and / or permission of Department Head

Advanced Topics in French : Francophone Cinema (2025-2026)

French

269

Full-Year

Credit: 1

This class is designed to help students build upon the foundational skills they have gained by adding more accuracy and precision to their use of the language, and to help them deepen their understanding of Francophone cinema. This class is an advanced course which will allow students to improve their French skills in reading, writing, listening, presenting and conversing. The goal of the class is to provide a better understanding of Francophone culture and politics as represented in Francophone films. Class is taught exclusively in French, and designed to be highly interactive and student-centered.

Available to students at an Intermediate-High Proficiency Level on the ACTFL scale

Available to students who meet prerequisites:

- French V and / or permission of Department Head

Latin

Latin I

Latin

218

Full-Year

Credit: 1

This Upper School course is an introduction to the Latin language. For the purpose of enriching the student's vocabulary, the course will emphasize the study and memorization of Latin vocabulary and its roots and derivations. The class will increasingly focus upon identifying parts of speech and using basic grammatical forms and functions in Latin as a means to improve reading fluency. Within the context of narrative reading passages, students will encounter various types of nouns, their inflected endings, and the different tenses of verbs that occur in Latin. This introduction to the nuances of the Latin language will be accompanied by an emphasis on the rich historical and cultural aspects of antiquity.

There is no prerequisite; students elect to take this course or are placed in it based on their placement test scores.

Text:

- Suburani, Book 1

By the end of Level I, students will reach a range of Intermediate-Low to Intermediate-Mid in communicative proficiency according to ACL-ACTFL proficiency standards

Latin II

Latin

225

Full-Year

Credit: 1

This Upper School course is a continuation of all basic skills introduced and mastered in Latin I. During the course of the year, students further their exploration of the grammatical forms and functions of the Latin language, developing and sharpening their ability to read Latin with comprehension, to translate with accuracy (both from and into Latin), and to analyze grammatically the structural components of a Latin sentence. Analogies to English grammar will be plentiful. New vocabulary, grammar, and syntax are studied within the meaningful context of extended passages of Latin prose. Word study and a focus on the culture and history of Rome reinforce the connection between Latin and English and the link between Roman civilization and ours.

Text:

- Suburani, Books 1 and 2

Available to students at an Intermediate-Low to Intermediate-Mid level in communicative proficiency according to ACL-ACTFL proficiency standards

Latin III

Latin

235

Full-Year

Credit: 1

This intermediate Upper School course is a continuation of all the skills mastered in previous Latin courses. Students will continue to develop and sharpen their ability to read Latin with comprehension, to translate with accuracy (both from and into Latin), and to analyze grammatically the structural components of a Latin sentence as presented within the context of patterned sentences and continuous passages. The more advanced structures of Latin grammar are introduced through and reinforced by the reading of unadapted and authentic stories and fables. Students will learn more about cultural and historical topics as we dive more deeply into authentic Latin texts. For the purpose of enriching the student's English vocabulary, the course will emphasize the etymology and derivations of the Latin vocabulary encountered.

Text:

- Suburani, Book 2

Available to students at an Intermediate-Mid or emerging Intermediate-High level in communicative proficiency according to ACL-ACTFL proficiency standards

Latin IV

Latin

265

Full-Year

Credit: 1

This advanced Upper School course combines a survey of authentic Latin literature with a review of upper level grammar. Students develop their comprehension, facility and analytic skills as they aim at increased accuracy in translating a range of authors and genres. Historical and cultural topics serve to augment the readings and to illuminate aspects of the ancient world. Students will read and analyze a variety of prose selections from such authors as Caesar and Cicero, and will explore poetry and meter through the works of such poets as Catullus and Ovid.

Available to students at an Intermediate-High or emerging Advanced-Low level in communicative proficiency according to ACL-ACTFL proficiency standards

Advanced Topics in Latin: Anthology of Latin Literature (2026-2027)

[AT Latin : Anthology of Latin Literature]

Latin

246

Full-Year

Credit: 1

This advanced course builds upon the survey of literature in Level IV. In this course, students read selections from the works of Roman poets and philosophers like Cicero, Lucretius, Horace, and Seneca. Students explore the conventions, literary styles, and characteristics associated with these authors as well as the everyday testimonials from the Roman world, particularly inscriptions, that shed more light on the hopes and dreams of those who lived two thousand years ago. By the end of the course, students are able to answer these essential questions: How did Romans aim to live their best lives? What can we learn from them in our quest to live our best lives?

Available to students at an Advanced-Low or emerging Advanced-Mid level in communicative proficiency according to ACL-ACTFL proficiency standards

Available to students who meet prerequisites:

- Latin IV or permission of Department Head

Advanced Topics in Latin: Poetry- Vergil (2025-2026)

Latin

245

Full-Year

Credit: 1

Despite the fact that Vergil composed his *Aeneid* over two thousand years ago, his text is one that seems to find resonance in almost any time and place. Aeneas' journey from Troy to Italy and the wars that ensued upon his destined arrival incorporate narratives of unwanted war, refugees in exile, prejudice and bigotry, nature's fearsome power, and political unrest to name a few—issues that seem all too familiar today. This Advanced Topics course, therefore, is designed to provide students with the guidance, confidence and skills necessary to read, discuss, and analyze this seminal work of Latin literature: Vergil's *Aeneid*. Throughout the year, students will develop their abilities to translate as literally and clearly as possible selected passages of Vergil's *Aeneid*. Students will also come to understand the political, historical, literary, and cultural background of the author and text, and will engage in analysis of the content, style, linguistic effects, and rhetorical devices used by the author. Students will ultimately come away with a deeper understanding of this ancient text and its place in our modern world.

Texts:

- Vergil's *Aeneid*, C. Pharr, editor
- *The Aeneid*, S. Ruden, translator

Available to students at an Advanced-Low or emerging Advanced-Mid level in communicative proficiency according to ACL-ACTFL proficiency standards

Available to students who meet prerequisites:

- Latin IV or permission of Department Head

Spanish

Spanish I

Spanish

228

Full-Year

Credit: 1

This course is an introduction to the Spanish language. Students will acquire basic vocabulary and grammar via a communicative approach which enables beginners to express themselves in both oral and written Spanish. Appropriate readings from authentic sources, communicative activities, and cultural presentations will serve to enhance student learning.

There is no prerequisite; students elect to take this course or are placed in it based on their placement test scores.

By the end of Level I, students will be approaching or at a Novice-High Proficiency Level on the ACTFL scale

Spanish II

Spanish

227

Full-Year

Credit: 1

This course builds upon the skills learned in Spanish I. Students will begin to express themselves in the past and the future, and expand their vocabulary to be able to ask questions to satisfy basic needs. In order to experience the language in context, students are introduced to short authentic print, audio and video material, which will serve as a basis for a variety of performance tasks.

Available to students at a Novice-High Proficiency Level on the ACTFL scale

Spanish III

Spanish

238

Full-Year

Credit: 1

In this intermediate-level course, students will continue developing their interpersonal, presentational, and interpretive communication skills. Vocabulary and grammatical concepts will be learned through the use of longer authentic print, audio and video material and practiced through a variety of performance tasks. Students will become more comfortable narrating and describing in all major time frames using connected discourse approaching paragraph length.

Available to students at an Intermediate-Low Proficiency Level on the ACTFL scale

Spanish IV

Spanish

248

Full-Year

Credit: 1

Spanish IV is designed to help students reach an advanced level of communication skills and cultural competency according to the ACTFL scale. Activities and materials relate to contemporary topics in the Spanish-speaking world : current themes, political movements, and historical events. This course gives a basis for exploring cultural comparison and analysis at a more advanced level and helps develop these skills via the sustained reading of articles and stories and cinematographic analysis, for example. There is an emphasis on the development of fluency and accuracy in oral and written communication, and students are expected to engage exclusively in the target language during class discussion.

Available to those who are Intermediate-Mid Proficiency Level students on the ACTFL scale

Spanish V: Cultures of the Spanish-Speaking Caribbean

[Spanish V: The Spanish-Speaking Caribbean]

Spanish

258

Full-Year

Credit: 1

In Spanish V, students strengthen intermediate-high language skills by exploring music as a reflection of Latin America's cultural, linguistic, and social diversity. They study a range of genres—from traditional to urban—to examine themes like identity, activism, language variation, cultural fusion, and the influence of the music industry and social media. Authentic materials such as songs, videos, interviews, and visual media support the development of critical thinking and communication. Students learn grammar and vocabulary in context through discussions, presentations, creative projects, and analytical writing. The course centers the voices of Latin American and Caribbean artists, including Afro-descendant and Indigenous communities. Students are expected to participate in Spanish at all times.

Available to students who are at an emerging Intermediate-high Proficiency Level on the ACTFL scale

Advanced Topics in Spanish: Literature and Culture (2026-2027)

Spanish

259

Full-Year

Credit: 1

The Advanced Topics Spanish Literature and Culture course introduces students to texts such as short stories, novels, poetry and essays from across the Spanish-speaking world, with a special emphasis on Latin America. Students continue to develop proficiencies across the full range of skills, honing their critical reading and analytical writing skills. Literature is examined within the context of its time and place, as students reflect on the many voices and cultures present in the readings. The course also includes a strong focus on cultural connections and comparisons, including exploration of various media such as art, film, articles and literary criticism.

Available to students who are at an Intermediate-High Proficiency Level on the ACTFL scale

Available to students who meet prerequisites:

- Spanish V and/or permission of Department Head

Advanced Topics in Spanish: Human Rights (2025-2026)

Spanish

271

Full-Year

Credit: 1

In this class students will work to expand, refine and put to use their already advanced Spanish language skills through the study of a series of thematic units exploring the issues, ideas, and attitudes linked to issues of Human Rights in the Spanish-speaking world. Working with an array of authentic texts, audio and other materials, students will study advanced vocabulary and grammar constructs across a variety of registers, using the context to help shape their comprehension. In addition, students will analyze how language affects perception and perspective and be invited to challenge common preconceptions and assumptions from a native Spanish speaker's point of view. While the extensive use of present day source materials (e.g., press reports from print, radio, film, television and Internet sources) certainly brings a contemporary focus to the coursework, selected historical texts (both literary and scholarly in nature) will also be studied to further broaden the context of the concepts being investigated.

Available to students who are Intermediate-High Proficiency Level students on the ACTFL scale

Available to students who meet prerequisites:

- Spanish V and/or permission of Department Head

Post-AT Spanish Seminar: Language and Culture

Spanish

260

Full-Year

Credit: 1

In this class students will work to expand, refine, and put to use their already advanced Spanish skills through the study of a series of thematic units exploring contemporary culture, issues, and ideas of the Spanish-speaking world with a frequent focus on our local Spanish-speaking community. Students will work with a variety of media, including authentic texts, audio, video, exhibitions, and lectures to explore how Spanish speakers view themselves, their heritage, their cultures, and their contributions to society. It is expected that students will engage in regular community outreach and exploration of local events and community spaces with the aim of sharing what they learn with their classmates. This course is conducted solely in Spanish.

Available to students who have reached the Advanced Proficiency Level or are emerging Advanced Low on the ACTFL scale.

Available to students who meet prerequisites:

- Completion of AT Spanish at Meets or Exceeds Expectations and permission of Department Head

History and Social Science

Department Head: Eve Herold

The History and Social Science Department aims to prepare students to become citizens capable of taking an active and informed role in shaping the society they will inherit. Our rich variety of elective offerings exposes students to the forces that have shaped our nation's institutions as well as those of our increasingly interdependent world. Experienced faculty members take students beyond dates and memorization to insightful analysis and thoughtful interpretations of past and present world events. Instruction encourages students to think critically, through a historical lens, with consideration of multiple situated perspectives in our local communities and around the world. We emphasize writing and research skills as well as an abiding enthusiasm for deliberation, civil dialogue and the continuing study of history.

Packer requires three years of Upper School history for graduation. In the ninth grade, students investigate major themes of global history through the fourteenth century. In the tenth grade, students explore how historians interpret history and construct or challenge historical narratives. In the eleventh and twelfth grade, students fulfill their graduation requirement by choosing from a range of one-semester or full-year electives. At least one of these semesters must be in a course which satisfies the department's global requirement. Additionally, qualified students may pursue Advanced Topics (AT) courses. Requirements for enrollment in AT history courses are an A- history average in non AT courses and teacher approval or a B+ history average in an AT course and teacher approval. In approving students for AT history course, teachers consider the criteria listed on page 4 of this guide and emphasize the following:

- self-direction and autonomy
- strong conceptual and abstract thinking ability
- an effective and sustained work ethic
- demonstrated proficiency in analytical writing

If students opt not to take a fall history elective in eleventh grade and do not have a final average of A- or higher from their tenth-grade history course, they may not meet the requirements to take an AT course in their senior year.

Please note that courses that meet the department's third-year global graduation requirement are designated with an asterisk (*).

History and Social Science Courses

9th Grade

[Humanities: Foundations of World History](#)

10th Grade

[United States History](#)

11th & 12th Grade

Fall Electives

[Africa Through the Lens](#)

[Cleopatra and the Caesars: Historical and Literary Perspectives](#)

[A Cultural History of American Popular Music](#)

[The Dragon Rises: A History of Modern China](#)

[Genocide in the Contemporary World](#)

[History & Philosophy of Death & Dying](#)

[Religion, Conflict, & Peace](#)

Spring Electives

[Cleopatra and the Caesars: Historical and Literary Perspectives](#)

[Cultural Anthropology](#)

[Democracy in Action](#)

[The First Age of Globalization](#)

[International Relations](#)

[Jim Crow and Apartheid: Roots, Resistance, and Reckoning](#)

[Women's Rights Are Human Rights](#)

Advanced Topics

[American Government](#)

[European History](#)

[Imperialism and Resistance](#)

[Making History: Conducting Scholarly Research in the Archives](#)

[Middle East History \(2026-27 SY\)](#)

[Religion, Nationalism, and the Politics of Belonging](#)

Fall History Electives: Grades Eleven and Twelve

Africa Through the Lens*

[Hist of Portrayal of the African Continent]

History

398

Fall

Credit: 0.5

This interdisciplinary course aims to create critical consumers of images regarding the African Continent by examining how stories have been told about the Continent through the mediums of photography, film, and written sources, throughout history. Using primary sources as diverse as colonial photographic archives, post-colonial portraiture, music videos, literature, films, and Instagram accounts, as well as secondary sources, students will evaluate the literal and theoretical lenses through which the Continent has been perceived, examining how evolving forms of media have advanced or dispelled “single stories” of the Continent and variously contributed to humanization or dehumanization of African subjects. Students will gain historical context about the African Continent and fluency in photo and film analysis language, while engaging in discussion and readings on topics such as the “colonial gaze,” poverty porn, white saviorism, and “Othering,” and questions of intent vs. impact, authenticity, ownership, consent, positionality and representation. Assessments will vary from source analyses to reflections on our roles and responsibilities as consumers and will culminate with a research assignment in which students will critically examine an Africa-focused storyteller’s body of work.

Cleopatra and the Caesars: Historical and Literary Perspectives*

History

381

Fall

Credit: 0.5

In this one-semester course, students will explore the complex and intriguing facets of one of history’s most famous figures, Cleopatra VII. Students will find that Cleopatra and her legacy represent the culmination of historical and literary developments that stretch back thousands of years before her time. Using a wide variety of sources, both historical and literary, students will research the geopolitical landscape of the ancient Mediterranean, the diverse cultures and empires that laid the foundation for Cleopatra’s rise to power, and the lasting historical effects of her reign and image. Students will ultimately use their understanding to evaluate the legacy of Cleopatra—and other women in power—in the modern imagination, through literature, film, and art.

Available to students for history or English credit

A Cultural History of American Popular Music

History

355

Fall

Credit: 0.5

American popular music is an art form that has helped to reflect and define social and cultural change for each successive generation. It has played a pivotal role in shaping identity, gender and race in America. In this course, we will listen closely to popular music genres from the late nineteenth century to the present while at the same time looking at the historical context in which the music emerged and the people and institutions that produced it. We will approach song recordings as primary sources and learn how to analyze music as “text.” No prior musical training is required but students enrolled in this course will develop a basic understanding of musical ideas such as beat, tempo, rhythm, and form so they can analyze the different genres of music and recognize how music has drawn from preexisting musical traditions. Upon completion of this course, students will have learned why popular music was an essential ingredient in American social and cultural history.

The Dragon Rises: A History of Modern China*

History

346

Fall

Credit: 0.5

An examination of the last 100 years of Chinese history provides a remarkable picture of decline and resurrection. Today, China is making its uneasy transformation into an economic, political and military superpower, but a little over 50 years ago, China experienced one of the worst famines in human history. China’s combination of free-market economics and authoritarian one-party rule seem incompatible to Americans who view democracy and capitalism as bound together, yet China has followed its own path to nation state building. This course begins with the Qing dynasty’s failure to check western aggression and the resulting 1911 Revolution that ended 2000 years of dynastic rule. China’s break with the traditions of the past and increased global interaction introduced new challenges and opportunities for reinvention. We will learn how warlordism, civil war, and Japanese aggression plagued China for decades following the 1911 Revolution and why the Chinese communists were ultimately able to unite the country and establish the People’s Republic of China in 1949. Lastly, we evaluate how the policies implemented by two communist leaders, Mao Zedong and Deng Xiaoping, shaped China’s re-emergence as a global superpower.

Required Text: R. Keith Schoppa, *Revolution and Its Past: Identities and Change in Modern Chinese History Fourth Edition*, Routledge, 2020.

Genocide in the Contemporary World*

History

352

Fall

Credit: 0.5

This course examines the historical forces and human behaviors that have resulted in genocide in the 20th century. Students start by exploring the concepts of identity and its markers; nationalism; historical memory; human rights; the genesis and definition(s) of the term genocide; and how the word genocide differs in meaning from terminology like crimes against humanity, mass violence, and ethnic cleansing. Within this thematic framework, students examine the specific case studies of Armenia and The Holocaust. The course asks students to examine critically the ways genocides are remembered and memorialized. Throughout the course, students use primary and secondary sources to help them comprehend the history of genocide and they will be asked to consider connections between the histories they have studied and the choices they make in their own lives.

History and Philosophy of Death & Dying*

History

313

Fall

Credit 0.5

Death is the only inevitable conclusion to life; it is the “great equalizer” – one of the few shared human experiences regardless of time, place, person, or culture. Yet today, it remains elusive, frightening, confusing, and often ignored, despite its certainty. But it wasn’t always this way. In this course, we will explore four turning points in Western death history - the Renaissance, the Reformation, the Enlightenment, and the Victorian Era. These turning points led to major shifts in how individuals and society understood life and death, as represented in the evolution of their religious beliefs, mourning practices, funerary rituals, and overall attitudes towards death and the afterlife. We will approach this course through primary and secondary readings, while using social and cultural lenses in an attempt to answer the existential questions that have vexed humanity - how to live a good life, how to have a good death, and what happens after you die. This course offers opportunities for students to engage in interdisciplinary studies in areas such as literature, philosophy, religious studies, and anthropology. Students will have the opportunity to examine death through art and public spaces, explore the historical roots of their own attitudes around death, and compare beliefs and practices across time. Through our studies, we will discover shared, human experiences and understand how history, culture, and society shape how we approach the art of death and dying.

Religion, Conflict, & Peace*

History

361

Fall

Credits 0.5

What do we need to know about the past to understand the role of religion in the world we live in today? How do religions that originated in pre-modern historical contexts respond to modern and postmodern worldviews? How can we better understand how religious teachings, beliefs, practices, and identities affect people's understanding of politics and society?

This course will draw upon religious studies and cultural studies frameworks to engage in the non-sectarian exploration of three global religious traditions: Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. We will examine three foundational premises of religious literacy: "religions are internally diverse as opposed to uniform; religions are dynamic and change over time as opposed to being ahistorical and static; and religious influences are embedded in all aspects of human experience rather than the idea that religions function in discrete, isolated, and private contexts." Students will study some of the histories of these spiritual traditions, examine religious texts, and explore how religions integrate into the personal, political, social, economic, and cultural aspects of the human experience. Through global case studies linked to the themes "gender and sexuality," "climate change," "violence and peace," and "religious minorities"--and examination of issues related to sectarian conflict and religious nationalism-- we will discuss how religions are embedded in cultures. We will also analyze the power dynamics that contribute to the emergence of dominant and marginalized groups in different cultural contexts. Throughout the course, we will explore how religions contribute to and respond to types of direct, structural, and cultural violence and their corresponding types of peace.

Spring History Electives: Grades Eleven & Twelve

Cleopatra and the Caesars: Historical and Literary Perspectives*

History

381

Spring

Credit: 0.5

In this one-semester course, students will explore the complex and intriguing facets of one of history's most famous figures, Cleopatra VII. Students will find that Cleopatra and her legacy represent the culmination of historical and literary developments that stretch back thousands of years before her time. Using a wide variety of sources, both historical and literary, students will research the geopolitical landscape of the ancient Mediterranean, the diverse cultures and empires that laid the foundation for Cleopatra's rise to power, and the lasting historical effects of her reign and image. Students will ultimately use their understanding to evaluate the legacy of Cleopatra—and other women in power—in the modern imagination, through literature, film, and art.

Available to students for History or English credit

Cultural Anthropology*

History

345

Spring

Credit: 0.5

Cultural Anthropology is a discipline that focuses on the cultural practices of local communities in the world. It looks at humans as cultural beings and explores various ways that humans express their cultures. Students will be asked to consider thematic similarities among various culture groups; to study different cultural practices without judgment; and to make comparisons with their own cultural practices. They are asked to consider the implications of studying communities that are not one's own and to explore what it means to study one's own community. Since this course will be an introduction to the discipline for many students, it will begin with an investigation of Anthropology's subfields, methodologies, ethical dilemmas, and historical roots. The remainder of the course will focus on themes such as ethnicity, language, kinship, religion, and ritual, among others, using ethnographic studies as supplemental texts. Students will be required to engage in a final ethnographic research project.

Textbook: Guest, Kenneth. (2023). *Essentials of Cultural Anthropology* (4th ed.). New York: W. W. Norton & Co. Supplemental readings to be provided.

Democracy in Action

History

375

Spring

Credits 0.5

How do Americans engage as citizens? Why *should* we be civically engaged? Can we truly affect how our government functions? Under a democracy, the people have the power to enact change, but over the years, many threats have emerged to damage our carefully crafted system of government. How do we distinguish fact from fiction, and fulfill our half of the social contract by ensuring the government is truly working *by the people, for the people*? In this course, we will learn “how to do democracy” rather than just learn *about* it. This begins with considering our individual roles and responsibilities, the relationship between civics and government, and civic actions of the past and present. In addition, we will examine methods and avenues for change at the local, state, and federal level, build and leverage community relationships, and develop 21st century media literacy. Throughout the course, you will have the opportunity to implement your civic skills and knowledge on a student-led action project aimed at advocating for change or solving an issue in your community.

The First Age of Globalization*

[History of Globalization 1700-1850]

History

341

Spring

Credit: 0.5

In this course, students will examine the impact and enduring legacies that early globalization had on the cultures, economies, and political systems of Asia, Europe, Africa, and the Americas during the 18th and 19th centuries. Students will learn how the global exchange system and cross-cultural interactions, such as the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade and the export of Enlightenment ideas, shaped different regions of the world. We will explore why globalization brought about the rise of strong nation states in Western Europe and Japan but in China, arguably the largest Empire in the world at that time, globalization accelerated the process of imperial decline. By studying how different regions of the world met the challenges of globalization, students will understand what was gained, lost or preserved and why traditional ideas about government, religion and social order were fundamentally altered across the globe.

Women's Rights are Human Rights*

History

390

Spring

Credit: 0.5

What does exploring women's experiences through the lenses of human rights, gender, and intersectionality make visible? How do gendered concepts and structures shape identity and norms, creating hierarchies and power dynamics that affect women's social, economic, political, personal, and collective well-being?

This course will explore contemporary issues to examine the interconnections between women, culture, and human rights. We will explore theoretical frameworks and short case studies to learn about the interconnection of women's human rights issues and how they are agents of change and advocates for their empowerment. More specifically, we will examine women's low status and power, forms of discrimination and violence against women and girls, and the security of reproductive rights and health. Other topics include an overview of human rights philosophy and the international human rights framework. We will focus on the global significance of CEDAW (The Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women) and how groups use it to articulate, monitor, and protect women's human rights. Along with reading and discussing analytical writing by experts, we aim to use literature, videos, and contemporary news articles as mini-case studies to understand how these issues manifest in particular global situations. Students will also engage in a mini-research and a final action project highlighting a women's human rights issue and the work of local human rights defenders.

Advanced Topics in History: Grades Eleven & Twelve

Qualified students may pursue Advanced Topics (AT) courses. Requirements for enrollment in AT history courses are an A- history average in non-AT courses and teacher approval or a B+ history average in an AT course and teacher approval. In approving students for AT history course, teachers consider the criteria listed on page 4 of this guide and emphasize the following:

- self-direction and autonomy
- strong conceptual and abstract thinking ability
- an effective and sustained work ethic
- demonstrated proficiency in analytical writing

If students opt not to take a fall history elective in eleventh grade and do not have a final average of A- or higher from their tenth-grade history course, they may not meet the requirements to take an AT course in their senior year.

Advanced Topics in American Government

History

372

Full-Year

Credit: 1

Advanced Topics in American Government explores the philosophical and constitutional underpinnings of the United States political system; major institutions of government; the roles of interest groups, political parties, elections, and the media; as well as debates about national security, civil liberties, and civil rights. Through an examination of politics in the United States and case studies of government in other countries, students will develop a vocabulary and conceptual framework which will enable them to better analyze political developments at home and abroad. In the process students will cultivate their abilities to think and write critically and persuasively, to interrogate sources and develop their abilities to make effective, well-informed presentations. In the second semester, students will conduct and present scholarly research on an urgent public policy issue of their choice: domestic - such as education, healthcare, and job creation or international - such as development, security and sustainability.

Required Texts: *Challenge of Democracy 13th Edition*, Janda, Berry and Goldman; *Lanahan Readings in the American Polity, 6th Edition*, Serow and Ladd, eds.

Available to students who meet prerequisites:

A minimum of A- history average in non-AT courses or a B+ in AT history is required. Additionally, student eligibility for enrollment in Advanced Topics History courses is determined by a student's current history instructor in conjunction with the History Department Head. (See page 4 of this guide for a detailed list of approval criteria.)

Advanced Topics in European History*

History

382

Full-Year

Credit: 1

European History (AT) thematically traces the evolution of Western modernity from the eighteenth century to the early twenty-first century. The central goals for the course remain, as articulated by longtime Packer instructor, George Snook, “for you to cultivate a love for the discipline, an awareness of its value, empathy for others, and the ability to critically analyze, and ideally, to improve your world... History can’t predict the future, but it can help us make sense of the present, and just maybe, avoid some of the mistakes of the past.” This course is an open forum for discussions of the local, state, national, and international experience. As we examine how Western life has changed over time, we will also grapple with current events and deeply consider future dilemmas. In the fall semester, students will explore Enlightenment ideals that established the terrain for modern Euro-American conceptions of the self, society, and the state. In the spring, students will examine the role of industrialization, nationalism, and imperialism in shaping not only the world wars, but also the Cold War and a decolonization process that continues to reverberate in our global economy and interconnected world. Students, in consultation with the instructor, will identify their own areas of focus in semester research projects on the legacies of the Enlightenment and the Cold War, respectively.

Available to students who meet prerequisites:

A minimum of A- history average in non-AT courses or a B+ in AT history is required. Additionally, student eligibility for enrollment in Advanced Topics History courses is determined by a student’s current history instructor in conjunction with the History Department Head. (See page 4 of this guide for a detailed list of approval criteria.)

Advanced Topics in Imperialism and Resistance*

History

371

Full-Year

Credit: 1

This course seeks to reckon with the underrecognized economic, political, social, cultural, and even psychological impacts of empire on our world today. The course will kick off by nuancing definitions of empire and imperialism before weeks spent immersing in the theoretical works of thinkers across diverse disciplines including Walter Rodney, Frantz Fanon, Jamaica Kincaid, and Adom Getachew. Having gained theoretical grounding, the core of this course will focus on applying our theory to a series of roughly chronological case studies examining different manifestations of imperialism from the early modern period until today (with a particular focus on the Atlantic World). The course's penultimate unit, prior to an expensive research project, will focus on the varied and ingenious ways in which individuals and collectives have historically resisted – and continue to resist – and reimagine a world unshackled from imperial legacies, with the arts as activism appearing as a central strain.

Available to students who meet prerequisites:

A minimum of A- history average in non-AT courses or a B+ in AT history is required. Additionally, student eligibility for enrollment in Advanced Topics History courses is determined by a student's current history instructor in conjunction with the History Department Head. (See page 4 of this guide for a detailed list of approval criteria.)

Advanced Topics in Making History: Conducting Scholarly Research in the Archives

[AT Archival Research]

History

358

Full-Year

Credit: 1

This Advanced Topics course will enable students to conduct original research to gain insight into history by using the materials held in the Packer Collegiate Institute's archives located at the Center for Brooklyn History at the Brooklyn Public Library. Working as research historians in the archives, students will develop advanced research and writing skills and provide feedback to others throughout the research process. Each participant will be expected to work confidently and with a high degree of independence throughout the research process by seeking to draw meaningful connections between items in the Packer collection and national and international events. Past topics have included: "The Price of Voicelessness: Student Editorials at a Private High School"; "Understanding Brown: Speaking Out on Racism in New York During the Civil Rights Era"; and, "He Was Always Told 'No': The Life of Jeffrey Dickeman, a Transgender Alum '48." Students will present their research in two forms: first, in the composition of a scholarly essay suitable for submission to *The Concord Review* or comparable journals that publish quality works by high school students and, second, in a public presentation at a research seminar held in May at the Center for Brooklyn History at the Brooklyn Public Library.

Available to students who meet prerequisites:

A minimum of A- history average in non-AT courses or a B+ in AT history is required. Additionally, student eligibility for enrollment in Advanced Topics History courses is determined by a student's current history instructor in conjunction with the History Department Head. (See page 4 of this guide for a detailed list of approval criteria.)

Advanced Topics in the Middle East History* (2026-27 SY)

History

394

Full-Year

Credit: 1

This Advanced Topics course explores the history of the Middle East, beginning with an investigation of the term “Middle East” and a discussion of socio-cultural, economic, and political diversity within the region. We then move into a brief overview of the Gunpowder Empires as historical context before we transition to our primary focus on the histories of the 19th and 20th centuries. This historical study will include investigations of imperialism and its lasting effects on the region; the rise of nationalism; understandings of modernity; and social, cultural, and political movements, among other topics. Students will engage with scholarly debates and intellectual frameworks that have informed the study of the region, reading texts that include theory, history, anthropology, and memoir. They will interrogate primary and secondary sources throughout the course, developing their critical reading, writing, and research skills. Throughout the year, students will be asked to make connections between the history studied and contemporary events.

Textbook: Gelvin, James. *The Modern Middle East: A History* (5th ed.). New York: Oxford University Press, 2020. Supplemental readings to be provided.

Available to students who meet prerequisites:

A minimum of A- history average in non-AT courses or a B+ in AT history is required. Additionally, student eligibility for enrollment in Advanced Topics History courses is determined by a student's current history instructor in conjunction with the History Department Head. (See page 4 of this guide for a detailed list of approval criteria.)

Advanced Topics: Religion, Nationalism, and The Politics of Belonging*

History

310

Full-Year

Credit: 1

Religious narratives, symbols, myths, and rituals do more than reflect cultural traditions—they can be potent elements that define national identity, determine inclusion and exclusion, and bestow political legitimacy on governments. This advanced topics course explores the deep connections between religion, politics, identity, and belonging. We will examine how religion is embedded in nation-building and explore how power operates through social, political, and cultural structures to create and enforce national boundaries. We will use interdisciplinary frames to examine global case studies and identify themes for cross-cultural comparison. We will also explore how religious nationalist movements connect to colonial histories, identity markers, and the spectrum of political values. In the final unit, students will apply what they learned by comparing a country case study we studied with a case study of their choice.

Available to students who meet prerequisites:

A minimum of A- history average in non-AT courses or a B+ in AT history is required. Additionally, student eligibility for enrollment in Advanced Topics History courses is determined by a student's current history instructor in conjunction with the History Department Head. (See page 4 of this guide for a detailed list of approval criteria.)

Mathematics

Department Head: Chloe Houston

The central goal of the mathematics department is to provide Packer students with a supportive and challenging learning environment in which they may fully develop their talents and abilities in the field of mathematics. The coursework for students in the Upper School is designed to build upon the algebraic and problem-solving skills developed in Middle School math courses so that students can master the increasingly complex concepts and ideas explored in the Geometry, Algebra II, Precalculus, Calculus, and Statistics courses.

Nearly all Upper School students enroll in a math course all four years.

Students will have the opportunity to develop the analytical skills necessary to work confidently and independently as they study more advanced math topics. Students will also develop their ability to collaborate effectively with their peers and articulate their understanding of mathematical concepts, both verbally and in writing.

Because of the cumulative nature of Packer's math curriculum, it is important for students to be adequately prepared in Algebra in order to be successful in subsequent courses. A student who earns a grade of C- or lower in Algebra I will be required to complete a summer school course. This summer work is expected to strengthen the student's mastery of the material. Prior to enrolling in a geometry course, the student will be required to complete an exam to assess his or her achievement. A TI-83 or TI-84 graphing calculator is required for all Upper School mathematics courses.

Advanced Mathematics Classes

Placement decisions are thoughtfully made by Packer's math faculty, with the goal of identifying the most effective learning environment for each student.

Advanced math classes spend less time reviewing foundational material, cover content at a much more rapid pace, and explore some topics more deeply than standard classes do; they also involve much more independent work.

Occasionally, teachers will consider switching a student from standard to advanced if the student:

- Earns an A (93% and above) in the standard course and consistently exceeds performance expectations in the standard course
- Consistently demonstrates the attributes listed in AT and Accelerated Courses Criteria found on page 4 of this curriculum guide
- Demonstrates mastery of prerequisite content that may not have been covered in the standard section
- Obtains a recommendation from the Department Head and from the student's current math teacher

Students who wish to advance a year in their mathematics studies through summer study must have prior approval from the Department Head and submit a detailed syllabus of the course in which they intend to enroll for pre-approval. The course must align with Packer's syllabus, which is available from the Department Head. Approval is rare and reserved for students who would not be well served by Packer's math sequence and offerings.

All students enrolled in a summer course must take a Packer math department exam for the corresponding course. Students who earn a grade of 85% or higher on the exam will earn full credit for the course. Students who earn less than 85% on the exam will work with the Department Head to determine if additional study is required prior to advancement or if the student will be required to repeat the course during the coming school year.

Math Support

Students whose prior work and/or standardized tests indicate that they would benefit from ongoing, structured support in their math learning (typically students whose grade in math was a C+ or lower in the prior year) may be recommended for a Math Support class. These mandatory classes meet once per week with a Math Department member so that students can receive additional support with math in a small group setting.

Enrollment in Math Support is reassessed after each mid-semester and semester; if a student's teacher determines that support is no longer necessary, students may leave the support class. Similarly, a student's teacher may recommend a student be added to a Math Support class if the need becomes apparent during the course of the year.

Note: An asterisk (*) indicates that the topic is covered in the advanced section but not in the standard section.

Mathematics Courses

9th Grade

[Geometry](#)

[Geometry Advanced](#)

10th Grade

[Algebra II](#)

[Algebra II Advanced](#)

11th Grade

[Precalculus](#)

[Precalculus Advanced](#)

12th Grade

[Calculus](#)

[Discrete Mathematics & Democracy](#) (2025-26)

[Statistics](#) (2026-27)

Advanced Topics

AT [Calculus I](#)

AT [Calculus I & II](#)

AT [Math: Symmetry & Transformations](#)

AT [Statistics](#)

Geometry

Math

422

Full-Year

Credit: 1

This is a standard geometry course, which covers the fundamentals of plane and solid geometry and concepts in geometric proofs. Topics include points, lines, planes, and angles; deductive reasoning; parallel lines and planes; distance; congruent triangles; quadrilaterals; polygons; inequalities in geometry; similarity; right triangles; circles; areas of planar figures; right triangle trigonometry; and coordinate geometry.

Students will apply many of the skills that they learned in algebra and at least one topic from Algebra I will be reviewed in each unit. Students will work with geometric proofs and use Geogebra to investigate the material.

Available to students who meet prerequisites:

- A grade of C or higher in 8th grade Algebra I

Geometry Advanced

Math

420

Full-Year

Credit: 1

This is a fast-paced advanced geometry course, which covers the fundamentals of plane and solid geometry and geometric proofs. Topics include points, lines, planes, and angles; deductive reasoning; parallel lines and planes; congruent triangles; quadrilaterals; inequalities in geometry; similar polygons; right triangles and trigonometry; circles; areas of planes and figures, areas and volumes of solids, coordinate geometry, and transformations. Students will apply many of the skills that they learned in algebra. They will work with Geogebra Geometry and other dynamic geometry software to investigate the material.

Available to students who meet prerequisites:

- Consistent demonstration of AT and Accelerated Course Criteria for students found on page 4 of this document
- A grade of B or higher and the approval of the teacher in 8th Grade Algebra I Advanced
- For students new to Packer in the 9th grade, placement in this course will be based on performance on their 9th grade math placement.

Algebra II

Math

432

Full-Year

Credit: 1

This is a standard Algebra II course, which strengthens and reinforces students' algebraic skills through the study of intermediate algebraic concepts and provides a rigorous study of functions. Topics include functions, function transformations, exponential functions, logarithms and logarithmic functions, quadratic functions, and advanced equation-solving. Additional strands in statistical literacy and numeracy are explored topically. Students use the graphing calculator and Desmos extensively throughout the course.

Available to students who meet prerequisites:

- A passing grade in Geometry (Math 422)

Algebra II Advanced

Math

430

Full-Year

Credit: 1

This is a fast-paced Algebra II and Trigonometry course, which strengthens and reinforces algebraic skills through the study of intermediate algebraic concepts and provides a rigorous study of functions and trigonometry. Topics include linear and absolute value equations and inequalities; polynomial, radical and rational expressions and equations; linear, quadratic, exponential, and logarithmic functions; common parent functions and their graphs, as well as their transformations, operations, compositions and their inverses;; unit circle trigonometry*, trigonometric functions*, and trigonometric identities and equations*; and intermediate statistics including the standard deviation and the normal distribution as time permits. Students use the graphing calculator, Desmos, and other dynamic online resources extensively throughout the course.

Available to students who meet prerequisites:

- Consistent demonstration of AT and Accelerated Course Criteria for students found on page 4 of this document
- A grade of B+ or higher and the approval of the teacher in Geometry Advanced (Math 420)

Precalculus

Math

445

Full-Year

Credit: 1

This is a standard Precalculus course that builds on the skills acquired in Algebra II, strengthening and reinforcing students' facility with functions. Topics include unit circle trigonometry, graphs and transformations of trigonometric functions, combinatorics, matrices, polynomial functions, rational functions, and sequences and series.

Available to students who meet prerequisites:

A passing grade in Algebra II (Math 432) or department head approval

Precalculus Advanced

Math

448

Full-Year

Credit: 1

This is an in-depth Precalculus course, which builds on the skills acquired in Algebra II Advanced, strengthening and reinforcing students' facility with functions. Students will engage in rigorous study of several topics including matrices, rational functions, additional work with trigonometric functions, intermediate probability and combinatorics, polar coordinates and equations*, conic sections*, vectors*, and sequences and series.

Available to students who meet prerequisites:

- Consistent demonstration of AT and Accelerated Course Criteria for students found on page 4 of this document
- A grade of B or higher and the approval of the teacher in Algebra II Advanced (Math 430)

Calculus

Math

480

Full-Year

Credit: 1

This is a standard calculus course, covering functions, integration, differentiation, and applications of all three. Students focus on conceptual understanding as well as applications of those ideas.

Available to students who meet prerequisites:

- Permission of the Department Head
- Strong algebra skills
- A grade of C or higher in Precalculus (Math 445) or Precalculus Advanced and the approval of the teacher

Statistics (Anticipated 2026-2027)

Math

440

Full-Year

Credit: 1

This is a standard statistics course, covering the basics of collecting, analyzing and drawing conclusions from data. Students will focus on conceptual understanding, as well as applications, of those ideas.

Available to students who meet prerequisites:

- Permission of the Department Head
- A passing grade in Precalculus (Math 445) or Precalculus Advanced and the approval of the teacher

Discrete Mathematics & Democracy I (2025-26)

Math

469

Fall

Credit: .5

In this one-semester course, students will study various topics from discrete mathematics (including decision theory and discrete geometry) as a mathematical lens to analyze how our country and other countries operate, both presently and historically, as well as how they could work. The course is structured into multiple units that focus on analyzing the mathematics of elections, including Voting Systems/Social Choice Theory, Apportionment, and Mapmaking (including gerrymandering). We will explore what barriers (both mathematical and social) exist that prevent creating perfect systems, and what changes are possible to be made to improve our current election systems.

Available to students who meet prerequisites:

- Permission of the Department Head
- A passing grade in Algebra II (Math 445) or Algebra II Advanced and the approval of the teacher

Discrete Mathematics & Democracy II (2025-26)

Math

470

Spring

Credit: .5

In this one-semester course, students will study various topics from discrete mathematics (including decision theory and game theory) as a mathematical lens to analyze how our country and other countries operate, both presently and historically, as well as how they could work. The course is structured into multiple units that focus on analyzing the math of governance: Fair Division, Math in the Law (including the Census and Taxation), and Decision Making (including game theory and logic). We will explore what it means to be fair when making decisions that cannot, by definition, be split equally; how to make choices with incomplete information; and what changes are possible to be made to improve our current civic systems.

Available to students who meet prerequisites:

- Permission of the Department Head
- A passing grade in Algebra II (Math 445) or Algebra II Advanced and the approval of the teacher

Advanced Topics in Mathematics

Advanced Topics in Calculus I

Math

481

Full-Year

Credit: 1

This is a rigorous calculus course covering limits, derivatives, applications of the derivative, integrals, applications of the integral and an introduction to differential equations and slope fields. Students learn through a discovery-based approach and will prove the theorems they use.

Available to students who meet prerequisites:

- Consistent demonstration of AT and Accelerated Course Criteria for students found on page 4 of this document
- A grade of B or higher and the approval of the teacher in Precalculus Advanced

Advanced Topics in Calculus I & II

Math

483

Full-Year

Credit: 1

This course is taught in a problem-based curriculum. Students must be comfortable and familiar with the process of problem solving. AT Calculus I & II covers the same material as AT Calculus I but at a faster pace, allowing the following additional topics to be covered: sequences and series; Taylor and Maclaurin polynomials; the calculus of parametric and polar equations; and advanced techniques of integration. Additional emphasis will be placed on proof, the expression of mathematical ideas, and the mathematics of problem solving.

Available to students who meet prerequisites:

- Consistent demonstration of AT and Accelerated Course Criteria for students found on page 4 of this document
- A grade of A and the approval of the teacher in Precalculus Advanced

Advanced Topics in Math: Symmetry & Transformations

Math

496

Full-Year

Credit: 1

Students will explore topics in college-level mathematics through problem-solving and proof writing. The class will begin with an overview of proof techniques and mathematical habits of mind before launching into an inquiry-based study of graph theory. Next, students will investigate topics in linear algebra, including the theory of matrices, linear transformations, and vector spaces. The course will culminate in an introduction to group theory and its applications. Additional topics in abstract algebra will be introduced as time permits.

Available to students who meet prerequisites:

- Superior demonstration of AT and Accelerated Course Criteria for students found on page 4 of this document
- Completion of or current enrollment in AT Calculus I & II and the approval of the current teacher

Advanced Topics in Statistics

Math

442

Full-Year

Credit: 1

The purpose of this AT statistics course is to introduce students to the major concepts and tools for collecting, analyzing, and drawing conclusions from data. Students are exposed to four broad conceptual themes: (1) Exploring Data: Describing patterns and departures from patterns, (2) Sampling and Experimentation: Planning and conducting a study, (3) Anticipating Patterns: Exploring random phenomena using probability and simulation, and (4) Statistical Inference: Estimating population parameters and testing hypotheses. Throughout each of these themes, students will be exposed to technological tools that assist in the analysis of data and creation of distributions as well as real, relevant studies that are just now being published.

Available to students who meet prerequisites:

- Consistent demonstration of AT and Accelerated Course Criteria for students found on page 4 of this document
- A grade of A in Algebra II Advanced (Math 430) or a grade of B or higher in Precalculus Advanced (Math 448); students earning a grade of A or higher in Precalculus (Math 445) may be considered with a teacher recommendation.

Science

Department Head: Kerry Kline

The science department promotes a curriculum that is designed to provide the information and skills necessary to understand the discoveries and principles of science in an increasingly scientific and technological society. There are three primary goals of the science program: to promote scientific literacy for all students, to develop critical thinking and inquiry skills that help students understand the basic nature of science, and to teach students how to apply their knowledge to solve scientific problems. What is critical is not the amount of material covered, but rather the conceptual depth of understanding reached.

The use of the laboratory is essential to learning science at Packer. Students conduct hands-on investigations as integral components of each unit, with an emphasis on prediction alongside qualitative and quantitative analysis. Writing skills, mathematics, and technology are organically embedded within the laboratory program.

Packer requires three years of laboratory science for graduation. Students fulfill this requirement by taking physics in ninth grade, chemistry in tenth grade, and biology in eleventh grade.

Those considering a career in science or engineering are encouraged to complete four years of science including the Independent Science Research Program and/or an Advanced Topics (AT) science course.

Science Courses

9th Grade

[Physics](#)

[Accelerated Physics](#)

10th Grade

[Chemistry](#)

[Accelerated Chemistry](#)

11th Grade

[Biology](#)

[Accelerated Biology](#)

11th/12th Grade

Fall Semester:

[Astronomy](#)

[Human Anatomy and Physiology: Organization, Movement, and Transport](#) (12th grade only)

[Scientific and Historical Origins of Race and Gender](#) (12th grade only)

Spring Semester:

[Cosmology](#)

[Environmental Science](#)

[Human Anatomy and Physiology: Regulation, Energy, and Reproduction](#) (12th grade only)

Advanced Topics

[Biology](#)

[Inorganic Chemistry](#)

[Organic Chemistry](#)

[Physics](#)

Independent Science Research

[Introduction to Independent Science Research](#) (10th Grade)

[Intermediate Independent Science Research](#) (11th Grade)

[Advanced Independent Science Research](#) (12th Grade)

Physics

Science

500

Full-Year

Credit: 1

Evidence is at the core of all science. Doing science means performing experiments that ask specific questions about nature, and the pieces of evidence we collect during these experiments are nature's answers to these questions. Making sense of the answers we get involves interpreting and organizing what we've seen in order to make predictions about novel situations.

Physics is great for practicing how to do science, and in this course students will learn physics and to think like a scientist. Students have been doing physics experiments their whole lives by simply observing the world around them and figuring out how things work. The goal in this class is to formalize the rules of nature from the ground up with a careful, scientific approach. Students will engage in a lot of hands-on work, graph interpretation, group discussion, and even some algebra to develop better ways of making predictions; but looking closely at evidence will always be at the center of their work.

Accelerated Physics

Science

505

Full-Year

Credit: 1

Evidence is at the core of all science. Doing science means performing experiments that ask specific questions about nature, and the pieces of evidence we collect during these experiments are nature's answers to these questions. Making sense of the answers we get involves interpreting and organizing what we've seen using graphical and algebraic methods. The goal is to explain phenomena and make predictions about novel situations. Looking closely at data will always be at the center of our work.

In this rigorous course students will formalize the rules of nature from the ground up using the language of mathematics. Students will learn to use a careful, scientific approach including hands-on work, group discussion, and mathematical modeling to develop better ways of making predictions.

Available to students who meet prerequisites:

- An A- average in 8th grade science and math at Packer without extensive reassessing and approval of the relevant science and math teacher.
- For students new to Packer in the 9th grade, placement in this course will be based on performance in their 8th grade science courses, a skill survey sent to their 8th grade science teachers and their 9th grade math placement.

Chemistry

Science

510

Full-Year

Credit: 1

This introductory course emphasizes the development of chemical literacy and analytical thinking through a study of matter and the changes that it undergoes. Students engage in active exploration of chemical phenomena and learn to analyze and explain their observations with increased precision and detail. The central principles of chemistry will enrich their understanding of natural phenomena and the world in which we live. Topics include but are not limited to energy, models of atomic and molecular structure, states of matter and the changes that the matter undergoes and bonding. **This course is open to all 10th grade students, regardless of their math level or previous performance in 9th grade physics.**

Available to students who meet prerequisites:

- 9th Grade Physics

Accelerated Chemistry

Science

512

Full-Year

Credit: 1

This rigorous year-long course in chemistry explores the nature of matter through quantitative analysis. An emphasis is placed on developing improved analytical thinking and problem solving skills and on exploring the nature of the scientific process. Students will carry out hands-on investigations of chemical phenomena and learn to analyze and explain their observations with increased precision and detail. Topics covered will include atomic structure, bonding, qualitative and quantitative relationships in chemical reactions, thermodynamics, gas laws, condensed states of matter and solution behavior.

Required Text: *Introductory Chemistry: A Foundation, 7th Edition, 2010, Zumdahl*

Available to students who meet prerequisites:

- An A- average in Accelerated Physics or an A average in Physics and minimum B+ in math grades
- Approval of the relevant science teacher

Biology

Science

520

Full-Year

Credit: 1

This introductory course presents a study of the fundamental processes of living organisms, with an emphasis on the role of evolution in the development of those processes. Topics addressed include evolution, classical and molecular genetics, cell division, protein synthesis, and energy transfer in organisms. This course will locate scientific investigation in its historical context and make connections between historical biases and development of biological concepts. Our investigative lens will include modern repercussions of these earlier prejudices and misconceptions. Students will also explore biology by analyzing data, asking questions, and discussing ideas with colleagues. Through these facilitated discussions and related laboratory explorations, students will arrive at their own answers while building critical thinking and problem solving skills.

Available to students who meet prerequisites:

- Completion of Physics and Chemistry

Accelerated Biology

Science

521

Full-Year

Credit: 1

This rigorous year-long course in Biology presents an in-depth study of the fundamental processes of living organisms, with an emphasis on the role of evolution in the development of those processes. Topics addressed include evolution, classical and molecular genetics, protein synthesis, biochemistry, structure and function of cells, cellular respiration, and photosynthesis. This course will locate scientific investigation in its historical context and make connections between historical biases and development of biological concepts. Our investigative lens will include modern repercussions of these earlier prejudices and misconceptions. Students will also explore biology by analyzing data, asking questions, and discussing ideas with colleagues. Through these facilitated discussions and related laboratory explorations, students will arrive at their own answers while building critical thinking and problem solving skills. Students will hone their graphing skills and begin to analyze their work statistically to incorporate mathematical support for their ideas.

Available to students who meet prerequisites:

- A grade of A- in Accelerated Chemistry or A in Chemistry and equivalent math grades
- Approval of the relevant science teacher

Fall Science Electives: Grades Eleven & Twelve

Astronomy

Science

554

Fall

Credit: 0.5

This elective offers a survey of space sciences. We begin by examining constellations, lunar cycles, and eclipses from both a scientific and historical perspective. As we continue to investigate our planet's relationship to the cosmos, we use our solar system as a model to drive discussion of planetary formation. We continue our outward trajectory to explore the life cycle of stars, from their nebular beginnings to their many possible end points, including supernovas and black holes. This elective includes lab-work, sessions with a telescope, reading assignments, and a research project.

Available to students who meet prerequisites:

- Completion of Physics and Chemistry

Human Anatomy and Physiology: Organization, Movement, and Transport [Human Anatomy and Physiology A]

Science

587

Fall

Credit: 0.5

In this course, we will study the structure and function of the systems of the human body through the lens of biology, making connections to essential topics like evolution, genetics, and homeostasis. In the Fall semester of Human Anatomy and Physiology, we will explore how the human body is organized to sustain life, how the skeletal and muscular systems support movement, and how the cardiovascular, lymphatic, and immune systems work to circulate necessary materials and protect you from pathogens. Using lab experiences and case studies, we'll learn about the equipment and diagnostic tools, medical procedures, and diseases associated with these systems.

Students should be aware that lab exercises will include dissections after most units.

Available to students who meet prerequisites:

- Completion of Biology or Accelerated Biology;
- B or higher in Biology

Available to students in Grade 12

Scientific and Historical Origins of Race and Gender [Scientific His of Race and Gender]

Science

540

Fall

Credit: 0.5

The course will begin with an overview of early human societies to debunk notions of difference based in biology and nature. In this study, we will look at examples of hunter-gatherer societies, classical civilizations like ancient Greece, and Europe in the Middle Ages. Students will then study the development of Enlightenment thought in connection to the Scientific Revolution, investigating the scientific, political, and social debates around race and gender that emerge out of both. We will continue into the 19th and 20th centuries, looking at the ways scientific theories helped rationalize slavery, gender discrimination, and the Eugenics Movement. Students will investigate the science used to support oppression, looking at the realities of human genetics and the historical contexts out of which studies of race and gender developed. They also will research the historical context for these studies and reasons why American and European societies were receptive to these discriminatory ideas. The course will include the contemporary US and Europe, with an examination of current instances of discrimination and debates around recent scientific studies.

Available to students who meet prerequisites:

- Completion of Biology or Accelerated Biology

Available to students in Grade 12

Spring Science Electives

Cosmology

Science

589

Spring

Credit: 0.5

This elective offers a survey of the universe. We begin by examining the context and development of astronomical thought and paradigm shifts about the universe from both a scientific and historical perspective. The course is an examination of cosmological theory, reviewing the formation of the universe from the first nanoseconds to the present age of galaxies to the potential endings of the universe. Topics covered include galaxy formation and evolution, Dark Matter, Dark Energy, expansion of the universe, Big Bang, and Cosmic Microwave Background. This elective includes lab-work, sessions with a telescope, reading assignments, and a research project.

Available to students who meet prerequisites:

- Completion of Physics and Chemistry

Environmental Science

Science

522

Spring

Credit: 0.5

This one-semester course is designed to introduce students to the science of the most pressing environmental questions of today such as climate change, biodiversity loss, genetically modified organisms, factory farming, desertification, hydrofracking, and to draw connections between these issues and economic, political, social, and historical questions. Many of these issues are fundamental to life and go to the very heart of our society: how we obtain our energy, food and water. A multidisciplinary approach will be used so students can make sense of the discrepancy between our deep scientific understanding of these issues and the lack of meaningful action by the leaders of the world. A discussion of the role of colonialism and imperialism in paving the way for global ecological degradation will provide the historical context for our current global ecological crisis. The course will also seek to examine environmental racism, how certain groups in society already feel the impacts of environmental problems more severely and earlier than others. The main objective of this course is to furnish students with the tools to understand climate change and to play a role in effecting positive social and ecological change.

Available to students who meet prerequisites:

- Completion of Physics and Chemistry

Human Anatomy and Physiology: Regulation, Energy, and Reproduction

[Human Anatomy and Physiology B]

Science

588

Spring

Credit: 0.5

In this course, we will study the structure and function of the systems of the human body through the lens of biology, making connections to essential topics like evolution, genetics, and homeostasis. This is a stand alone course and can be taken *without* enrollment in the Fall Semester of Human Anatomy and Physiology (Organization, Movement, and Transport). In this semester, we will explore how the nervous system and endocrine system help us respond to our environment and maintain homeostasis, how the respiratory, digestive, and urinary systems help us obtain and utilize necessary materials for survival, and how the reproductive systems function in conjunction with other systems. Using lab experiences and case studies, we'll learn about the equipment and diagnostic tools, medical procedures, and diseases associated with these systems.

Students should be aware that lab exercises will include dissections after most units and end with a fetal pig dissection.

Available to students who meet prerequisites:

- Completion of Biology or Accelerated Biology
- B or higher in Biology

Available to students in Grade 12

Advanced Topics in Science

Advanced Topics in Biology

Science

582

Full-Year

Credit: 1

This course is designed so that students engage in college-level biology coursework. It aims to provide students with the conceptual framework, factual knowledge, and analytical skills necessary to deal critically with the rapidly changing science of biology. Areas covered will build on foundations learned the previous year in 11th grade Biology but will delve deeper into the investigation of evolution, molecular genetics and information transfer, communication and interactions between organisms. The laboratory program consists of quantitative experiments that stress experimental design, as well as the use of computers for simulations, data collection, graphing, and an introduction to statistical analysis.

Available to students who meet prerequisites:

- Consistent demonstration of AT and Accelerated Course Criteria for students found on page 4 of this document
- A grade of A- in Accelerated Chemistry or an A in Chemistry
- A grade of A- in Accelerated Biology or an A in Biology
- Approval of the relevant science teacher

Advanced Topics in Inorganic Chemistry

Science

580

Full-Year

Credit: 1

Chemistry is all around, in every interaction of matter and in all that is observable. Chemistry provides the answers to the questions: Why does ice float? How do batteries generate electricity? How does the catalytic converter in a car work? Why is the ozone layer important? How is life maintained and reproduced? What are the tiles on the space shuttle made of? How do we freeze-dry coffee? By accepting the challenge of AT Inorganic Chemistry, students are building the academic foundation required to excel in any field of science. This course is the equivalent of the general chemistry course usually taken during the freshman year of college by science majors.

Students can expect to achieve a deep understanding of the fundamentals of general chemistry, develop critical thinking and problem solving skills, and learn to interpret and explain a broad range of chemical phenomenon.

Required Text: Zumdahl & Zumdahl, *Chemistry*, 9th Edition, 2013

Available to students who meet prerequisites:

- Consistent demonstration of AT and Accelerated Course Criteria for students found on page 4 of this document
- A grade of A- in Accelerated Chemistry, A in Chemistry or A- in Advanced Experimental Chemistry
- Current enrollment or completion in Algebra II while maintaining a B average in Math
- Approval of the relevant science teacher

Advanced Topics in Organic Chemistry

Science

544

Full-Year

Credit: 1

Organic compounds frequently make headlines and create media buzz – often described in hyperbolic terms ranging from “miracle drugs” to “deadly toxins,” but how much does the average person actually know about the chemical structures, properties and reactivity of these compounds (Not much, it turns out...)? What do they look like? What do they do? How are they developed into usable products? How do we decide if they are “safe?” In this course, we will explore these questions as we develop a new way of thinking about and visualizing chemical structures and reactivity and as we explore the relationships between chemistry and economics, politics, and public opinion. Students will come to a better understanding of the chemistry behind physiological processes discussed in biology, learn to apply the fundamental principles of interactions between organic substances, and gain fluency with the basic reactions that allow chemists to build new complex molecules in the laboratory.

Required Text: *Organic Chemistry: a short course, 13th Edition, 2012, Hart.*

Available to students who meet prerequisites:

- Consistent demonstration of AT and Accelerated Course Criteria for students found on page 4 of this document
- A grade of A- in Accelerated Chemistry or an A in Chemistry
- Completion or concurrent registration in Biology
- Approval of the relevant science teacher

Advanced Topics in Physics

Science

586

Full-Year

Credit: 1

Everything in the universe can be understood in terms of particles, waves or fields. In this college-level physics course, students will explore these three manifestations of reality by building upon the foundations of physics developed in 9th grade. Topics will include: force and motion in three dimensions, optics, waves, harmonic motion, circular motion and electromagnetic theory. Numerous quantitative experiments and lab practica are conducted throughout the year to show application of concepts and expand understanding. Students will also learn fundamentals of coding in order to produce three dimensional simulations of physical phenomena. Strong emphasis is placed on solving a variety of challenging problems, as well as continuing to develop a deep understanding of physics concepts.

Available to students who meet prerequisites:

- Consistent demonstration of AT and Accelerated Course Criteria for students found on page 4 of this document
- Completion of Physics or Accelerated Physics
- A grade of A- in Accelerated Chemistry or an A in Chemistry and equivalent math grades
- Completion or concurrent enrollment in Advanced Precalculus or AT Calculus I
- Approval of the relevant science teacher

Independent Science Research

Introduction to Independent Science Research

[Intro Indep Sci Research]

Science

506

Full-Year

Credit: 1

Open to students entering the **10th grade**, Introduction to Independent Science Research will provide a rich experience in a topic of the student's choosing, leading to an authentic research experience working in a laboratory with a scientist in the summer. The course is perfect for students who have a strong interest in science and are organized, motivated, independent learners who want to investigate an area of science of their own choice, and deepen their scientific and research skills.

As it is designed to be multi-year, the program is quite different from other courses at Packer. As part of the program, students are required to conduct a minimum of four consecutive weeks of lab work beginning the summer after 10th grade, which will give them the opportunity to receive 2 college credits from SUNY Albany. Following 10th grade, students are required to continue the work in the lab during the school year after school, so students need a large degree of flexibility in their after school time. This means that usually students go to the lab twice a week after school.

Students will read and analyze journal articles, attend science lectures and meet local scientists both at the school and in their labs. Students will gain experience presenting their research in a variety of settings culminating with the end of year Science Research Symposium.

Students must submit an application and be accepted to the program.

Intermediate Independent Science Research

[Inter Indep Sci Research]

Science

507

Full-Year

Credit: 1

The intermediate science research course is open to those students who have received teacher approval, successfully completed the introductory course, including the summer lab work, and will be a continuation of each student's work in their field of independent research. Students will continue working with both the course teacher and their individual mentors from the first year, to advance and deepen their understanding of their chosen topic. Students will be encouraged to enter at least one science competition and continue their independent research with their research mentor. Students are expected to go to their lab placement at least three hours a week throughout the school year and conduct a minimum of four consecutive weeks of lab work during the summer. Students have the option to receive college credit from SUNY Albany for both their research during the school year (4 credits) and also during the summer (2 credits).

Available to students who meet prerequisites:

- Successful completion of Introduction to Independent Science Research
- Teacher approval
- Completion of a minimum of 4 weeks of summer research

Advanced Independent Science Research

[Adv Indep Sci Research]

Science

508

Full-Year

Credit: 1

The advanced science research course is open to those students who have received teacher approval, successfully completed the introductory and intermediate courses and will be a continuation of each student's work in their field of independent research. Students will continue working with both the course teacher and their individual mentors from previous years to further advance and deepen their understanding of their chosen topic. Students are expected to go to their lab placement at least three hours a week throughout the school year. Students will enter at least two science competitions and continue their independent research with their science mentor. Other public speaking opportunities arise at this level, such as a presentation of the research during Community Meeting. Students have the option to receive college credit from SUNY Albany for both their research during the school year (4 credits) and also during the summer (2 credits).

Available to students who meet prerequisites:

- Successful completion of Introductory and Intermediate Independent Science Research
- Teacher approval
- Completion of a minimum of 4 weeks of summer research

Computer Science

Department Head: Dr. Makeba McCray

Packer's computer science program is designed to meet the needs of all our students in this important and growing academic field. The program offers a variety of courses that emphasize problem solving, abstract thinking, design, and creativity. The required Introduction to Computer Science course serves as preparation for the other course offerings listed. In this first course which is typically taken in the 9th grade, students are introduced to computational thinking, computer programming, web design, and physical computing. Later courses allow students to develop and grow in various areas of the field.

Computer Science Courses

Fall Semester:

[Introduction to Computer Science](#)

[Physical Computing](#)

Spring Semester

[Introduction to Computer Science](#)

[Web Development](#)

Advanced Topics (full year)

[Data Science](#) (2025-26 SY)

[Web Applications](#) (2026-27 SY)

Advanced Topics in Computer Science

Advanced Topics in Computer Science: Data Science (2025-2026)

Computer Science 871 Full-Year Credit: 1

In this course students will build upon the fundamental skills of computer science including data, algorithms, control, modularization, and abstraction. Students will be asked to apply these concepts to incrementally challenging problems. The course will focus on data science topics including text analysis, predictive models, statistical methods, and visualization. Students will engage in real-world problems using data and coding to tell compelling stories. Students are expected to work on long-term projects independently and in self-facilitated groups producing professional level products.

Available to students who meet prerequisites:

- Consistent demonstration of attributes of students successful in Advanced Topic and Accelerated Course Criteria (see page 4 of this Curriculum Guide)

Advanced Topics in Computer Science: Full Stack Web Development (2026-2027)

Computer Science 851 Full-Year Credit: 1

In this course students will build upon the fundamental skills of computer science including data, algorithms, control, modularization, and abstraction. Students will be asked to apply these concepts to incrementally challenging problems. The course will focus on web technologies including databases, APIs, applications development and unit testing. Students will create web products that can be distributed and tested. Students are expected to work on long-term projects independently and in self-facilitated groups producing professional level products.

Available to students who meet prerequisites:

- Consistent demonstration of attributes of students successful in Advanced Topic and Accelerated Course Criteria (see page 4 of this Curriculum Guide)

ACADEMIC ELECTIVES

Journalism (full year)

[Journalism I](#)

[Journalism II](#)

[Journalism III](#)

Journalism*

The Journalism program is interdisciplinary in that it bridges the mediums of print, web, and video. Students begin the class with instruction and practice in the foundations of journalism, such as finding and developing stories, interviewing, filming, writing, editing, producing, and working under deadlines. The semester then progresses to reflect a true newsroom environment, as students assign and develop their own stories relevant and pressing to the Packer community.

This yearlong course ranges from introductory to advanced levels, allowing students the opportunity to advance from Journalism I to Journalism III, as they continue to build and hone their skills in reporting and expand their personal portfolios. All students enrolled in Journalism I will receive Academic Elective credit. Students in Journalism II and III will have the option to earn Academic Elective or Arts credit with departmental approval. Additionally, students in Journalism II and III will be encouraged to apply for editorial positions on the *Prism*, such as section, web, content, and photo editors. All coursework contributes to the *Prism* student newspaper, as well as the *Prism*'s online publication. Students are assessed on class productivity, collaboration, initiative, independent work, meeting deadlines, and producing polished final projects.

Admission to Journalism I is based on an application and interview process.

***Journalism courses do NOT meet English graduation requirements.**

Journalism I

Academic Elective

115

Full-Year

Credit: 1

In this course, students will learn basic journalism skills, techniques, and practices, including how to determine newsworthiness, cover events and issues, gather information, develop and interview sources, organize material, and produce news and feature pieces. Students will have the opportunity to practice using video equipment and print layout software, such as InDesign. Students will also receive instruction in grammar and style for newspaper writing.

Students will share space, time, and assignments with Journalism II and III students engaged in the publication of the *Prism*.

Available to Grades 10, 11 and 12

Qualifies for Academic Elective credit

Journalism II

Academic Elective

172

Full-Year

Credit:1

Students in Journalism II will apply knowledge and hone reporting and writing skills learned in Journalism I as they produce the monthly student newspaper, mentor Introduction to Journalism students, and expand their personal portfolios. In addition, they will master the practical aspects of producing print, web, and video content under deadline. Students in Journalism II will be given the opportunity to apply for editorial positions.

Available to students in Grades 11 and 12 who meet the prerequisites:

- Journalism I
- B- or above average in Journalism I

Journalism III

Academic Elective

173

Full-Year

Credit: 1

This course is for budding videographers, journalists, and documentarians who have already taken Journalism I and Journalism II. Students will continue to learn the fundamentals of print, web, and video journalism to create in-depth reports on current issues of interest and concern to the Packer community. Stories will be published routinely in the *Prism* newspaper, as well as on the *Prism* website. Students in Journalism III will continue to serve as leaders and mentors in the class, and they will be given the opportunity to apply for editorial positions.

Available to students in Grade 12 who meet the prerequisites:

- Journalism I and Journalism II
- B- or above average in Journalism II

Fine and Performing Arts

Department Head: Viraj Lal

The mission of the Arts Department is to offer a range of opportunities for students to respond creatively and thoughtfully to the world we live in. The aim is that every student will find their 'voice' and develop the skills necessary to enjoy a passionate engagement with their craft. The education process in these art courses combines theory and concept with students' imaginative lives, and offers them the practical tools to give form to their experience. Using traditional and innovative techniques, the Arts faculty encourages students to be risk-takers and creative problem-solvers, and to appreciate both the rigors of disciplined craft and the joy of developing skills over time.

The Arts program across the school has two strands that intersect - the formal studio/class experience within the curriculum, and the co-curricular experience, represented by regular performances in a range of disciplines and visual art displays, including the annual Packer Dance Concert, the Spring Dance Showcase, the Fall Play, the Spring Musical, the Film Festival, Choral, Wind, Brass and Jazz concerts, alongside participation in a range of local and national competitions for both performing and visual Arts. Opportunities to perform in NYC and more widely give students a chance to play in public away from Packer.

Fine and Performing Arts Courses

Performing Arts	Visual Arts
<p><u>Dance</u> <i>Semester Class:</i> Packer Dance Company (Fall/Spring) <i>Full-Year Classes:</i> Dance and Choreography Advanced Topics (full-year) Choreography</p> <p><u>Theatre</u> <i>Semester Classes:</i> Actors' Studio (Fall/Spring)</p> <p><u>Choral</u> <i>Full-Year Classes:</i> Packer Concert Ensemble (half-band) Packer Solo and Chamber Ensemble (half-band)</p> <p><u>Strings</u> <i>Full-Year Class:</i> String Orchestra (half-band) <i>Semester Class:</i> Chamber Strings (half-band)</p> <p><u>Band</u> <i>Full-Year Classes:</i> Brass Choir (half-band) Wind Choir (half-band) <i>Required dual enrollment with Brass or Wind Choir:</i> Lab Band (half-band) Jazz Band (half-band)</p>	<p><u>Digital Video</u> <i>Semester Classes:</i> Introduction to Digital Video (Fall/Spring) <i>Full-Year Classes:</i> Foundations of Digital Video Intermediate Digital Video Advanced Topics (full-year) Advanced Digital Video</p> <p><u>Visual Studio Art</u> <i>Semester Classes:</i> Introduction to Visual Art (Fall/Spring) Sculpture I (Fall) Sculpture II (Spring) Studio Art I (Fall) Studio Art II (Spring) Advanced Topics (full-year): Studio Art Level I Studio Art Level II</p> <p><u>Photography</u> <i>Semester Classes:</i> Photography: Method and Concept</p> <p>Advanced Topics (full-year): Photography 1 & 2</p>

Performing Arts: Dance

Packer Dance Company (Meets 5 times per rotation)

Arts (for 9-12)	645	Fall/Spring	Credit: 0.5
PE (for 9-12)	745		

Packer Dance Company is a performance ensemble that helps dancers develop a professional approach to rehearsals and performances. Students are exposed to a variety of movement, repertoire, and music as a way to learn choreography and gain experience as part of a dance company. Dancers will develop technique, artistry, and performance skills, and will have the opportunity to perform original works created by the instructor and outside guest artists in the Upper School Dance Concert and other showcases. Packer Dance Company can be taken by semester or as a full-year of study.

Available to students in Grade 9 through 12; qualifies for either Arts or PE credit

Dance and Choreography

Arts	659	Full-Year	Credit: 1
PE	759		

This course is designed to help artists explore their technique and choreographic voice. Students will bring awareness to the body through a learned warm-up and sequences both across the floor and in the center. Principles of composition, teaching methods and development of performance skills are covered throughout the year. We will create, rehearse and premiere a new work to be performed in the annual US Dance Concert. The choreography workshop portion of class allows each student to create and direct a piece for their own ensemble of dancers. This piece will be shared in the annual Spring Showcase.

Available to students who meet prerequisites::

- One semester of either Dance Technique or Packer Dance Company is recommended, or participation is by permission of the instructor

Available to students in Grades 10 through 12; qualifies for either Arts or PE credit

Advanced Topics in Dance: Choreography

Arts
PE

640
720

Full-Year

Credit: 1

This course provides the opportunity for the in-depth study of choreography, improvisation, performances skills, and personal creative process through advanced composition assignments and performances. A major focus of the class is the required participation as a choreographer in the Dance Concert and other showcases, which requires a good deal of time in required after-school rehearsals. While learning the craft of composition or “dance-making” is the most obvious element of this course, students also learn about costume design, lighting, leadership, and collaborative concert production.

Available to students who meet prerequisites:

- Arts 625 (Dance and Choreography)
- Admission to AT Choreography is based on an application and portfolio review process.

Available to students in Grades 11 and 12; qualifies for either Arts or PE credit

Performing Arts: Theatre

Actors' Studio

Arts

627

Fall/Spring

Credit: 0.5

Actors' Studio is designed to take a deep dive into the inner workings of a theatre ensemble. Students will explore theatrical history and current trends in New York City, and beyond. Part of this course will also include development of one's artistic instrument via a variety of physical, vocal and meditative techniques, along with improvisational theatrical exercises employed as part of an actor's practice. As a class, we will select a production to explore through the lens of its place in theatre history and its significance on the world stage. Students will learn the skills of character development by implementing a variety of acting techniques developed by Stanislavski, Uta Hagen, Sanford Meisner, Augusto Boal & Theatre of the Oppressed, [Sharrell D. Luckett](#) and more.

There will be a performance component, however the ensemble nature of this course will provide opportunities for non-actors to approach this work by engaging with a variety of other theatrical elements including light and sound design, tech booth operation, stage and production management, or directing based on the skills and interests of the class company. A performance background is not required, though an appreciation for theatre arts and a collaborative spirit is valued highly.

Available to students in Grades 9 through 12.

Performing Arts: Choral

Packer Concert Ensemble (meets 3 times per cycle, plus Thursday after school)

Arts

638

Full-Year

Credit: 0.5

The Packer Choral program offers students in grades 9-12 regardless of previous experience the opportunity to participate in the **Concert Ensemble**. Students will work to develop their own musical and singing ability within a group setting. Using a repertoire that explores diverse musical genres, including jazz, pop, classical, music theater, and so much more, a sense of community is fostered in the Concert Ensemble with singers working together to create professionalism, self-discipline, team-work, and an appreciation for the arts. Various styles of SATB choral music are studied and performed. The Concert Ensemble performs at both the Winter and Spring Concerts and various musical performances throughout the year.

PLEASE NOTE: Students of this class are also **required** to participate in the **Packer Chorus**, which meets during Extended Day each Thursday from 3:30 to 4:15 pm.

Students in Packer Concert Ensemble are encouraged to participate in Concert and Community service trips when offered.

Available to students in Grades 9 through 12

Packer Solo and Chamber Ensemble (meets 3 times per cycle, plus Thursday after school)

Arts

689

Full-Year

Credit: 0.5

The Packer Choral program offers students in grades 9-12 the opportunity to participate in the **Solo and Chamber Ensemble Class** regardless of previous experience. Students will learn to develop their own musical and singing ability through various genres of solo, duet, and small group ensemble vocal works. Repertoire is drawn from exciting and diverse sources, and chosen specifically to help develop the singers' voices. Class participants will perform in both a Winter and Spring Recital - a new performance opportunity for Solo and Chamber Ensemble students.

PLEASE NOTE: Students of this class are also **required** to participate in the **Packer Chorus**, which meets during Extended Day each Thursday from 3:30 to 4:15 pm.

Students in Packer Concert Ensemble are encouraged to participate in Concert and Community service trips when offered.

Available to students in Grades 9 through 12

Performing Arts: Strings

String Orchestra (meets 3 times per cycle, plus Thursday after school)

Arts

653

Full-Year

Credit: 0.5

The Upper School Orchestra is the core of the Upper School Strings Program. The ensemble performs a wide variety of repertoire spanning from the orchestral canon to contemporary and world music. In order to gain a richer understanding of the works that we perform, exploration of the composers and music theory concepts related to each piece becomes part of the rehearsal process. Instrumental technique and ensemble playing (large and small) are integral aspects of our rehearsals, with the opportunity to divide into sectional practice between upper and lower strings. Each enrolled student is responsible for preparation of music and any related activity. As an extension of the skills developed in MS orchestra, attention is paid to working out finger placements, bowings, and other technical aspects of string playing. Further focus given on how to watch and interpret visual cues given by the conductor.

PLEASE NOTE: Students of this class are also **required** to participate in the Music Extended Day each Thursday from 3:30 to 4:15 pm.

Available to instrumentalists in Grade 9 and 12

Chamber Strings (meets 3 times per cycle)

Arts

654

Fall/Spring

Credit: 0.5

The Chamber Strings class is an ancillary ensemble to the Upper School String Program. Students are given a platform for a traditional small string ensemble experience and work in performance as a collaborative group without a specific leader. (Members of the group support each other's musicianship so that the ensemble may successfully perform together without outside direction.) This ensemble will work in tandem to arrive at a musical and artistic consensus. Participating in such a group requires skills associated with small ensemble work: mutual cooperation, nonverbal communication, and a fairly strong knowledge of the score, to ensure cohesion within the group. Students will work to improve intonation skills and achieve a higher level of listening while sight-reading.

Additionally, as a tightly knit team, this group performs more frequently than the full orchestra, and in a variety of collaborations with other performing ensembles, such as the Select Chorus, Jazz Band and others. Some of the proposed venues include art gallery openings and chamber music festivals. This is a semester-long course, registration shall serve as acknowledgment.

Students in Chamber Strings are encouraged to participate in Concert and Community service trips when offered.

Available to instrumentalists in Grade 9 and 12 in String Orchestra with permission from the instructor

Jazz Lab Band (Meets 3 times per cycle)

Arts

657

Full-Year

Credit: 0.5

Lab Band consists of jazz, pop and other musical styles as it prepares students who aspire to the jazz band. Lab band meets three times per cycle and additionally as warranted for each performance opportunity. Each student is responsible for preparation of music and any related activity. As the nature of jazz allows for improvisational technique, students in Packer's Lab study the fundamentals of chord changes and the jazz language. Students explore repertoire, form and music theory, as improvisational work is predicated on knowledge of these formal applications.

Available to instrumentalists in Grade 9 and 12

*For 1.0 credit, students take Lab Band or Jazz Band WITH Wind Symphony

Jazz Band (Meets 3 times per cycle)

Arts

658

Full-Year

Credit: 0.5

This ensemble will be making a trip to New Orleans, the birthplace of Jazz, during the first week of Spring Break 2025. Registration in this class shall serve as acknowledgement of the same. Additionally, there may be live performances in NYC to underscore the work done in class.

Steeped in Big Band Jazz and pop styles, this ensemble usually performs several times each year, including concerts with the Wind Symphony and its subsets, the Brass Choir and Winds Choir, as well as in its own designated formal concert setting. The Jazz Band meets regularly each week as per schedule, and additionally as warranted by the needs of each concert. Each student is responsible for preparation of music and any related activity. We make it a point to study style, as it relates to performance pieces, especially those works found in any reputable list of Jazz standards. This often means working within a framework of historical perspective. We engage in listening, review the lives of Jazz greats in their time, and explore features that distinguish one era in Jazz from another.

As the nature of Jazz allows for improvisational technique, students in Packer's Jazz Band are encouraged to take an active role in soloing from given/printed chord changes. Students will explore form and music theory, as improvisational work is predicated on knowledge of these formal applications. This ensemble is available to instrumentalists in grades 9-12 enrolled in one of the flagship ensembles (exemptions for guitar exist), with prior Jazz ensemble experience in either Middle School, or the US Lab Jazz Band and/or permission from the director.

Available to instrumentalists in Grade 9 and 12 with permission from the instructor

Visual Arts: Digital Video

Introduction to Digital Video

Arts

611

Fall/Spring

Credit: 0.5

In this introductory course, students explore the fundamentals of video production and filmmaking technologies. Through hands-on experience with digital media, they will work on both individual and group projects, experimenting with a variety of filmmaking techniques. An ongoing critical dialogue will be central to the creative process, helping students develop their technical skills, artistic vision, and storytelling abilities.

Available to students in Grade 9 only

Foundations of Digital Video

Arts

633

Full-year

Credit: 1

Video storytelling is at the heart of this course designed to expose students to current and historical approaches to art making through an array of new media. A variety of projects are planned to enhance student understanding of video production and the synthesis of media that is at the core of the storytelling that shapes our world. The class will work with visiting filmmakers and artists through class visits and field trips. Each semester will have elements of team brainstorming, screenwriting, and production.

Available to students in Grade 10 through 12

Intermediate Digital Video

Arts

634

Full-year

Credit: 1

At this stage in the sequence, students shift their focus toward writing and directing, honing their creative vision and storytelling skills. Through a variety of hands-on projects, they will deepen their understanding of video production while refining their technical and artistic abilities. Advanced students are expected to take on leadership roles, mentoring peers and driving collaborative projects forward. They will also develop a cohesive, theme-based body of work that showcases their unique voice as filmmakers. Each semester will incorporate team brainstorming, screenwriting, and full-scale production, fostering both individual creativity and a strong sense of ensemble filmmaking.

Available to students in Grade 11 and 12 who meet prerequisites:

- Arts 612 (Digital Video I)
- Permission of the instructor

AT Advanced Digital Video

Arts

642

Full-year

Credit: 1

In this final course, students will deepen their creative and technical skills through ambitious, self-driven projects. With a focus on personal expression and storytelling, they will refine their directing, cinematography, and editing techniques while exploring new ways to bring their creative vision to life.

Building on previous experience, students will take on leadership roles in collaborative projects while also developing an independent body of work. The course encourages experimentation with narrative style, visual composition, and thematic storytelling, allowing students to push their ideas further in a supportive workshop environment.

A highlight of the semester will be a final presentation where students share their films with a panel of experienced filmmakers and storytellers. This conversation will provide valuable feedback and inspiration as students reflect on their creative growth and next steps.

Throughout the course, students will engage in hands-on filmmaking, refining their process and discovering new ways to craft meaningful, compelling stories on screen.

Available to students in Grade 11 and 12 who meet prerequisites:

- Arts 615 (Digital Video II)
- Permission of the instructor

Visual Arts: Studio Art

Introduction to Visual Art

Arts

610

Fall/Spring

Credit: 0.5

In this introductory freshman course, students work with a variety of media including but not limited to drawing, painting, printmaking and sculpture. Work from observation forms the basis of refining their skills of seeing, and of using tools and materials. In addition to exploring traditional themes of landscape, still life and portraits, students also use the school and city environments for inspiration and explore other conceptual approaches to making art.

Available to students in Grade 9 only

Sculpture I

Arts

690

Fall

Credit: 0.5

Sculpture is the art of creating in three dimensions. This course will include work with traditional sculpture materials including but not limited to paper, cardboard, clay, and found objects. Students will learn how to create forms from flat media and how to model with clay from direct observation. Their experience will incorporate working from drawings, developing a build plan and exposure to a variety of tools as they develop their craftsmanship. One museum visit and report is required.

Available to students in Grade 10 through 12

There is no prerequisite for this course

Sculpture II

Arts

691

Spring

Credit: 0.5

This course will include work with clay, plaster, wire and found objects. Students will learn how to hand build a functional form using clay, how to develop abstractions from observed form and how to create work from recycled materials and found objects. Their experience will incorporate working from drawings, developing a build plan and exposure to a variety of tools as they learn to refine their craftsmanship. One museum visit is required.

Available to students in Grade 10 through 12

There is no prerequisite for this course

Studio Art I

Arts

631

Fall

Credit: 0.5

This course is designed to immerse students in a broad range of visual arts experiences in drawing and printmaking. Through the use of a wide variety of techniques, materials, and visual concepts, students explore realism, abstraction, and self-expression. The drawing sequence includes figure drawing, observation drawing, imagination and conceptual drawing. Students will use drawing mediums including but not limited to pencil, pastel, charcoal, ink, watercolor, collage and mixed media. Printmaking techniques include relief printing, collagraphs and monoprinting. Daily studies in a personal sketchbook and at least one independent museum visit is required.

Available to students in Grade 10 through 12

Studio Art II

Arts

632

Spring

Credit: 0.5

This course is designed to explore a wide range of visual arts experience through painting. The projects explore observational, abstract and non-representation approaches. Painting mediums may include tempera, acrylic and mixed media. By the end of the course, students are encouraged to develop their own project-based series of paintings. Daily studies in a personal sketchbook and at least one museum visit are required.

Available to students in Grade 10 through 12

Advanced Topics in Studio Art: Level I (Junior year) and Level II (Senior year)

Arts

681(Level 1)

Full-Year

Credit: 1

683(Level 2)

688(Level 3)

This course comprises the third year and fourth year of visual arts offerings. Students will each create a comprehensive portfolio in response to independent assignments and class projects, as well as self-initiated work. In the junior year, a wide range of visual arts experiences are structured to give breadth both in terms of use of materials and visual arts concepts while in the senior year students are expected to foster and bring to fruition ambitious projects of their own conception and direction. Portfolios are comprised of two major areas; **concentration** and **breadth**. The **concentration** area allows you to develop in depth a single compelling theme or concept, while the **breadth section** includes a range of work using different media and visual art concepts. While work created in the course serves as the body of the portfolio, each student is expected to complete substantial assignments not covered in class. Portfolio development is discussed in periodic seminars with the instructor. The completed portfolios will be reviewed in May by a panel of artists typically drawn from the Packer community and from among Packer alums who have gone on to establish careers in art. This course is open to students in grades eleven and twelve and occasionally to sophomores by special permission of the instructor.

Available to students who meet prerequisites:

- Consistent demonstration of criteria noted on page 4 of this Guide
- Completion of a year of intermediate art or equivalent
- Permission of the instructor

Visual Arts: Photography

Photography: Method and Concept

Arts

622

Full-Year

Credit: 1

In this era of smartphones almost everyone takes photographs; hundreds of them. What qualities make a photograph “good”, one that stands out from the crowd of snapshots? This course is designed to develop in students an awareness of effective composition, an understanding of the important role that light plays in taking pictures, and a capacity to look at the ordinary in totally new ways.

Students will be taking pictures with both film and digital cameras and working in the darkroom to learn the traditional methods of making photographic prints. Students will learn to articulate their understandings about photography through speaking and writing about the work of other photographers as well as through discussions of their own work. The sequence of photographic assignments covers a wide range of subject matter including portraits, still life, and the city, as well as important aspects of picture-taking such as light, vantage point and composition. It is helpful but not essential to have a digital camera.

The school provides film cameras for use in class. Students purchase film and photographic paper for darkroom work.

Available to students in Grade 10 through 12

Advanced Topics in Photography I & II

Arts

**682
685**

Full-Year

Credit: 1

The Advanced Topics Photography course provides an in-depth experience to students who wish to pursue photography with dedication and concentrated focus. The end goal is a portfolio, which represents a student’s best efforts from both creative and technical standpoints. The final portfolio will demonstrate both a broad understanding of photographic concepts and will, most importantly, include a thorough photographic exploration of a self-selected theme. More demanding than first year photography, this course requires students to demonstrate a high level of engagement in both classwork and homework. Students are encouraged to push the limits of their creativity and conceptual understanding, through both their creative efforts and their written and verbal efforts to “read” and analyze photographs. A central feature of the class will be visits from professional photographers who will offer consultation and feedback to students during the course of the year as well as evaluate portfolios at the end of the year.

Available to students who meet prerequisites:

- Consistent demonstration of criteria noted on page 4 of this Guide
- Completion of a year of intermediate art and/or photography with a grade of B+
- A portfolio of 5 photographs or other artwork to be presented to and discussed with the instructor

Available to students in Grades 11 and 12

Physical Education and Athletics

Physical Education Department Head: Zachary Wright
Director of Athletics: Naim Abdul-Malik

The Physical Education program in the Upper School seeks to develop each student's appreciation of and commitment to lifelong personal health and fitness. The physical education program recognizes the wide range of abilities and interests of its students and seeks to offer some choice and flexibility in order to encourage maximum participation and enjoyment. To achieve these aims, Packer offers instruction in the following activities: team sports, fitness and weight training, climbing wall activities, yoga, alternative group games and cooperative activities.

Requirements:

Physical Education is **required each year** and meets three times per cycle for the entire year. Students must pass eight semesters of physical education in the Upper School to graduate. These courses are Pass / Fail. If a student is absent 4 times (in a quarter class) or 8 times (in a semester class) they will not receive PE credit.

All students are required to register for a full year of physical education during the registration process the previous school year; students can fulfill this full-year requirement through the variety of options listed below.

Participation on one athletic team will fulfill one semester of physical education and participation on two athletic teams will fulfill the full year's requirement.

Fall teams are decided before the beginning of the school year. However, any student who is participating in a physical education class and is interested in trying out for a Winter or Spring team must stay in PE class until tryouts are completed and they are assured of a place on the team.

Physical Education Courses

Semester Classes (Fall/Spring):

[Physical Education](#) (X3 per cycle)

[Morning Foundational Yoga](#) (X2 a week)

[Morning Advanced Yoga](#) (X2 a week)

[Athletic Manager](#)

[Athletic Participation Exemption](#)

[Packer Dance Company](#) (full-band)

Full-year Classes:

[Dance Technique](#) (half-band; X3 per cycle)

[Dance and Choreography](#) (full-band)

[Advanced Topics in Dance: Choreography](#) (full-band)

Physical Education

PE

711

Fall/Spring

Credit: 0.5*

The class will cover a variety of physical education activities, which may include team sports, racquet sports, cardio/strength training, wellness (yoga/pilates/mindfulness), and project adventure/climbing. Classes meet either three times per 7 day cycle (half-band) or three times per 7 day cycle during community time.

Morning Foundational Yoga

PE

702

Fall/Spring

Credit: 0.5*

Foundational Yoga is open to students in grades 9 and 10 and new practitioners. No prior yoga experience is necessary.

Yoga postures are introduced, practiced, and combined with relaxation and breathing exercises, meditation, and philosophy. The class meets at 7:15am on Monday and Wednesday mornings.

Morning Advanced Yoga

PE

703

Fall/Spring

Credit: 0.5*

Advanced Yoga is open to grades 11 and 12 and students with previous Yoga experience. Prior yoga experience is required.

Yoga postures are practiced with emphasis on body awareness and alignment, combined with relaxation and breathing techniques, meditation, and philosophy. The class meets at 7:15am on Tuesday and Thursday mornings.

Athletics Manager

PE

770

Fall/Spring

Credit: 0.25*/0.5*

Students who act as managers for the Athletic teams listed below will receive PE credit for either a quarter or a semester depending on the season. The expectations of a manager include the following:

- Complete one training session organized by the Athletic Director, Assistant Athletic Director, or PE Department Head
- Attendance at all home and away games
- Set-up and breakdown of equipment at home games
- Working the scorer's table: scorebook, stats, scoreboard
- Sport related game management responsibilities: lines, videoing, etc.
- Attend 1 practice each week to work-out with the team

The following Athletic teams require managers and offer the following exemption:

- Fall: Women's Varsity and JV Volleyball - 1st quarter
- Winter: Women's and Men's Varsity and JV Basketball, Varsity Swim- 2nd and 3rd quarters
- Spring: Men's Varsity Volleyball: 4th quarter

*Each team requires 3 managers.

Managers of Fall and Spring sports are exempt from PE class for the **duration of the season**. Student managers **MUST have a PE class in their schedule**, as they will return to PE (Fall sports) in the 2nd quarter or begin a PE class (Spring sports) for the 3rd quarter when they are not in season. Basketball managers are exempt for the semester, due to the length of the season, but should have a PE class in their schedule for the 1st and 4th quarters.

Students can only receive a semester worth of credit through this course each year. This role must be approved by the Athletic Director and Physical Education Department Head.

Athletic Participation Exemption

PE

764

Fall/Spring

Credit: 0.5*

This program is offered to students in grades 10 through 12. Students who wish to use their participation on an outside of school athletic team or dance program may do so if their participation is the equivalent to a varsity athletic team, meeting 8-10 hours per week.. Students asking to use an athletic team or dance program as their Physical Education credit must meet the following criteria:

- Meets the equivalent of a Varsity athletic team
- Department Head approval before registering
- Be part of an established, approved, competitive/performance program
- Play on Packer's sport team (if offered)

Once enrolled, students must provide contact details for their coach/ teacher and club, a detailed practice/game schedule, and keep a regular log documenting their participation. The log must be signed by their coach and submitted to the Physical Education Department Head on a schedule determined by the Dept Head. .

This class is graded on a Pass/ Fail basis.

Packer Dance Company (Meets 5 times per rotation)

Arts (for 9-12)	645	Fall/Spring	Credit: 0.5
PE (for 9-12)	745		

Packer Dance Company is a performance ensemble that helps dancers develop a professional approach to rehearsals and performances. Students are exposed to a variety of movement, repertoire, and music as a way to learn choreography and gain experience as part of a dance company. Dancers will develop technique, artistry, and performance skills, and will have the opportunity to perform original works created by the instructor and outside guest artists in the Upper School Dance Concert and other showcases. Packer Dance Company can be taken by semester or as a full-year of study.

Available to students in Grade 9 through 12; qualifies for either Arts or PE credit

Dance Technique (Meets 3 times per rotation)

PE	718	Full-Year	Credit: 0.5
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This course encourages having fun and taking risks through full-bodied movement. Dancers develop strength, stamina, stability, and fluidity by studying the history and technique of a variety of dance genres. Units of study may include (but are not limited to): ballet, jazz, hip-hop, tap, modern, musical theater, and salsa. Each class begins with floor work and conditioning and ends with longer dance phrases that integrate skills into a full experience of dancing. No prior dance experience is necessary.

Available to students in Grades 9-12; qualifies for PE CREDIT ONLY (no Arts credit)

Dance and Choreography

Arts	659	Full-Year	Credit: 1
PE	759		

This course is designed to help artists explore their technique and choreographic voice. Students will bring awareness to the body through a learned warm-up and sequences both across the floor and in the center. Principles of composition, teaching methods and development of performance skills are covered throughout the year. We will create, rehearse and premiere a new work to be performed in the annual US Dance Concert. The choreography workshop portion of class allows each student to create and direct a piece for their own ensemble of dancers. This piece will be shared in the annual Spring Showcase.

Available to students who meet prerequisites::

- One semester of either Dance Technique or Packer Dance Company is recommended, or participation is by permission of the instructor

Available to students in Grades 10 through 12; qualifies for either Arts or PE credit

Advanced Topics in Dance: Choreography

Arts
PE

635
720

Full-Year

Credit: 1

This course provides the opportunity for the in-depth study of choreography, improvisation, performances skills, and personal creative process through advanced composition assignments and performances. A major focus of the class is the required participation as a choreographer in the Dance Concert and other showcases, which requires a good deal of time in required after-school rehearsals. While learning the craft of composition or “dance-making” is the most obvious element of this course, students also learn about costume design, lighting, leadership, and collaborative concert production.

Available to students who meet prerequisites:

- Arts 625 (Dance and Choreography)
- Recommendation of the instructor

Available to students in Grades 11 and 12; qualifies for either Arts or PE credit

Athletics

Students can choose from a variety of team sports for interscholastic competition:

Fall:

Girls JV Volleyball
Girls Varsity Volleyball
Girls JV Soccer
Girls Varsity Soccer
Boys JV Soccer
Boys Varsity Soccer
Girls Varsity Cross Country
Boys Varsity Cross Country
Girls Varsity Tennis

Winter:

Girls JV Basketball
Girls Varsity Basketball
Boys JV Basketball
Boys Varsity Basketball
Girls Varsity Swim
Boys Varsity Swim
Co-ed Varsity Squash
Girls Varsity Indoor Track
Boys Varsity Indoor Track

Spring:

Boys Varsity Baseball
Girls Varsity Softball
Boys Varsity Volleyball
Girls Track & Field
Boys Track & Field
Co-ed Ultimate Frisbee
Co-ed Varsity Golf
Boys Varsity Tennis

Participation on one sports team may be used to satisfy one semester of physical education credit each year. Participation on two or more teams may be used to satisfy an entire year of physical education credit.

The following table shows during which quarters and/or semesters the credit will count.

Physical Education/Athletic Team Exemption

Fall Sports

Sport	Quarters Exempt	Semester Grade
Girls JV Volleyball	1 and 2	1st
Girls Varsity Volleyball	1 and 2	1st
Girls Varsity Soccer	1 and 2	1st
Girls Varsity X--Country	1 and 2	1st
Girls JV Soccer	1 and 2	1st
Boys JV Soccer	1 and 2	1st
Boys Varsity Soccer	1 and 2	1st
Boys Varsity X--Country	1 and 2	1st
Girls Varsity Tennis	1 and 2	1st

Winter Sports

Sport	Quarters Exempt	Semester Grade
Girls JV Basketball	2 and 3	2nd
Girls Varsity Basketball	2 and 3	2nd
Girls Varsity Swim	2 and 3	2nd
Girls Varsity Indoor Track	2 and 3	2nd
Boys JV Basketball	2 and 3	2nd
Boys Varsity Basketball	2 and 3	2nd
Boys Varsity Swim	2 and 3	2nd
Boys Varsity Indoor Track	2 and 3	2nd
Co-ed Varsity Squash	2 and 3	2nd

Spring Sports

Sport	Quarters Exempt	Semester Grade
Girls Varsity Softball	3 and 4	2nd
Girls Varsity Track & Field	3 and 4	2nd
Boys Varsity Baseball	3 and 4	2nd
Boys Varsity Volleyball	3 and 4	2nd
Boys Varsity Track & Field	3 and 4	2nd
Co-ed Varsity Ultimate Frisbee	3 and 4	2nd
Boys Varsity Tennis	3 and 4	2nd
Co-ed Varsity Golf	3 and 4	2nd

Students may also fulfill their Physical Education credit by working as a manager for an athletic team.

NOTE

1. Students who are registered for a physical education class that takes place in the fall and who decide to participate in a winter team sport **must** remain in their assigned class until they have made the team.
2. Students who, in the course of the school year, play one sport only in winter, **must** take PE 1st and 4th quarter, and will be exempt from PE, 2nd and 3rd quarter, during their season.
3. First time spring sport participants, if they are not coming off a winter season, **must** be in a second semester physical education class until they are assured of making the team.
4. If the number of students trying out for a team is more than the team can carry, cuts may be made. If this is the case, all students in jeopardy of not making a team **must** be enrolled and participating in a physical education class until they have made the team.

Health

Director of Health & Wellness: Bridget Loday

Health Department Head (beginning 2025) - Ashleigh Petillo

Upper School Health Education courses are designed to educate students to take responsibility for their choices, understand consequences, and learn from their experiences. Building on the Lower and Middle School Health Education program, the Upper School courses address the foundational concepts of self-awareness, healthy communication, values based decision-making, recognition of and respect for diversity, and community membership. The Upper School program includes year-long courses in ninth and tenth grade, and finishes with a 12th grade seminar class. The Health Department also oversees the Peer Leadership Programs which involve teaching upper school students leadership capabilities including: active listening, small group facilitation skills, conflict resolution, and relationship building. These skills are practiced through peer mentorship and regular meetings with small groups of younger students.

Health Courses

Grade 9 (required)

[Life Skills](#) (half-band)

Grade 10 (required)

[Health](#) (half-band)

Grade 12 (required)

[Health](#) (Spring seminar)

Leadership

[Peer Support Team Training](#)

[Peer Support Team Training \(PALS\)](#)

Grade Nine Health: Life Skills (required) (Meets 2.5 times per rotation)

Health

751

Full Year

Credit: 0.5

Health 9 prepares students for the transition from middle to upper school. Guest speakers visit throughout the year introducing 9th graders to different aspects of Packer Upper School. Guest topics include learning support and library services, mental health, and review of the Upper School Handbook. The rest of the year is dedicated to introductory health topics, including nutrition, alcohol and other drugs, mental health, and sexuality. Learning occurs through lecture, group activities, current events analysis, reflections, and discussion.

Peer Support Team Training (PALS)

Health

760

Full-Year

Credit: 0.0

The purpose of this course is to provide Upper School students with the tools to facilitate peer sessions for seventh grade students. PALS leaders are trained to mentor and support seventh graders through instructive group activities and discussions. During the fall training retreat, the students develop active-listening techniques, learn about strategies to help establish and implement group guidelines, gain tactics for effective conflict resolution, and create activities to promote team unity and build trust in a group. Throughout the year, peer leaders hone their group facilitation and mentoring skills in their bi-monthly sessions with their seventh graders.

Students are selected by a four-week process completed during the previous spring semester.

Summary of Courses Requiring Prior Approval

World Languages

AT Chinese
AT French
AT Latin
AT Spanish
Post AT Spanish

History

AT American Government
AT European History
AT Archival Research
AT Imperialism
AT Middle East History

Mathematics

Geometry Advanced
Algebra II Advanced
PreCalculus Advanced
AT Statistics
AT Calculus I
AT Calculus I & II
AT Symmetry & Transformations

Science

Accelerated Physics
Accelerated Chemistry
Accelerated Biology
AT Biology
AT Inorganic Chemistry
AT Organic Chemistry
AT Physics
Introduction to Independent Science
Research

Fine and Performing Arts

AT Choreography
Select Choral Lab
Jazz Band
Lab Band
AT Studio Art
AT Photography

Physical Education

After School Workout
Athletic Participation Exemption

Leadership

Peer Support Team Training
Peer Support Team Training (PALS)

Quick Course Guide - Links to all courses by subject:

[Arts](#)

[Computer Science](#)

[English](#)

[Health](#)

[History & Social Sciences](#)

[Mathematics](#)

[Physical Education](#)

[Science](#)

[World Languages](#)

Fine and Performing Arts Courses

Performing Arts	Visual Arts
<p>Dance <i>Semester Class:</i> Packer Dance Company (Fall/Spring) <i>Full-Year Classes:</i> Dance and Choreography Advanced Topics (full-year) Choreography</p> <p>Theatre <i>Semester Classes:</i> Actors' Studio (Fall/Spring)</p> <p>Choral <i>Full-Year Classes:</i> Packer Concert Ensemble (half-band) Packer Solo and Chamber Ensemble (half-band)</p> <p>Strings <i>Full-Year Class:</i> String Orchestra (half-band) <i>Semester Class:</i> Chamber Strings (half-band)</p> <p>Band <i>Full-Year Classes:</i> Brass Choir (half-band) Wind Choir (half-band)</p>	<p>Digital Video <i>Semester Classes:</i> Introduction to Digital Video (Fall/Spring) <i>Full-Year Classes:</i> Foundations of Digital Video Intermediate Digital Video Advanced Topics (full-year) Advanced Digital Video</p> <p>Visual Studio Art <i>Semester Classes:</i> Introduction to Visual Art (Fall/Spring) Sculpture I (Fall) Sculpture II (Spring) Studio Art I (Fall) Studio Art II (Spring) Advanced Topics (full-year): Studio Art Level I Studio Art Level II</p> <p>Photography <i>Semester Classes:</i> Photography: Method and Concept</p> <p>Advanced Topics (full-year): Photography 1 & 2</p>

<p><i>Required dual enrollment with Brass or Wind Choir:</i></p> <p>Lab Band (half-band)</p> <p>Jazz Band (half-band)</p>	
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Computer Science Courses

Fall Semester:

[Introduction to Computer Science](#)

[Physical Computing](#)

Spring Semester

[Introduction to Computer Science](#)

[Web Development](#)

Advanced Topics (full year)

[Data Science](#) (2025-26 SY)

[Full Stack Web Development](#) (2026-27 SY)

English Courses

9th Grade

[Foundations of Form and Function](#)

10th Grade

[The American Experience](#)

11th & 12th Grade

Fall Electives

Literature-based Courses:

[African-American and Afro-Caribbean Literature](#)

[Asian and Asian-American Literature](#)

[“Beauty” and the “Beast” in Literature: Complicating Concepts of Beauty and Ugliness](#)

[Cleopatra and the Caesars: Historical and Literary Perspectives](#)

[Feminist Literary Theory & Ancient Myth](#)

[Legacy and Identity in Literature](#)

[Literary Memoir](#)

[The Literature of Modern Drama: Playwrights of the Twentieth Century](#)

[Literature’s Ghosts & Monsters](#)

[Modernism in Literature and Philosophy](#)

[Reconsidering Shakespeare](#)

Writing-based Courses:

[Creative Nonfiction Writing in the Digital Age](#)
[Creative Writing: Short Fiction](#)
[Persuasive Writing and Rhetoric](#)
[Literary Explorations of Scripts and Screenwriting](#)

Spring Electives

Literature-based Courses:

[Cleopatra and the Caesars: Historical and Literary Perspectives](#)
[Culture, Capitalism, and Conflict in Literature](#)
[Latin American Literature \(in translation\)](#)
[Literature of America's Rebels & Dreamers: Environment, Power, and Agency](#)
[The Literature of Modern Drama: Playwrights of the Twenty-first Century](#)
[Literature of Money & Power](#)
[Modern Journeys in Literature](#)
[New York City in Literature](#)
[Science Fiction as Literature](#)
[Time and Memory in Literature](#)
[Unconventional Narratives](#)

Writing-based Courses:

[Creative Writing: Short Fiction](#)
[Persuasive Writing and Rhetoric](#)
[The Art and Craft of Memoir Writing](#)
[Poetry](#)

Health Courses

Grade 9 (required)

[Life Skills](#) (half-band)

Grade 10 (required)

[Health](#) (half-band)

Grade 12 (required)

[Health](#) (Spring seminar)

Leadership

[Peer Support Team Training](#)
[Peer Support Team Training \(PALS\)](#)

History and Social Science Courses

9th Grade

[Humanities: Foundations of World History](#)

10th Grade

United States History

11th & 12th Grade

Fall Electives

[Africa Through the Lens](#)

[Cleopatra and the Caesars: Historical and Literary Perspectives](#)

[A Cultural History of American Popular Music](#)

[The Dragon Rises: A History of Modern China](#)

[Genocide in the Contemporary World](#)

[History & Philosophy of Death & Dying](#)

[Religion, Conflict, & Peace](#)

Spring Electives

[Cleopatra and the Caesars: Historical and Literary Perspectives](#)

[Cultural Anthropology](#)

[Democracy in Action](#)

[The First Age of Globalization](#)

[International Relations](#)

[Jim Crow and Apartheid: Roots, Resistance, and Reckoning](#)

[Women's Rights Are Human Rights](#)

Advanced Topics

[American Government](#)

[European History](#)

[Imperialism and Resistance](#)

[Making History: Conducting Scholarly Research in the Archives](#)

[Middle East History \(2026-27SY\)](#)

[Religion, Nationalism, and the Politics of Belonging](#)

Mathematics Courses

9th Grade

[Geometry](#)

[Geometry Advanced](#)

10th Grade

[Algebra II](#)

[Algebra II Advanced](#)

11th Grade

[Precalculus](#)

[Precalculus Advanced](#)

12th Grade

[Calculus](#)

[Discrete Mathematics & Democracy](#) (2025-26)

[Statistics](#) (2026-27)

Advanced Topics

AT [Calculus I](#)

AT [Calculus I & II](#)

AT [Math: Symmetry & Transformations](#)

AT [Statistics](#)

Physical Education Courses

Semester Classes (Fall/Spring):

[Physical Education](#) (X3 per cycle)

[Morning Foundational Yoga](#) (X2 a week)

[Morning Advanced Yoga](#) (X2 a week)

[Athletic Manager](#)

[Athletic Participation Exemption](#)

[Packer Dance Company](#) (full-band)

Full-year Classes:

[Dance Technique](#) (half-band; X3 per cycle)

[Dance and Choreography](#) (full-band)

[Advanced Topics in Dance: Choreography](#) (full-band)

Science Courses

9th Grade

[Physics](#)

[Accelerated Physics](#)

10th Grade

[Chemistry](#)

[Accelerated Chemistry](#)

11th Grade

[Biology](#)

[Accelerated Biology](#)

11th/12th Grade

Fall Semester:

[Astronomy](#)

[Human Anatomy and Physiology: Organization, Movement, and Transport](#) (12th grade only)

[Scientific and Historical Origins of Race and Gender](#) (12th grade only)

Spring Semester:

[Cosmology](#)

[Environmental Science](#)

[Human Anatomy and Physiology: Regulation, Energy, and Reproduction](#) (12th grade only)

Advanced Topics

[Biology](#)

[Inorganic Chemistry](#)

[Organic Chemistry](#)

[Physics](#)

Independent Science Research

[Introduction to Independent Science Research](#) (10th Grade)

[Intermediate Independent Science Research](#) (11th Grade)

[Advanced Independent Science Research](#) (12th Grade)

World Language Courses

Chinese

[Chinese I](#)

[Chinese II](#)

[Chinese III](#)

[Chinese IV](#)

[Chinese V](#)

[Advanced Topics in Chinese: Conversation and Culture](#)

French

[French I](#)

[French II](#)

[French III](#)

[French IV](#)

[French V](#)

[Advanced Topics in French: Francophone Cinema \(2025-26 SY\)](#)

[Advanced Topics in French: Francophone Maghreb \(2026-27 SY\)](#)

Latin

[Latin I](#)

[Latin II](#)

[Latin III](#)

[Latin IV](#)

[Advanced Topics in Latin: Poetry - Vergil \(2025-26 SY\)](#)

[Advanced Topics in Latin: Anthology of Latin Literature \(2026-27 SY\)](#)

Spanish

[Spanish I](#)

[Spanish II](#)

[Spanish III](#)

[Spanish IV](#)

[Spanish V: Cultures of the Spanish-Speaking Caribbean](#)

[Advanced Topics in Spanish: Human Rights \(2025-26 SY\)](#)

[Advanced Topics in Spanish: Literature and Culture \(2026-27 SY\)](#)

[Post AT Spanish Seminar: Language & Culture](#)