



Upper School Course Offerings

Academic Year 2026-27

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Letter From the Head of School

Thaden Families,

It is with great excitement that I introduce the 2026-27 course offerings guide, a testament to the creativity, collaboration, and dedication of our faculty and academic leadership team. Over the past year, they have worked tirelessly to craft a curriculum that challenges and inspires our students, paving the way for a transformative educational journey.

At Thaden, we believe that education is not just about acquiring knowledge but about discovering and nurturing the independence that comes from learning how to think, speak, and act for oneself. Whether students are diving into the timeless themes of *Macbeth*, exploring the rich food systems of Northwest Arkansas, testing the boundaries of physics, or bringing their own one-act plays to life, they are engaging in experiences that foster critical thinking, empathy, and curiosity. Our curriculum encourages students to approach complex questions from multiple perspectives, balancing conviction with humility and embracing civil discourse and free inquiry. Above all, a Thaden education seeks to instill in every student a profound joy in learning and a confidence that propels them toward a future of boundless possibilities.

This spring, students will embark on the exciting process of shaping their academic pathways for the coming year. In partnership with their families, teachers, and academic advisors, they will explore the diverse opportunities that our curriculum offers. We warmly invite parents to join us in this journey, fostering a shared commitment to our students' growth and success.

I encourage you to dive into the course offerings and discover the remarkable opportunities awaiting your student. Should you have any questions, please do not hesitate to reach out to Jessica Bonnem, Head of Upper School.

Together we fly!

Michael Maloy
Head of School

Mission and Guiding Principles

Our mission is to provide a balanced and challenging education that ignites in our students a passion for discovery and learning, prepares them to succeed in college, and inspires them to lead lives of integrity, purpose, and responsible global citizenship.

In pursuing our mission, we are guided by these principles:

- The diversity of a school is essential to the quality of education that it provides.
- In a small school, students are better able to form close relationships with teachers that will give them a strong sense of belonging, self-confidence, and responsibility.
- There is an art in masterful teaching, which requires resources, mentorship, and recognition.
- A well-balanced curriculum empowers students:
 - To think ethically, critically, and creatively about global issues and their local manifestations;
 - To see connections among the humanities, sciences, and mathematics as integrative disciplines in the search for knowledge, meaning, and beauty;
 - To build coherent, compelling, and innovative arguments;
 - To establish their voice in the world by writing and speaking well and expressing themselves creatively;
 - To work independently and collaboratively.
- Activities outside of the classroom (such as acting in a play, competing on a team, or working on a sustainability project) give students essential opportunities to develop as leaders, volunteers, and contributors to the life and spirit of the greater community.
- A school must create a safe and healthy environment where students have time and space for reflection, freedom to make important decisions, and opportunities to learn from mistakes.
- The harmony of a school community depends on a shared commitment to honesty, compassion, and fair play.

Overview

Giving equal emphasis to the sciences and humanities, Thaden School's graduation requirements are designed to ensure that students build a strong and balanced foundation across all major disciplines. While our curriculum respects the boundaries of the core academic disciplines so that students understand how scientists, artists, mathematicians, historians, and others create knowledge and understand the world, the course of study within a given discipline often intersects with other disciplines in ways that help students discover larger patterns and explore broad topics and questions from multiple angles.

Our commitment to interdisciplinary problem solving also finds rich expression within the context of our three signature programs – Meals, Reels, and Wheels – where students combine multiple fields of study and engage with community partners in ways that foster a strong sense of civic responsibility. Intensives and other forms of independent study as well as Community-Based Learning (CBL) courses provide further opportunities for students to form and investigate their own questions from many perspectives.

While our curriculum committee and academic leadership oversee the development of our academic program to ensure consistency and coherence, we leverage the special interests and expertise of our nationally recruited faculty by giving them considerable discretion in the design of their courses. Our faculty use a wide range of pedagogical methods – from seminar-style discussions to community-engaged projects – that collectively enhance students' versatility as problem solvers who can work independently and collaboratively in a rapidly changing world.

By virtue of our Indexed Tuition program and small class sizes, we also offer a classroom experience in which students of many interests, aspirations, and backgrounds share and explore different points of view under the guidance of nurturing, even-handed educators. As our students discover their common ground and learn from their differences, they grow better prepared for life and citizenship in a nation founded upon a shared commitment to the value of civil debate and diversity of thought.

Our approach to the assessment of academic work is designed to foster a “growth mindset” and resilience in the face of challenge. In particular, our standards-based grading practices illuminate the path to self-improvement by helping students focus on the skills and habits essential to their success at Thaden and beyond. Given our small class sizes, we also expect faculty to provide their students with detailed written feedback and personal encouragement that builds their self-confidence and ignites a lifelong passion for learning and discovery.

Graduation Requirements

Thaden School's graduation requirements ensure that all students build a strong and balanced foundation, while also offering freedom to explore and develop a wide range of interests.

Program	Credits	Notes
English	4.5	The required sequence in Grades 9-12 (English I, II, III, IV, and Professional Communication) fulfills this four-and-a-half-credit requirement.
Mathematics and Computer Science	4	The required sequence in Grades 9-11 (Algebra I-II and Geometry) fulfills three credits of this four-credit requirement. Algebra I taken in Middle School counts as one Upper School math credit.
History and Social Sciences	3	The required sequence in Grades 9-11 (Modern World History, US Government and Economics, US History) fulfills this three-credit requirement.
Science	3	The required sequence in Grades 9-10 (Integrated Biology and Environmental Science, Integrated Chemistry and Physics) and one additional year-long course fulfills this three-credit requirement.
World Languages and Cultures	3	Students must study the same language for at least two consecutive years in the Upper School. World language study in Middle School may count for up to one credit.
Signature Programs	2	Students may choose elective courses in three areas: Meals, Reels, and Wheels.
Visual and Performing Arts	2	Students may choose elective courses in three areas: music, theater, and visual arts.
Wellness and Physical Education	2	Students in Grades 9 and 11 are required to take a one-trimester Wellness course. Students must earn one Physical Education (PE) credit each year in the Upper School by taking a one-trimester PE elective or by participating on a Thaden athletics team.
Additional Courses	3	This requirement may be fulfilled by taking elective courses in any field of study at Thaden School.
Total	26.5	As a general matter, students are expected to take seven courses per trimester.
<p>While fulfilling these requirements, students must also earn at least one full credit of Community-Based Learning (CBL) courses.</p> <p>In most cases, one credit equals three trimesters of study. The number of credits required represent the minimum that a student must earn to fulfill that requirement. Thaden School's graduation requirements exceed Arkansas state standards.</p>		

Academic Policies

Course Selection

Thaden School's Upper School course selection process begins in February. Students start the process by referring to this guide and setting their long-range academic goals as well as their specific selections for the upcoming year. During this planning phase, students are encouraged to consult with their parents, advisor, college counselor, teachers, and assistant head of school.

When students have identified their desired course of study for the upcoming year, they should complete the course selection form through the school portal. Course selections are due on March 13, 2026.

Advanced Coursework

At many schools, especially those serving students with a broad range of academic trajectories and needs, courses that are specifically designed to prepare students for college often carry the Advanced Placement (AP) or International Baccalaureate (IB) designation in order to signal their academic rigor. Thaden does not offer an AP or IB program because our required course of study, consistent with our mission, is designed to prepare students for success at even the most academically challenging colleges and universities.

Thaden does offer opportunities for students to take advanced courses, which are denoted on the transcript – and in the Course Offerings Guide – with an asterisk (*). Students who enroll in an advanced course are expected to have a high degree of facility and fluency in the fundamental skills of the course's discipline, as well as high degrees of curiosity, preparation, and initiative both inside and outside of the classroom. They should expect to proactively find, consult, and effectively use resources to problem solve and extend their knowledge and skills. Advanced courses offer exciting and challenging opportunities for students to deepen and apply their knowledge and skills to develop meaningful and authentic work products.

Independent Study

Students who have exhausted Thaden School's course offerings in a particular area of study may submit a proposal for an independent study, which they complete in partnership with a faculty mentor. Independent Study courses are graded on a Pass/No Credit basis.

Senior Thesis

In the spring of the junior year, a student may submit a proposal for a senior thesis project. Senior theses are an opportunity to pursue original research, in partnership with faculty mentors. Students may develop their projects from ideas sparked by past courses or pursue topics of long-standing personal interest. Senior theses are graded on a Pass/No Credit basis.

Further, a student who begins a thesis project but receives a grade of no credit (NC) at the end of the first trimester will not continue in the thesis program and no grade will be recorded. A student who receives a grade of NC at the end of the second trimester will not continue in the thesis program and the NC grade will be recorded on their transcript. It is very important, therefore, that a

student take careful stock of their readiness to pursue the thesis before embarking on this intensive, self-directed project.

Course Add/Drop Policies

Thaden School conducts its course registration process prior to scheduling course meeting times for the following academic year with the goal of accommodating students' preferences to the fullest extent possible. Once the schedule has been constructed, changes may be difficult or even impossible, and students may be precluded from altering their schedule due to conflicts, class sizes, or other factors.

Students may request to drop and add courses during the first two weeks of the academic year for year-long courses and the first week of the trimester for trimester-long courses. To initiate the process of dropping and adding courses, students should complete the course add and drop forms (available on the school portal and in Coleman) by indicating which courses they wish to drop and add and obtaining the signed approval of their advisor, parent or guardian, and the relevant course instructors. Completed forms should be submitted to the registrar, who makes the final decision in consultation with the academic leadership team.

A student who drops a course receives no credit for that course and the course does not appear on the student's transcript. Students who add courses are responsible for making up all work assigned prior to their enrollment.

Grading and Assessment

Thaden School faculty use a system called Standards-Based Grading (SBG). In this system, students are evaluated based on their proficiency in meeting clearly-articulated course objectives. Instead of receiving a single overall grade, SBG breaks down subject matter into smaller "learning targets." We employ Standards-Based Grading practices because the learning goals and ratings provide students with more specific information about their progress, above and beyond what a letter grade can reveal.

To communicate students' Standards-Based ratings, Thaden School allows students and families to see their cumulative learning progression ratings at all times, and also releases progress reports at the end of each trimester. Upper School students receive ratings on their progress in meeting specific learning goals for each course as well as letter grades. In addition, students receive narrative comments from their teachers twice a year and a personal letter at the end of the year, written by their advisor or another member of the faculty, that reflects on their growth.

The specific learning goals are divided into two categories:

Skills

- Factual Knowledge: accurately recalls and uses factual information and vocabulary
- Conceptual Understanding: grasps fundamental ideas, constructs, frameworks, and theories
- Procedural Technique: understands and follows disciplinary methods and processes
- Critical Thinking: effectively analyzes complex problems using factual knowledge, conceptual understandings, and procedural techniques
- Communication: clearly and/or persuasively articulates ideas and arguments with appreciation for the audience and context

- Creativity and Originality: generates and advances novel ideas, products, or points of view

Habits

- Preparation: brings relevant materials to class and effectively manages time
- Initiative and Perseverance: actively engages in the learning process and demonstrates an eagerness to improve
- Collaboration: works well in diverse groups to achieve a common goal

While students may cultivate many, if not most, of these Skills and Habits in each of their courses, progress reports identify and rate only the goals that a teacher deems most important in the context of a given course. A student's progress with respect to each goal is rated numerically on a four-point scale, indicating the degree to which the student has progressed in meeting grade-level expectations: (1) Beginning; (2) Approaching; (3) Proficient; (4) Exemplary. The absence of a rating next to a certain Skill or Habit indicates that not enough information or data has yet been collected to provide meaningful feedback.

Thaden uses a decaying average to calculate students' overarching scores in each skill and habit. The decaying average formula is a calculation method that places more weight on the most recently scored material, allowing for a better measure of growth by rewarding students for how far they have come regardless of where they started. To translate ratings into letter grades, faculty take the average of a student's overall rating in each of the course's identified transdisciplinary skills – only skills, not habits – and then use the following conversion scale:

A	>3.5
A-	3.25-3.49
B+	3.0-3.24
B	2.75-2.99
B-	2.5-2.74
C+	2.25-2.49
C	2.0-2.24
C-	1.75-1.99
D	1.5-1.74
NC (no credit)	<1.49

Course Offerings

English

The required sequences in Grades 9-12 (English I, II, III, IV, and Professional Communication) fulfills the four-and-a-half credit graduation requirement.

Course Title	Grade(s)	Credit
Required Courses		
English I: Journeys and Transformations	9	1
English II: Individuals and Communities	10	1
English III-A: Money and Power	11	1
English III-A: Love and Loyalty	11	1
English IV-A: Tragedy	12	1
English IV-B: Comedy	12	1
Professional Communication	12	1/2
Elective Courses		
Creative Writing: Memoirs and Personal Essays	9-12	1/3
Creative Writing: Poetry	9-12	1/3
Creative Writing: Short Fiction	9-12	1/3
From Page to Stage and Screen	9-12	1/3
Panels and Prose in Graphic Novels	9-12	1/3
Yearbook: The Screech (CBL)	9-12	2/3
Building a Writing Center (CBL)	11-12	1/3
Dante's Inferno: Reimagining Hell and Poetry*	11-12	1/3
Latin American Literature: Social Examinations*	11-12	1/3
Novel Truths and Critical Dialogue*	11-12	1/3

Required Courses

English I: Journeys and Transformations

This year-long course introduces students to the study of literature as an academic discipline. As students read texts in many forms and from many periods and places, such as Homer's *The Odyssey*, Adichie's *Purple Hibiscus*, and Portis' *True Grit*, they investigate the importance of storytelling in the human experience through the lenses of journeys and transformations. Using annotation and other close-reading strategies, students deepen their understanding of the course texts. In addition, they write numerous analytical paragraphs and three extended essays, while also exploring their own journeys and transformations through autobiographical and creative writing assignments. Seminar-style discussions develop students' oral presentation skills and their ability to listen actively and contribute, one of the hallmarks of a Thaden education.

Required for Grade 9

1 Credit

Prerequisites: None

English II: Individuals and Communities

This year-long course builds on the reading, writing, and thinking skills students develop in English I, applying them with greater sophistication and to more complex texts. Students read books such as Dürrenmatt's *The Visit*, Satrapi's *Persepolis*, Kelley's *A Different Drummer*, Shelley's *Frankenstein*, Baldwin's *Giovanni's Room*, and Morrison's *Sula*. Focusing on individuals and communities, they investigate fundamental questions related to the formation and negotiation of one's identity relative to the status quo. Through reading, writing, and critical conversations, students explore how one becomes oneself; how society shapes an individual; how societies can be just or unjust; and how individuals contribute to the formation and preservations of just societies. These questions – and many more – emerge through textual encounters that span periods and genres, from graphic memoir and horror to fabulism, realism, and bildungsroman. While students continue to work on their writing at the paragraph level, their focus is primarily on extended pieces, including four major papers and creative and reflective responses.

Required for Grade 10

1 Credit

Prerequisites: None

English III-A: Money and Power

This year-long course uses literature as a lens to explore the roles of money and power in the human experience. Students read works such as Diaz's *Trust*, Garcia Marquez's *Chronicle of a Death Foretold*, Shakespeare's *Macbeth*, and Whitehead's *The Nickel Boys*, along with selected poems and short stories. These texts raise fundamental questions about how money and power reveal and shape the human heart. What do people truly value and deeply desire? What forces influence those yearnings? To what lengths will individuals go to get what they want? Is it true that “absolute power corrupts absolutely” and “the love of money is the root of all evil?” Is it possible to have great wealth and great power, yet be *good*? These questions are more than literary hypotheticals. They have shaped our world for centuries. As students develop thoughts around these questions, they hone their writing

skills by crafting extended argumentative essays that analyze text and communicate complex ideas clearly. Students also spend significant time writing personal essays in preparation for the college application process.

Required for Grade 11 (students must enroll in English III-A or B)

1 Credit

Prerequisites: None

English III-B: Love and Loyalty

This year-long course uses literature as a lens to explore the varied roles of love and loyalty in the human experience. Within friendships, family, romance, and other unique kinds of community, threads of love and loyalty are frequently explored and questioned, pointing to the myriad ways in which humans connect and, alternately, disconnect from one another. Students in this course read works that address these themes such as Diaz’s *Trust*, Austen’s *Pride and Prejudice*, Hosseini’s *The Kite Runner*, and Shakespeare’s *Othello*. These texts highlight key questions about human relationships: how and why do we sustain genuine connections with others? How do we trust and come to know one another? What do we do when love or loyalty is tested and what might those tests look like? To delve into these kinds of thematic questions, students hone their critical thinking and reading skills through seminar-style discussions. In addition, students share their ideas through extended argumentative essays that analyze the text and communicate complex ideas clearly.

Required for Grade 11 (students must enroll in English III-A or B)

1 Credit

Prerequisites: None

English IV-A: Tragedy

Ancient Greek philosopher Aristotle once defined tragedy as “an imitation of life.” Indeed, we use the term “tragedy” to refer to works of literature (such as *Antigone* or *Romeo and Juliet*) and to characterize life events. Curiously, the first definition – tragedy as literature – predates the second by centuries. This year-long senior English course is dedicated to tragedy both as a form of drama and as a mode that spans literary genres. The course studies the evolution of tragedy, considering famous tragic works such as Sophocles’ *Oedipus Rex* and Shakespeare’s *Hamlet*, as well as novels like Fitzgerald’s *The Great Gatsby* and Achebe’s *Things Fall Apart*, along with selected poems and short stories. As students study these works, they continue to hone their analytical reading and writing skills in preparation for college. They also explore tragedy’s role in the human experience. This course probes questions such as: How can we understand tragedy if we have not experienced it? To what extent does tragedy shape society? And, perhaps most importantly, how do human flaws inform and inspire tragedy?

Required for Grade 12 (students must enroll in English IV-A or B)

1 Credit

Prerequisites: None

English IV-B: Comedy

Erma Bombeck, a 20th century American humorist, once said, “When comedy goes, there goes civilization.” This year-long senior English course is dedicated to the history and development of comedy as a vessel of commentary and critique. The course studies the evolution of comedy, considering famous comedic works such as Aristophanes’ 5th century BCE political lampoon *Lysistrata*, Vonnegut’s commentary on war in his novel *Slaughterhouse 5*, and Stoppard’s Shakespearean parody *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are Dead*. As students study these works, they continue to hone their analytical reading and writing skills in preparation for college. This course – ironically enough – takes Bombeck’s quote seriously and emphasizes how comedy addresses social and cultural ills as well as historical trauma by asking questions such as: Why is comedy used as escapism in the face of tragedy? To what extent does comedy shape and critique society? And, perhaps most importantly, what does comedy offer that tragedy cannot? Can one exist without the other?

Required for Grade 12 (students must enroll in English IV-A or B)

1 Credit

Prerequisites: None

Professional Communication

This course equips students in Grade 12 with the skills needed for effective professional communication. Through interactive lessons and practical exercises, students hone the toolbox of skills they have acquired at Thaden to craft clear and concise messages, engage in active listening, and strengthen interpersonal skills. Students compose a resume, rehearse interview skills, and practice giving and receiving feedback. Through collaborative activities mirroring modern workplaces, students practice engaging in various informal talks and addresses relevant to professional environments. Other lessons include ethical communication, responsible social media usage, communication barriers, conflict resolution, leadership styles, professional etiquette, and presentation skills.

Students in Grade 12 are automatically enrolled in this required course.

1/2 Credit

Prerequisites: None

Elective Courses

Creative Writing: Memoirs and Personal Essays

Stories are all around us, and we immerse ourselves daily in the stories – written, spoken, and recorded – of others. But what does it mean to tell our own story? This one-trimester elective guides students through the analysis, composition, critique, revision, and completion of original narrative nonfiction. Studying essayists such as Joan Didion, Annie Dillard, Zadie Smith, and David Sedaris, the class discusses the methods and structures that give rise and form to narrative nonfiction. Students compose their own pieces of memoir and personal essay. The course is structured as a workshop/seminar, where students present their writing to be read and discussed by the class in a round-table format. Students work over the course of the trimester to complete their individual creative nonfiction portfolio. Polished work may be published in Thaden’s literary magazine.

Open to Grades 9-12
1/3 Credit
Prerequisites: None

Creative Writing: Poetry

This one-trimester elective guides students through the analysis, composition, critique, revision, and completion of original poetic work. Beginning with an overview of the fundamentals of poetry and a survey of various readings across genres and time periods, our reading and study ranges from Shakespeare's Elizabethan sonnets, to 20th-century greats such as Langston Hughes and T.S. Eliot, to contemporary poets around the world publishing their work in various forms and media. After studying these models, students move into brainstorming and drafting original poetry, writing in a variety of modes and styles. The course is structured as a workshop/seminar, where students present their poetry to be read and discussed by the class in a round-table format. Students work over the course of the trimester to complete their individual poetry portfolio. Polished work may be published in Thaden's literary magazine.

Open to Grades 9-12
1/3 Credit
Prerequisites: None

Creative Writing: Short Fiction

This one-trimester elective guides students through the analysis, composition, critique, revision, and completion of original fictional work. Students read works of short fiction from a variety of eras, genres, and voices. In studying such writers as Kate Chopin, Ernest Hemingway, Octavia Butler, and George Saunders, the class analyzes the methods and structure behind producing a complete piece of short fiction. From here, students proceed to compose their own works of short fiction. The course is structured as a workshop/seminar, where students will present their short stories to be read and discussed by the class in a round-table format. Students work over the course of the trimester to complete their individual short-fiction portfolio. Polished work may be published in Thaden's literary magazine.

Open to Grades 9-12
1/3 Credit
Prerequisites: None

From Page to Stage and Screen

This one-trimester elective invites students to explore how classic and contemporary literature is transformed into dramas and other artworks, particularly visual art, theater, and music. Through reading, viewing, discussion, and hands-on creative work, students analyze the choices writers, directors, and playwrights make when adapting stories for new mediums. Students study narrative structure, characterization, theme, and visual storytelling, comparing how each element shifts, or stays true, during the adaptation process. The choice of texts may include: *The Curious Incident of the*

Dog in the Nighttime by Mark Haddon, *Emma* by Jane Austen, and *The Taming of the Shrew* by William Shakespeare.

Open to Grades 9-12

1/3 Credit

Prerequisites: None

Panels and Prose in Graphic Novels

Using *Understanding Comics: The Invisible Art* by Scott McCloud as its core text, this one-trimester elective guides students through an exploration of the art of graphic novels. Students read a variety of graphic texts and consider the evolving perceptions of comics and graphic novels, the power of combining text and images, and the increasing importance of media literacy. Students demonstrate understanding of the content through multimedia projects that combine students' choice of visuals, traditional texts, music, and technology. Representative texts include *Persepolis* by Marjane Satrapi, *March* by John Lewis, Andrew Aydin, and Nate Powell, *Hey, Kiddo* by Jarrett J. Krosoczka; *The Arrival* by Shaun Tan, *Logicomix* by Apostolos Doxiadis and Christos H. Papadimitriou, and *American Born Chinese* by Gene Luen Yang.

Open to Grades 9-12

1/3 Credit

Prerequisites: None

Yearbook: *The Screech* (CBL)

Among the traditions that signal the end of another academic year, the yearbook is the most enduring. It is a full-color, hardback time capsule preserving the events, people, and memories of the most formative years of a student's life. It's an exercise in story-telling and writing, graphic design and photography. This two-trimester elective is dedicated to the creation of *The Screech*, Thaden's annual yearbook. Join the Yearbook staff in telling the story of the community, creating an enduring keepsake, and learning valuable skills that translate into the workforce. Community partners may include the Bentonville Public Library and the *Northwest Arkansas Gazette*. Digital media will come and go, but the yearbook is forever.

Open to Grades 9-12

2/3 Credit; CBL (may be retaken for up to four years for a maximum of 2 2/3 credits)

Prerequisites: None

Building a Writing Center (CBL)

This one-trimester elective invites students to collaborate with faculty to build an on-campus Writing Center program. A Writing Center is a space featuring student-to-student tutoring and mentoring on academic writing. From composing a mission statement, to researching successful secondary school programs, to crafting style guides, manuals, and procedures, students build a Writing Center program from the ground up and prepare for its piloting in the subsequent trimester. To prepare for the Center's piloting, course participants read, critique, and give feedback on student academic writing

throughout the trimester. Students finish this course prepared to be leaders of an important new academic organization at Thaden School.

Open to Grades 11-12

1/3 Credit; CBL

Prerequisites: None

Dante's *Inferno*: Reimagining Hell and Poetry*

In this one-trimester advanced elective, students traverse the nine circles of hell with the medieval Italian poet Dante Alighieri. Students encounter famous literary and historical figures and the inventive punishments that defined not only their eternal fates in Dante's poem, but also shaped their afterlives in Western literature: corrupt politicians are transformed into bleeding trees, greedy popes are beaten by devils, and fraudsters forever drown in boiling tar. *Inferno* is the first of Dante's three-poem sequence known as *Divina Commedia* (1321), an epic adventure that begins by plunging readers into the depths of hell and concludes envisioning the highest spheres of heaven. This course is a deep dive into the first 'installment' of this phantasmagoric masterpiece of World Literature. Students encounter a poetic world punctuated with "strange utterances, horrible pronouncements...that whirl forever through that starless air." As we accompany Dante the pilgrim (and his guide, the Roman poet Virgil) through the landscape of the underworld, we encounter more than devilishly creative torments. We also discover new (and surprisingly modern) literature. Traditionally, epic poems chronicle war and emphasize empire. *Divina Commedia* instead marks a shift to a more personal narrative that represents profoundly human challenges such as emotional crisis, loss of purpose, and the battle between doubt and belief. Finally, we investigate how Dante's epic poem has influenced modern art and literature – and contemplate why it continues to inspire artists today.

Open to Grades 11-12

1/3 Credit

Prerequisites: None

Latin American Literature: Social Examinations*

This one-trimester advanced elective delves into Latin American literature from the twentieth century, featuring translated works by iconic authors like Gabriel García Márquez, Isabel Allende, Jorge Luis Borges, and Julio Cortázar. Students explore narratives that blend reality with the fantastic and address themes of history, identity, and political critique. Through close readings, discussions, and explorations of literary criticism, students examine how these writers reflect on Latin American experiences, from colonial legacies to personal and societal freedom, ultimately gaining insights into the region's unique contributions to global literature. No experience with Spanish is required.

Open to Grades 11-12

1/3 Credit English or World Languages and Cultures

Prerequisites: None

Novel Truths and Critical Dialogue*

In *Aspects of the Novel*, E.M. Forster declares, "Fiction reveals truth that reality obscures." In this one-trimester advanced elective, the class selects a single novel to examine Forster's claim and explore how the art form of the novel speaks to a changing world. Students read essays and practice various contemporary critical lenses in order to develop their own critical lens for an extended analysis of the text. Potential texts include *Mrs. Dalloway* by Virginia Woolf, *Jane Eyre* by Charlotte Brontë, *Beloved* by Toni Morrison, and *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* by James Joyce. The final novel selection will be determined by the students.

Open to Grades 11-12

1/3 Credit

Prerequisites: None

Mathematics and Computer Science

The required sequence in Grades 9-11 (Algebra I-II and Geometry)
fulfills three credits of the four-credit graduation requirement.
Algebra I taken in Middle School counts as one Upper School math credit.

Course Title	Grade(s)	Credit
Required Courses		
Algebra I	8, 9	1
Geometry	9, 10	1
Algebra II	10, 11	1
Accelerated Algebra II with Precalculus	10, 11	1
Elective Courses		
Small Business Management (CBL)	9-12	1/3
Geometry in Construction (CBL)	9-12	1
Programming I	9-12	1
Programming II*	10-12	1
Precalculus	11, 12	1
Calculus I*	11, 12	1
Multivariable Calculus*	11, 12	1
Statistics	11, 12	1

Required Courses

Algebra I

In this year-long course, students learn the basic structure of algebra while further developing their problem-solving and critical thinking skills. With a focus on data collection and analysis, students explore key properties of functions and their corresponding tables, graphs, and equations. Students analyze data and make inferences and predictions in the pursuit of communicating mathematical ideas clearly. Beyond modeling data, students also extend the properties of exponents to exponential equations and compare and contrast linear and exponential functions. The course offers a wide array of learning opportunities that develop students' ability to communicate and reason mathematically.

Required in math sequence (Grade 8 or 9)

1 Credit

Prerequisites: None

Geometry

This year-long course focuses on the development of geometrical vocabulary, problem-solving skills, mathematical communication, and logical proof. Students develop these skills with a variety of physical and digital tools that allow them to apply their knowledge constructively and creatively. Students also learn to work individually and collaboratively to solve problems, convey their thought processes, and communicate their results – verbally and in writing. Activities and assignments in this course push students to recognize the wide spectrum of mathematical questions, from the abstract to the applied.

Required in math sequence (Grade 9 or 10)

1 Credit

Prerequisites: Algebra I

Algebra II

This year-long course takes students into a variety of function families and enables them to integrate algebraic symbols and equations with tabular, graphical, and algorithmic representations. Students begin the year by spiraling back to linear and quadratic functions. With these core skills, they then survey other major function families (*e.g.*, radical, rational, exponential, and logarithmic) and enhance their algebraic toolkit with additional models to represent real-world phenomena. The course prepares students for college entrance exams, more advanced courses in mathematics, and other math-intensive STEM courses (*e.g.*, physics and computer science).

Required in math sequence (Grade 10 or 11; students must enroll in either Algebra II or Accelerated Algebra II with Precalculus)

1 Credit

Prerequisites: Algebra I and Geometry

Accelerated Algebra II with Precalculus

The scope of this year-long course is equivalent to that of Algebra II and Precalculus combined. Covering the same set of concepts and procedural skills, it moves at a much quicker pace, beginning with a study of polynomial functions that generalizes and builds on students' familiarity with linear and quadratic functions. Students then explore a host of transcendental functions (*e.g.*, radical, rational, exponential, logarithmic, and trigonometric), paying close attention to the unique properties of each function family, those they share in common, and other relationships among them (*e.g.*, inverses). In preparation for future calculus and advanced mathematics courses, students devote considerable practice to simplifying complicated expressions, equations, and functions. Students enrolling in this course should have strong number and algebra skills and an appetite for being challenged.

Required in math sequence (Grade 10 or 11; students must enroll in either Algebra II or Accelerated Algebra II with Precalculus)

1 Credit

Prerequisites: Algebra I and Geometry

Elective Courses

Small Business Management (CBL)

With a focus on data and analytics, this one-trimester elective offers real-world experience operating a small business. Through managing The Hangar, Thaden's school store, students explore key concepts in marketing, merchandising, operations, and finance. They conduct product research, design marketing campaigns, and handle daily store operations. Additionally, students gain experience preparing and presenting financial statements and customer analytics reports. Students engage with Thaden families to deliver customer service and gather feedback. They also collaborate with local business owners, who serve as mentors, guiding them through practical projects and negotiating new opportunities. This course may occasionally require students to be available to run The Hangar outside of school hours.

Open to Grades 9-12

1/3 Credit; CBL (cannot be used to fulfill the 4 Math credits required for graduation; may be retaken for up to four years and a maximum of 4 credits)

Prerequisites: None

Geometry in Construction (CBL)

This year-long course bridges the gap between theoretical mathematics and practical application by integrating geometric concepts with modern construction techniques. Students move beyond abstract reasoning to apply geometry and essential mathematical principles to real-world fabrication challenges. The curriculum emphasizes hands-on learning, requiring students to demonstrate proficiency in the safe and effective use of carpentry tools and construction equipment. Through collaborative project management, students design and construct functional, permanent structures for the campus and the community at large. This course fosters critical thinking, interpersonal skills, and vocational expertise, culminating in a tangible legacy project.

Open to Grades 9-12

1 Credit; CBL

Prerequisites: None

Programming I

This year-long elective provides a practical introduction to programming in the Python language. Students explore not only theoretical issues (*e.g.*, algorithms and object-oriented and functional approaches to programming) but also practical ones (*e.g.*, data types, control structures, and syntax). While gaining facility with the basic building blocks of the Python language, students work on increasingly complex and realistic programming puzzles and projects. At the same time, they pursue programming tasks of their own design, customizing their learning experiences according to their own goals and interests. Overall, the course enables students to engineer and execute simple programming tasks unassisted and to succeed in a college programming course in Python or any other programming language. While the course does not require prior knowledge of any programming language or mastery of mathematics beyond pre-algebra, students with less experience

in these fields should bring a genuine desire to deepen and enhance their mathematical and computational skills.

Open to Grades 9-12

1 Credit

Prerequisites: None

Programming II*

Building on the foundational Python skills acquired in Programming I, this intermediate year-long elective in programming brings conceptual precision and procedural fluency to the skills acquired in the first year. As students clarify and deepen their understanding of familiar topics, they also encounter new data (*e.g.*, sets, dictionaries, and custom objects) and control structures (*e.g.*, while loops and recursion). In addition, they learn to work within the Object-View-Model design paradigm and are taught to analyze and to design algorithms in terms of their efficiency (Big-O Notation). Built on curriculum from Carnegie Mellon University for first-year college programming, this course assesses students primarily through unit tests and trimester projects.

Open to Grades 10-12

1 Credit

Prerequisites: Programming I

Precalculus

This year-long course makes complex mathematical concepts accessible for algebraic, graphical, and numerical analyses. Through the study of a wide variety of functions, including trigonometric functions, students discover the similarities and differences among a variety of predictive models. In preparation for future calculus and advanced mathematics courses, students devote considerable practice to simplifying complicated expressions, equations, and functions. They also participate in group and individual exercises that develop their ability to employ algebraic skills strategically as they gather information from graphs and tables, and present and articulate their findings and rationales with confidence.

Open to Grades 11-12

1 Credit

Prerequisites: Geometry and Algebra II

Calculus I*

This year-long course in differential and integral calculus equips students with the mathematical tools to explore the nature of continuous change. The course begins with advanced precalculus topics before undertaking in-depth investigations of calculus topics, including derivatives, antiderivatives, and their applications. This overview prepares students for college-level calculus by giving them ample opportunities to develop their algebraic technical skills, refine their problem-solving strategies, and utilize technology as a powerful resource in the study of mathematics.

Open to Grades 11-12

1 Credit

Prerequisites: Precalculus or Accelerated Algebra II with Precalculus

Multivariable Calculus*

This year-long course continues students' studies in calculus, extending fundamental concepts such as limits, continuity, differentiation, and integration to functions with multiple inputs and/or outputs. Students develop conceptual understanding of abstract material throughout the course, and this conceptual understanding is accompanied by real-world applications related to physics, computer science and engineering, economics, and more. This course not only furthers students' preparation for college calculus courses, but also allows for challenging and enriching exploration of higher-level mathematics topics.

Open to Grades 11-12

1 Credit

Prerequisites: Calculus I

Statistics

This year-long course teaches students how to collect, represent, and interpret data. Students develop the skills of exploratory data analysis in real-world contexts, learn to implement statistical best practices in experimental design, examine the concepts of probability that inform statistical inference, and explore the methodology of making data-based factual claims. Students engage with the mathematical underpinnings of statistical methods and think critically about the philosophical and societal implications of data-driven decision making in the modern world.

Open to Grades 11-12

1 Credit

Prerequisites: Algebra II

History and Social Sciences

The required sequence in Grades 9-11 (Modern World History, US Government and Economics, US History) fulfills the three-credit graduation requirement.

Course Title	Grade(s)	Credit
Required Courses		
Modern World History	9	1
United States Government and Economics	10	1
United States History	11	1
Elective Courses		
Fashion and the Fabric of Social Change	9-12	1/3
Global Poverty	9-12	1/3
Louise Thaden Museum (CBL)	9-12	1/3
World Religions	9-12	1/3
Urban Studies (CBL)	9-12	1
The Cold War*	11-12	1/3
Incarceration in America (CBL)*	11-12	2/3
Principles of Economics*	11-12	1

Required Courses

Modern World History

While 1750 may feel like yesterday in the grand scope of human history, the period since then has seen extraordinary transformations. This year-long course traces the emergence and evolution of rights from the Enlightenment through revolutions, industrialization, imperialism, and the major conflicts of the 20th century. Using comparative case studies from around the world, students analyze how rights were developed, challenged, expanded, and reshaped over time, and explore the implications for governments, citizens, global relationships, and our current world. Course learning goals focus on developing the core skills of historical inquiry: analyzing primary and secondary sources, contextualizing historical events, communicating persuasive arguments orally and in writing, and undertaking historical research to answer meaningful questions about the past. Students engage individually and collaboratively with a variety of sources to examine how the histories of different regions connect to contemporary issues. Through reflections, analytical writing, presentations, artistic projects, and class discussions, students strengthen their conceptual understanding, communication, and critical thinking skills. By engaging with the past globally, critically, and ethically, students gain an appreciation for history as a tool for understanding and changemaking in our world today.

*Required for Grade 9
1 Credit*

Prerequisites: None

United States Government and Economics

This year-long course introduces students to foundational economic and governmental concepts. Students explore the philosophical and historical foundations of government to better understand the structure and function of the United States' political and economic institutions. Emphasis is placed on examining the proper role of government in a democracy and the importance of civic engagement and responsibility. This writing-intensive course challenges students to develop and communicate their positions on complex and, at times, controversial topics by synthesizing and presenting evidence. Students also apply their knowledge to real-world issues as they develop the skills necessary for informed and active citizenship.

Required for Grade 10

1 Credit

Prerequisites: None

United States History

In this year-long course, students investigate key themes and pivotal events in the history of the United States from the 19th to the 21st century. Readings include classic works of American political life, contemporary social and cultural critiques, and foundational primary and secondary historical sources. While developing the research methods and writing skills needed to produce substantial works of historical analysis, students are challenged to think critically and creatively about what it means to be an American citizen, whose voices may be misrepresented or missing, and how the complexities of the past continue to shape the course of events and the construction of historical accounts.

Required for Grade 11

1 Credit

Prerequisites: None

Elective Courses

Fashion and the Fabric of Social Change

This one-trimester interdisciplinary course challenges students to see clothing as a tool for transformation. Students investigate the aesthetic, social, and political significance of fashion by combining historical and contemporary research with hands-on technical skills. Students move from being passive consumers to informed creators; whether through mending, interviewing community members, or producing original media, they leave this course with a deeper understanding of how the things we wear shape the world. In addition to the socio-political context of clothing, students explore the environmental impacts of the fashion industry – including textile waste and labor conditions – as well as emerging sustainable practices. Reflecting on our readings, class discussions and exercises over the trimester, students have creative options to address a specific personal, social, or political theme as a final project.

Open to Grades 9-12

1/3 Credit History and Social Sciences or Visual and Performing Arts

Prerequisites: None

Global Poverty

This one-trimester elective offers students an in-depth exploration of global poverty by examining its historical roots, contemporary realities, and the complex factors that shape economic inequality around the world. Students examine how poverty has been produced and understood throughout history, analyze current data, trends, and case studies, and evaluate proposed solutions ranging from economic development strategies and global aid to structural reforms and grassroots movements.

Throughout the course, students consider broader philosophical and practical questions, such as: What causes poverty? Is poverty an inevitable feature of human societies or a preventable injustice? How do wealth, power, and global systems influence who thrives and who struggles? By engaging with interdisciplinary sources, from history and economics to ethics and political philosophy, students develop a nuanced understanding of how global poverty affects individuals, communities, and nations.

Through readings, discussions, and inquiry-based projects, students strengthen their research, analytical, and critical thinking skills. They learn to interpret quantitative and qualitative evidence, weigh competing arguments, and assess the effectiveness of various policy approaches. By the end of the course, students are able to explain major debates surrounding global poverty, evaluate potential pathways to reducing or eliminating it, and articulate informed perspectives on the responsibilities of individuals, governments, and the international community.

Open to Grades 9-12

1/3 Credit

Prerequisites: None

Louise Thaden Museum (CBL)

This one-trimester elective examines the life of pioneering aviator Louise McPhetridge Thaden and explores the culture, challenges, and achievements of the 1920s and 1930s. Through collaboration with community partners and local museums, students learn how to use object-based learning strategies to enhance an audience's understanding of Louise's story. The curriculum extends beyond traditional lessons by utilizing AI tools to modernize museum storytelling and practice responsible digital ethics. As a culminating project, students act as curators and designers to construct displays showcasing Louise's memorabilia generously donated by the Thaden family.

Open to Grades 9-12

1/3 Credit History and Social Sciences or Visual and Performing Arts; CBL

Prerequisites: None

World Religions

This one-trimester elective introduces students to the world's major religions through an exploration of their beliefs, practices, histories, and cultural significance. Students examine major religions such as Hinduism, Buddhism, Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, as well as lesser-known religions such as the Bahá'í Faith, Sikhism, Zoroastrianism, and Indigenous traditions. These investigations foster a

deeper understanding of the diverse ways people have sought meaning and connection throughout history and continue to do so in the contemporary moment. Through short readings, discussions, and visits from local faith leaders, students develop their empathy and critical thinking skills, learning to appreciate and respect diverse points of view. Students gain a stronger understanding of religious rituals, sacred architecture, and spiritual art from around the world while developing an appreciation for religious diversity in Northwest Arkansas and their own role in our multicultural society.

Note: Students who have previously taken Religious Studies may not take this course.

Open to Grades 9-12

1/3 Credit

Prerequisites: None

Urban Studies (CBL)

The great Danish architect and urban designer Jan Gehl wrote, “first we shape cities – then they shape us.” As the rate of urbanization – the process by which people migrate from rural to urban areas – increases and a greater share of the world population lives in cities, we would be wise to seriously consider the implications of Gehl’s insight. What kinds of cities do we want to live in? How might we rethink cities for the age of climate change? How will our answers change who we are as individuals and as citizens?

With these questions in mind, in the first trimester of this year-long Wheels and Social Sciences course, students learn about the basics of urban design in America and Europe through encounters with the seminal works of Jane Jacobs; Duany, Plater-Zyberk, and Speck; William H. Whyte; Jan Gehl; Mike Lydon, and more. Students also conduct community-based fieldwork to develop deeper understandings of the processes, politics, and practical considerations that influence how communities are designed, built, and inhabited. (Bentonville is in the midst of crafting the plan that will guide the development of the city for the next 15-20 years.) Further, students engage in critical examinations of these environments to assess how they influence the people who move through them and how people, in turn, influence their environments. In the second trimester, students collaborate to apply their learning and the principles of tactical urbanism – citizen-led, hyper-local, test-before-you-invest interventions intended to humanize and democratize the built environment – to a location in Bentonville. Ultimately, students are empowered to think critically and creatively about how they can catalyze positive change by planning and executing real projects in their communities.

Open to Grades 9-12

1 Credit History and Social Sciences or Signature Programs; CBL

Prerequisites: None

The Cold War*

From the Kennan Telegram in 1946 to the dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1991, the Cold War gave shape to every facet of American politics and culture and similarly influenced international relations on the world stage. This one-trimester advanced elective offers students the chance to investigate the origins, course, and impacts of this decades-long conflict between the US and the USSR, waged not through direct battlefield engagements, but through proxy wars, cultural influence, and espionage during the second half of the twentieth century. Students engage with primary sources in a variety of media along with scholarly secondary sources, participate in seminar-style

discussions, and write bi-weekly critical responses to develop a rich understanding of the events, personalities, ideologies, and contingencies that defined postwar America and gave rise to the world we inhabit. The course culminates in a project that asks students to develop a lesson plan on a key Cold War event, figure, or theme.

Open to Grades 11-12

1/3 Credit

Prerequisites: None

Incarceration in America (CBL)*

This two-trimester advanced elective introduces students to the historical and contemporary phenomenon of mass incarceration in the United States as well as its connection to issues of race and class. Using an interdisciplinary approach grounded in scholarly historical and sociological research as well as first-person accounts from incarcerated and formerly incarcerated individuals, students explore the processes of the US criminal justice system, the relationship between the lived experience of incarceration and the mission(s) of jails and prisons, and the ways that these institutions operate. Throughout the course, timely and challenging guiding questions encourage students to think critically about why the US has the highest rates of incarceration in the world, why disproportionately high numbers of those incarcerated are Black and/or poor, and how incarceration impacts not only those who are serving sentences inside correctional facilities, but also their families and communities more broadly. At the end of the course, students design a public education campaign to raise awareness of the ways that incarceration and related issues impact our Northwest Arkansas Community.

Open to Grades 11-12

2/3 Credit; CBL

Prerequisites: None

Principles of Economics*

This year-long advanced elective examines the principles of economics through three connected strands: macroeconomics, microeconomics, and personal finance. Building on foundational economic theories and concepts learned in US Government and Economics, students study how markets function, how consumers and firms make decisions, and how prices and incentives shape everyday choices. They also explore the broader economy by studying economic growth, unemployment, inflation, fiscal policy, and the role of central banks. Students apply these theories and concepts to real-world situations, strengthening their ability to evaluate economic news and public policy debates. In the personal finance component, students apply economic theory to household financial decision-making by analyzing intertemporal choice, risk and uncertainty, credit and investment markets, behavioral biases, and the role of public policy in shaping long-term financial outcomes. The goal of the course is to help students understand how economic systems operate and how individual decisions contribute to larger economic outcomes. By the end, students are equipped to think critically about the economy and make informed financial choices.

Open to Grades 11-12

1 Credit

Prerequisites: None

Science

The required sequence in Grades 9-10 (Integrated Biological and Environmental Science and Integrated Chemistry and Physics) and one additional year-long course fulfills the three-credit graduation requirement.

Course Title	Grade(s)	Credit
Required Courses		
Integrated Biology and Environmental Science	9	1
Integrated Chemistry and Physics	10	1
Elective Courses		
Advanced Chemistry*	11-12	1
Advanced Physics*	11-12	1
Molecular Genetics*	11-12	1
Plant Sciences (CBL)	11-12	1

Required Courses

Integrated Biology and Environmental Science

This year-long course explores interactions in the natural world – from the molecular processes that are integral to cell function to the forces that drive climate change. Building on previous coursework, students learn how living organisms carry out the processes that sustain life, adapt, and interact with their environment. Through case studies and laboratory work, students learn to observe, ask questions, and build and test hypotheses like scientists, which develops their critical thinking, communication (both written and oral), conceptual understanding, and procedural technique skills. This course also sets students up for future success by giving them the foundational knowledge and skills needed to succeed in upper-level biology electives.

Required for Grade 9

1 Credit

Prerequisites: None

Integrated Chemistry and Physics

This year-long laboratory course investigates the behavior, properties, and composition of matter. Students study the interactions of matter and energy, the way atoms combine to form compounds, and the fundamental structure of atoms. This course focuses on core conceptual understanding of the phenomena that shape the world around us and building a framework to interrogate and appreciate these phenomena. In their laboratory work students train on a range of tools for tabulation, graphical representation, visualization, and statistical analysis. In addition, they continue to hone their ability to ask scientific questions, design relevant experiments, develop models, engage in argument, and determine possible solutions using empirical evidence. The ability to read,

interpret, and produce scientific and technical text are fundamental foci of this course, as is the ability to communicate clearly and persuasively.

Required for Grade 10

1 Credit

Prerequisites: None

Elective Courses

Advanced Chemistry*

This advanced, year-long laboratory course is designed for students who wish to further their studies in this core scientific field. The key concepts underpinning this course include atoms and forces, patterns in chemical behavior and reactions, chemical bonds, energy changes, and experiments and evidence. Students delve deeply into analytical chemistry, theoretical chemistry, quantitative chemistry, and solutions chemistry through laboratory exploration, case studies, and designing solutions to real-world problems. Throughout this course, students gain a greater depth as well as breadth of subject knowledge, confidence in applying knowledge and skills in new situations, and the vocabulary to discuss this subject conceptually and show how different parts link together. Developing a deeper theoretical and practical knowledge of matter and energy enhances learning and understanding in biological sciences and physical sciences as well as the Signature Programs, thereby advancing students' appreciation for the beauty and complexity of this essential science.

Open to Grades 11-12

1 Credit

Prerequisites: Inquiries in Chemical and Physical Sciences

Advanced Physics*

This advanced, year-long course builds on the foundations laid in previous science courses. Students dive in to enhanced rigor and challenge as they deepen their conceptual understanding of physics and experimental design, as well as their problem-solving skills. Many of the oversimplifications that served us earlier in our scientific careers will be set aside for more robust models. Calculus and mathematical rigor will be our constant companions. Topics resemble a first semester college physics course with opportunities to branch further afield likely.

Open to Grades 11-12

1 Credit

*Prerequisites: Inquiries in Chemical and Physical Sciences; Prerequisites or Corequisites: Calculus I**

Molecular Genetics*

Molecular genetics is a field that makes advances in research and technology every day. In Molecular Genetics students learn about the molecules that make up genes, how they function, how they evolve, and how they control the function of cells. In this year-long, lab-intensive course, students use the knowledge gained to control, alter, and replicate genes (in other words, genetically engineer living microbes) using advanced molecular techniques like PCR, CRISPR, protein purification, and

gel electrophoresis. The course begins with the study of Mendelian and non-Mendelian inheritance and their influence on health and disease, continues with the molecular properties of genetic material, and concludes by analyzing genetic mechanisms in individual organisms and populations.

Open to Grades 11-12

1 Credit

Prerequisites: Inquiries in Biological and Environmental Sciences

Plant Sciences (CBL)

Botany is the scientific study of plants including their structure, physiology, genetics, ecology, evolution, and economic importance. In this year-long course, students make use of Thaden's grounds, greenhouse, and gardens to better understand how plants are put together, how they function, how they grow, and how they adapt to so many different environments. Plants are engineering marvels, absolutely essential to human life, providing the nutrition we need and the oxygen we require, and yet we often take them for granted. Through fieldwork, lab studies, and research projects, students strengthen their understanding of key biological concepts and develop a new level of wonder for these organisms that regularly and easily outnumber, outweigh, and outlast us.

Open to Grades 11-12

1 Credit; CBL

Prerequisites: Inquiries in Biological and Environmental Sciences

World Languages and Cultures

Students must study the same language for at least two consecutive years. World language study in Middle School (Latin B or AB, Mandarin B or AB, Spanish B or AB) may count for up to one credit of the three-credit graduation requirement.

Course Title	Grade(s)	Credit
Required Courses		
Latin I, II, III, IV*, and V*	9-12	1 (each)
Mandarin II, III, IV*, and V*	9-12	1 (each)
Spanish I, II, III, IV*, and V*	9-12	1 (each)
Elective Courses		
Mexican Cuisine and Storytelling (CBL)	10-12	1/3
Latin American Literature: Social Examinations*	11-12	1/3

Options for Required Courses

Latin I, II, III, IV*, and V*

The sequence of year-long courses in Latin enables students to achieve a degree of mastery sufficient to read and understand various Latin texts spanning over 2000 years. Students gradually build proficiency in their linguistic skills and find their voice through repeated use of the language both in and outside of class. Further down the line, students may participate in regionally and nationally recognized exams such as the AFLTA competition, the National Mythology Exam, and the National Latin Exam. Field trips to relevant museum exhibits, Classics and archaeology departments at universities, and historical/sacred sites present further chances to enhance student learning.

Open to Grades 9-12

Up to 4 Credits (one for each year)

Mandarin II, III, IV*, and V*

The sequence of year-long courses in Mandarin enables students to achieve a degree of mastery sufficient for meaningful engagement with the cultures of the Chinese-speaking world. Pronunciation of the four tones is emphasized through a variety of speaking and listening exercises that strengthen students' command of the Pinyin system, while reading and writing of Chinese characters is introduced through short dialogues and elementary patterns of Chinese grammar. As each course progresses, students master increasingly complex grammatical patterns and acquire additional characters that extend their ability to speak and write in Mandarin. Students also explore the traditions of China, compare and contrast socio-cultural norms and practices, and learn about the nation's current governmental, economic, and technological evolutions.

Open to Grades 9-12

Up to 4 Credits (one for each year)

Spanish I, II, III, IV*, and V*

This sequence of five year-long courses in Spanish enables students new to the language to achieve a degree of mastery sufficient for meaningful engagement with the cultures of the Spanish-speaking world. Students develop the four core skills of language learning: listening comprehension, speaking, reading, and writing. From the beginning, students are expected to participate actively in class using the target language. They also read and write about selected topics that give them opportunities to explore popular culture, customs, and traditions from the Spanish-speaking world. Spanish literature (poetry, drama, and short stories) and other cultural materials, including film and video, complement the lessons in the textbook. Students also have opportunities to develop their skills in conversation with guests and community members from Spanish-speaking countries.

Open to Grades 9-12

Up to 5 Credits (one for each year)

Prerequisites: None for Spanish I

Elective Courses

Mexican Cuisine and Storytelling (CBL)

In Northwest Arkansas, Mexican cuisine is both a living tradition and a site of ongoing adaptation. Who is telling the story of Mexican cuisine in our region? In this one-trimester elective, students explore this question through hands-on cooking and food journalism, examining how local ingredients, traditions, and chefs shape evolving dishes. Students prepare traditional and modern dishes in hands-on labs while conducting research and interviews with local chefs, uncovering the cultural and historical stories behind the food. They craft compelling food narratives that highlight people, traditions, and culinary innovation, considering whose voices are represented and whose may be missing. By the end of the course, students produce a single portfolio of food stories to share with the school community, demonstrating how Mexican cuisine in Northwest Arkansas reflects both heritage and innovation. Along the way, students develop culinary skills, research and interviewing techniques, storytelling ability, and cultural understanding.

Open to Grades 10-12

1/3 Credit Signature Programs or World Languages and Cultures; CBL

Prerequisites: None

Latin American Literature: Social Examinations*

This one-trimester advanced elective delves into Latin American literature from the twentieth century, featuring translated works by iconic authors like Gabriel García Márquez, Isabel Allende, Jorge Luis Borges, and Julio Cortázar. Students explore narratives that blend reality with the fantastic and address themes of history, identity, and political critique. Through close readings, discussions, and explorations of literary criticism, students examine how these writers reflect on Latin American experiences, from colonial legacies to personal and societal freedom, ultimately gaining insights into the region's unique contributions to global literature. No experience with Spanish is required.

Open to Grades 11-12

1/3 Credit World Languages and Cultures or English

Prerequisites: None

Signature Programs

Students may choose elective courses in three areas: [Meals](#), [Reels](#), and [Wheels](#), to meet the two-credit graduation requirement.

Signature Programs – Meals

Course Title	Grade(s)	Credit
Cooking for the Community (CBL)	9-12	1/3
Food Advocacy (CBL)	9-12	1/3
Food and Community: Harvest Festival (CBL)	9-12	1/3
Foundations of Flavor	9-12	1/3
Nutrition	9-12	1/3
World Cuisine	9-12	1/3
Mexican Cuisine and Storytelling (CBL)	10-12	1/3

Cooking for the Community (CBL)

This one-trimester elective offers students the opportunity to engage directly with the Northwest Arkansas community while developing valuable culinary skills. Students collaborate with local nonprofits, such as the Salvation Army, Meals on Wheels, and Compassion Coalition to address food insecurity and support vulnerable populations. Through hands-on activities including meal preparation, sourcing fresh produce from the Thaden gardens, and coordinating with community partners, students experience the transformative power of food as a tool for connection and support. In addition to refining cooking techniques, students gain insight into the food system, community service, and the importance of social responsibility. This course fosters civic engagement and challenges students to explore how they can create positive change through their skills and passions.

Open to Grades 9-12

1/3 Credit Signature Programs; CBL

Prerequisites: None

Food Advocacy (CBL)

In this one-trimester elective, students embark on a journey to explore how food impacts our community and discover ways to make a difference in the local food system. Through collaboration with farms, schools, nonprofits, and corporations, the class works together to identify challenges and opportunities for positive change. This is a community-based learning course that invites students to dive deep into food advocacy, engaging in real-world projects that range from addressing food insecurity to supporting sustainable practices. As a team, students brainstorm, plan, and execute initiatives that contribute to a healthier, more equitable food system in Northwest Arkansas. Whether you're passionate about fighting hunger, reducing food waste, or creating better access to

fresh ingredients, this course empowers students to turn ideas into action and become advocates for change in the community.

Open to Grades 9-12

1/3 Credit Signature Programs; CBL

Prerequisites: None

Food and Community: Harvest Festival (CBL)

This one-trimester elective explores how growing, harvesting, cooking, and enjoying food together benefits our community. The course consists of two components: hosting the annual Harvest Festival and designing garden-based experiences for community members. The Thaden School Harvest Festival is a much-anticipated annual event that brings the school community together through a celebration of food and community. Students explore how foodways can be a vehicle to cultivate community. Additionally, students engage with farmers, business owners, and food producers from the broader community as they help to plan the event. After the Harvest Festival, the course focuses on how gardens can have a positive impact in the world. Students design experiences that welcome community members into the gardens. This could include offering set times for people to pick their own farm-fresh produce, hosting a pickling workshop series, or inviting people to harvest every ingredient needed for a simple recipe. Ultimately, students have the agency to brainstorm and implement their own ideas for engaging the community in celebrating and connecting with food.

Open to Grades 9-12

1/3 Credit; CBL

Prerequisites: None

Foundations of Flavor

This one-trimester elective introduces students to the foundations of growing and cooking food through hands-on exploration in the Thaden garden and Teaching Kitchen. Using these spaces as laboratories, students cultivate seasonal vegetables and herbs while developing core culinary skills informed by Samin Nosrat's book *Salt, Fat, Acid, Heat*. Through experiential work in the greenhouse and garden, students sow seeds, harvest produce, and examine how ecological growing practices influence flavor, nutrition, and sustainability.

In the kitchen, students use seasonal ingredients to investigate how salt, fat, acid, and heat interact to create balanced and flavorful dishes. Learning activities include experiential labs in the garden and kitchen, selected readings and films, guided discussions, and reflective practice. Collaboration, curiosity, and close observation guide the course as students work together to build a strong foundation in both culinary technique and food systems knowledge. The course culminates in a final project in which students apply principles from *Salt, Fat, Acid, Heat* to transform garden-fresh ingredients into well-executed, thoughtfully composed dishes.

Open to Grades 9-12

1/3 Credit

Prerequisites: None

Nutrition

This one-trimester elective equips students with the knowledge and skills needed to make informed decisions about food in a world filled with conflicting nutrition messages. Students examine popular diet trends, nutrition myths, and common claims about protein, carbohydrates, sugar, and “clean” eating, learning to distinguish evidence-based information from misinformation.

Through hands-on labs, taste tests, and real-world investigations, students explore how macronutrients and micronutrients function in the body, how food supports brain and body performance, and why nutritional needs vary among individuals. Using a critical, inquiry-based approach, the course addresses questions relevant to adolescents, including how energy drinks affect the body, how to interpret nutrition labels, and what balanced eating looks like in everyday life. Emphasis is placed on practical application rather than prescriptive rules. By the end of the course, students build confidence in their ability to fuel their bodies, support physical and mental well-being, and make thoughtful food choices grounded in scientific understanding.

Open to Grades 9-12

1/3 Credit

Prerequisites: None

World Cuisine

This one-trimester elective explores the cuisines of different cultures from around the world through lessons in the kitchen, garden, and classroom. The course focuses on the following five concepts: 1) continental food difference; 2) the relationship of attitudes and practices of food preferences; 3) the relationship of food contribution to American culture and cuisine; 4) how foods of a country show a relationship to the agriculture of a country; and 5) practical application of international cooking in a collaborative kitchen environment.

In this course, students simultaneously develop their culinary skills and their global culinary fluency. Coursework includes hands-on learning through growing and harvesting foods from the regions of the world that students learn about. For example, they may harvest ginger grown in the greenhouse and then learn and apply culinary uses for ginger in Thai cuisine. After preparing and sampling traditional recipes that represent specific areas of the world, students have a clearer understanding of the contributions that many cultures have made to contemporary cuisine.

Open to Grades 9-12

1/3 Credit

Prerequisites: None

Mexican Cuisine and Storytelling (CBL)

In Northwest Arkansas, Mexican cuisine is both a living tradition and a site of ongoing adaptation. Who is telling the story of Mexican cuisine in our region? In this one-trimester elective, students explore this question through hands-on cooking and food journalism, examining how local ingredients, traditions, and chefs shape evolving dishes. Students prepare traditional and modern dishes in hands-on labs while conducting research and interviews with local chefs, uncovering the cultural and historical stories behind the food. They craft compelling food narratives that highlight people, traditions, and culinary innovation, considering whose voices are represented and whose may be missing. By the end of the course, students produce a single portfolio of food stories to share with the school community, demonstrating how Mexican cuisine in Northwest Arkansas reflects

both heritage and innovation. Along the way, students develop culinary skills, research and interviewing techniques, storytelling ability, and cultural understanding.

Open to Grades 10-12

1/3 Credit Signature Programs or World Languages and Cultures; CBL

Prerequisites: None

Signature Programs – Reels

Course Title	Grade(s)	Credit
Documentary Filmmaking (CBL)	9-12	1/3
Photography	9-12	1/3
Podcasting	9-12	1/3
Narrative Filmmaking	9-12	2/3
Sports Journalism (CBL)	9-12	1
African Americans in Film	11-12	1/3
Advanced Reels*	11-12	1

Documentary Filmmaking (CBL)

This one-trimester elective provides students with foundational storytelling and technical skills to become skilled documentary filmmakers. Students learn visual analysis, directing, cinematography, lighting, production, sound, and editing through a combination of lectures and hands-on workshops. Production generally takes place at Thaden, though some may choose to explore stories from the broader community. Creating a documentary film is more than a technical exercise – it's a journey of discovery. As students dive into true stories, they not only uncover meaningful narratives about the world around them but also gain insight into their own perspectives and values. This process builds empathy, sharpens critical thinking, and fosters a deeper understanding of human experiences. In addition to creating their own projects, students are expected to collaborate with their peers, provide constructive feedback, and learn from one another to gain fluency with Thaden's camera equipment and Adobe Premiere Pro. By the end of the trimester, students hone their ability to tell compelling stories through film, creating impactful projects that reflect both personal and community narratives.

Note: This class takes the place of Short-Form Video Production I and is one of two possible prerequisites (the other being Narrative Filmmaking) for Advanced Reels. Students who have previously taken Short-Form Video Production I may not take this course.*

Open to Grades 9-12

1/3 Credit; CBL

Prerequisites: None

Photography

This one-trimester elective delves into the fundamental concepts of digital photography as a means of creative expression through a blend of readings, lectures, demonstrations, and hands-on shooting assignments followed by constructive critiques. With a strong focus on fostering each student's individual creative practice, this course investigates the profound impact of the recent acceleration in the creation and dissemination of photography. This transformative shift significantly alters how photographs function in contemporary society. Covering technical, aesthetic, and conceptual dimensions, the course explores the intricate process of creating meaning within digital photographs.

Students acquire skills in digital editing, and master camera controls. They also understand file formats and develop efficient workflows. Assignments are designed to tackle relevant topics, including the abundance of images, the appropriation of images, and the themes of manipulation/truth and surveillance/voyeurism. Throughout the course, there is a strong emphasis on fostering interaction with classmates' work and cultivating a receptive approach to constructive critique.

Open to Grades 9-12

1/3 Credit

Prerequisites: None

Podcasting

In this one-trimester elective, students learn the basics of creating podcasts, gaining technical skills of audio interviewing techniques, workflow organization, structuring episodes, scriptwriting, post-production mixing, scoring, and critical review. Students leave this class understanding the mechanics of audio storytelling and how to approach and evaluate pitches. This course is a hands-on workshop, and students can expect to end this course with the start of an audio portfolio. The students are encouraged but not required to enter their podcasts in the NPR Student Podcast Challenge.

Open to Grades 9-12

1/3 Credit

Prerequisites: None

Narrative Filmmaking

This two-trimester elective provides students with foundational storytelling and technical skills to become skilled narrative storytellers. Students learn visual analysis, directing, cinematography, lighting, production, sound, and editing through a combination of class lectures and hands-on workshops. The course consists of one major project per trimester: writing a narrative screenplay and producing a narrative film based on that screenplay. Each project hones different aspects of the storytelling and filmmaking processes, allowing students to progressively build their technical expertise and foster confidence. Production generally takes place at Thaden, with class time dedicated to collaborative group exercises that develop on-set skills. In addition to creating their own projects, students are expected to assist their peers and provide constructive feedback in an environment that mirrors real-world filmmaking. Particular emphasis is placed on mastering Thaden's camera equipment and Adobe Premiere Pro. Narrative storytelling encourages students to think critically and empathetically, inhabit different perspectives, express themselves creatively, and communicate ideas effectively. By learning to convey emotions, experiences, and themes through narrative storytelling, students develop their ability to connect with audiences in meaningful ways. By the end of the year, students develop both the technical skills and the narrative techniques needed to tell compelling, cinematic stories.

Note: This class takes the place of Short-Form Video Production I and is one of two possible prerequisites (the other being Documentary Filmmaking) for Advanced Reels. Students who have previously taken Short-Form Video Production I may not take this course.*

Open to Grades 9-12
2/3 Credit
Prerequisites: None

Sports Journalism (CBL)

This year-long elective immerses students in the fast-paced world of sports journalism and the skills needed to cover athletics with accuracy, clarity, and creativity. From learning the fundamentals of game reporting and interviewing athletes to exploring the evolution of sports media, students connect modern coverage to the long-standing traditions that shape how we experience sports today. This hands-on course takes students from the classroom to the field, where they actively collaborate with Thaden's athletic teams to gather stories, conduct interviews, capture highlights, and produce real-time coverage. By the end of the year, students produce a body of professional-quality stories, features, and multimedia content, developing a strong understanding of how sports reporting informs communities, builds fan culture, and captures the spirit of competition.

Open to Grades 9-12
1 Credit (may be retaken for up to four years for a maximum of 4 credits)
Prerequisites: None

African Americans in Film

This one-trimester elective explores the evolution of African American representation in film and the impact Black filmmakers, actors, and storytellers have had on American culture. From examining early cinematic portrayals and the barriers Black creatives faced to studying the breakthroughs of the Civil Rights era and the rise of contemporary Black cinema, students connect film history with broader social movements. This hands-on course moves beyond the screen, offering opportunities to analyze landmark films, engage with guest speakers, and explore how storytelling shapes identity and community. Students develop a deeper understanding of African American contributions to film and create critical analyses that highlight how these works continue to influence culture today.

Open to Grades 11-12
1/3 Credit
Prerequisites: None

Advanced Reels*

This year-long advanced elective builds upon skills gained in Documentary Filmmaking (CBL) and/or Narrative Filmmaking and teaches students the advanced fundamentals of short-form video production, with a particular emphasis on story development. Students learn new skills such as treatment writing, screenwriting, casting, storyboarding, producing, sound design, and color correction through class lectures and workshops. Students focus on either narrative, documentary, or experimental filmmaking and are expected to complete a seven to ten minute independent project to be presented at the end of the year, focusing on stories that can positively affect our community. Students not only continue to build their technical skills but also reflect on their observations and

personal growth as they learn how to create meaningful work that potentially expresses social, cultural, or historical issues, as well as appreciate the broader social responsibilities of media making.

Open to Grades 11-12

1 Credit

Prerequisites: Documentary Filmmaking (CBL) or Narrative Filmmaking or Short-Form Video Production I

Signature Programs – Wheels

Course Title	Grade(s)	Credit
<u>Adventure Cycling and Gear Making</u>	9-12	1/3
<u>Bike Co-Op (CBL)</u>	9-12	1/3
<u>Trails, Ecology, and Geology</u>	9-12	1/3
<u>Urban Studies (CBL)</u>	9-12	1

Adventure Cycling and Gear Making

This one-trimester elective is a highly experiential, hands-on course that blends outdoor adventure, engineering design, craftsmanship, and self-reliance through the lens of human-powered travel. Students learn the foundations of bikepacking – route planning, navigation, risk management, nutrition, mechanical self-sufficiency, and expedition logistics – while designing and fabricating their own custom soft-goods such as frame bags, handlebar rolls, and feed bags. Through progressive rides and field-testing, students evaluate how weight, packing systems, terrain, and weather affect performance and decision-making. The course emphasizes real-world problem-solving, systems thinking, iterative design, and personal resilience as students refine their gear and riding strategies based on direct experience. Culminating in a capstone adventure, students leave the course not only as stronger, more capable cyclists, but as thoughtful designers, leaders, and stewards of the outdoors.

Though students do not need prior experience with adventure cycling and/or gear-making, students should know how to ride a bike before taking this course.

Open to Grades 9-12

1/3 Credit

Prerequisites: None

Bike Co-Op (CBL)

A problem that befalls anyone with a bicycle is the need for maintenance, but that maintenance is often prohibitively expensive or mysterious to those who need it. A bike co-op is a community space that brings people together to solve this issue – to work on bicycles, share mechanical know-how, and promote cycling accessibility. This one-trimester elective leverages students’ skills in mechanics, organization, and marketing in the service of creating a Bike Co-op for the Northwest Arkansas community. Working in collaborative groups, students create and lead several “bike co-op” sessions. The goal of these sessions is to support people as they learn to care for their own bikes. These sessions are a place where students offer both maintenance and skills development for people who depend on their bicycles to get around.

Open to Grades 9-12

1/3 Credit; CBL

Prerequisites: None

Trails, Ecology, and Geology

This one-trimester, immersive, hands-on elective teaches students to design, build, and care for sustainable trail systems by integrating earth science, ecology, hydrology, and real trail construction techniques. Using the landscapes of Northwest Arkansas as both classroom and laboratory, students explore how geology, soils, slope, vegetation, and water shape the places where trails can and should exist. Early in the course, students learn to read topographic maps and design trail alignments that respect contour, grade, and ecological sensitivity. Through field-based investigations, they study soil behavior – including hands-on tests like the soil ribbon method – and analyze erosion, drainage, and habitat impacts. Students gain practical experience in corridor clearing, full-bench construction, tread shaping, rock armoring, and drainage design, while also examining invasive species, forest structure, and riparian systems to understand how trails interact with living landscapes. The course culminates in a student-led trail design or stewardship project that incorporates map-based planning, environmental reasoning, and on-the-ground assessment. By the end, students emerge as thoughtful riders, trail stewards, and young land managers who understand not only how trails are built, but why they must be designed with care for the land they traverse.

Open to Grades 9-12

1/3 Credit

Prerequisites: None

Urban Studies (CBL)

The great Danish architect and urban designer Jan Gehl wrote, “first we shape cities – then they shape us.” As the rate of urbanization – the process by which people migrate from rural to urban areas – increases and a greater share of the world population lives in cities, we would be wise to seriously consider the implications of Gehl’s insight. What kinds of cities do we want to live in? How might we rethink cities for the age of climate change? How will our answers change who we are as individuals and as citizens?

With these questions in mind, in the first trimester of this year-long Wheels and Social Sciences course, students learn about the basics of urban design in America and Europe through encounters with the seminal works of Jane Jacobs; Duany, Plater-Zyberk, and Speck; William H. Whyte; Jan Gehl; Mike Lydon, and more. Students also conduct community-based fieldwork to develop deeper understandings of the processes, politics, and practical considerations that influence how communities are designed, built, and inhabited. (Bentonville is in the midst of crafting the plan that will guide the development of the city for the next 15-20 years.) Further, students engage in critical examinations of these environments to assess how they influence the people who move through them and how people, in turn, influence their environments. In the second trimester, students collaborate to apply their learning and the principles of tactical urbanism – citizen-led, hyper-local, test-before-you-invest interventions intended to humanize and democratize the built environment – to a location in Bentonville. Ultimately, students are empowered to think critically and creatively about how they can catalyze positive change by planning and executing real projects in their communities.

Open to Grades 9-12

1 Credit Signature Programs or History and Social Sciences; CBL

Prerequisites: None

Visual and Performing Arts

Students may choose elective courses in three areas: [music](#), [theater](#), and [visual art](#), to meet the two-credit graduation requirement.

Visual and Performing Arts – Music

Course Title	Grade(s)	Credit
Beginning Drum Set and Percussion	9-12	1/3
Beginning Guitar and Bass	9-12	1/3
Beginning Piano	9-12	1/3
Film Scoring	9-12	1/3
Intermediate Drum Set and Percussion	9-12	1/3
Intermediate Guitar and Bass	9-12	1/3
Intermediate Piano	9-12	1/3
Modern Band	9-12	1/3
Survey of Country Music	9-12	1/3
Survey of Rock and Roll	9-12	1/3

Beginning Drum Set and Percussion

This one-trimester elective offers an introduction to the essential skills and techniques to play the drum set and other percussion instruments. From keeping time to creating dynamic fills, students build a solid foundation in drumming while developing confidence behind the kit. This course emphasizes proper technique, rhythm reading, and coordination, progressing from basic beats to more complex patterns across a variety of genres from rock, jazz, and Latin to world music styles. By the end of the trimester, students perform in a group setting, demonstrating their ability to lay down grooves and add creative flair to any song.

Open to Grades 9-12

1/3 Credit

Prerequisites: None

Beginning Guitar and Bass

This one-trimester elective offers an introduction to the foundational skills, techniques, and music theory needed to play guitar or bass. Students learn how to play basic chords, scales, and riffs and read chord charts, tabs, and sheet music. This course emphasizes developing strong rhythmic skills and the ability to play in time with others. By the end of the trimester, students will perform a song in a group setting, showcasing their progress.

Open to Grades 9-12

1/3 Credit
Prerequisites: None

Beginning Piano

This one-trimester elective offers an introduction to the fundamentals of piano and keyboard playing. This course focuses on essential techniques, music theory, and practical skills, giving students the confidence to play melodies, chords, and songs across various styles. Students learn proper hand posture, basic scales and chords, and how to read music and chord charts. By the end of the trimesters, students will perform a simple piece in a group or solo setting, showcasing their progress.

Open to Grades 9-12
1/3 Credit
Prerequisites: None

Film Scoring

In this one-trimester elective, students explore the art of composing music for film. Students learn the fundamentals of film scoring and digital music production while using recording and editing software to compose, record, and synchronize original music to picture. Through a series of hands-on projects, students work with films created by Thaden students in the Reels department, adding original scores that enhance mood, narrative, and visual storytelling. No prior experience is required.

Open to Grades 9-12
1/3 Credit
Prerequisites: None

Intermediate Drum Set and Percussion

This one-trimester intermediate level elective builds on foundational drumming skills, advancing students' technique, timing, and coordination on the drum set and other percussion instruments. Students develop more complex grooves, fills, and rhythmic independence while exploring styles such as rock, jazz, Latin, and world music. The course emphasizes stylistic accuracy, advanced rhythm reading, and ensemble playing. By the end of the trimester, students perform confidently in a group setting, demonstrating strong groove control and creative expression.

Open to Grades 9-12
1/3 Credit
Prerequisites: Beginning Drum Set and Percussion or instructor approval

Intermediate Guitar and Bass

This one-trimester intermediate level elective builds on foundational guitar skills, expanding students' technique, fretboard knowledge, and musical independence. Students develop more advanced chords, scales, and riffs while improving their ability to read chord charts, tabs, and standard notation. The course emphasizes rhythmic accuracy, stylistic playing, and ensemble skills. By the end of the term, students perform a song in a group setting, demonstrating confident technique and musical collaboration.

Open to Grades 9-12

1/3 Credit

Prerequisites: Beginning Guitar and Bass or instructor approval

Intermediate Piano

This one-trimester intermediate level elective builds on foundational piano and keyboard skills, advancing students' technique, reading ability, and musical expression. Students refine hand posture, expand their knowledge of scales and chords, and develop greater fluency in reading music and chord charts. The course emphasizes coordination, independence between hands, and stylistic playing across a variety of genres. By the end of the term, students perform a polished piece in a solo or group setting, demonstrating confident technique and musicality.

Open to Grades 9-12

1/3 Credit

Prerequisites: Beginning Piano or instructor approval

Modern Band

This one-trimester elective provides instrumentalists and vocalists an opportunity to focus on small ensemble instrumental skills within the context of contemporary music. This course encompasses a full spectrum of popular music genres, from pop and rock to folk, country, and jazz. Students learn musicianship skills, theoretical concepts, and stylistic methods. Students have the opportunity to perform concerts at Thaden and in the community. Some experience playing a musical instrument or vocal performance is required.

Note: Students may take this course for one trimester but are encouraged to enroll for all three. Students interested in participating in All-Region Band or Orchestra must enroll in all three trimesters to be eligible to audition.

Open to Grades 9-12

1/3 Credit (may be retaken for up to four years for a maximum of 4 credits)

Prerequisites: Audition or instructor approval

Survey of Country Music

This one-trimester elective examines the history, sound, and cultural impact of country music as one of America's most influential musical genres. Through guided listening, discussion, and

research-based activities, students explore the evolution of country music from its early roots to contemporary country, Americana, and crossover styles.

The course highlights major artists, key eras, and defining musical characteristics, including storytelling traditions, instrumentation, and regional influences. Students consider how country music reflects American identity and social change while developing skills in critical listening and musical analysis. By the end of the course, students demonstrate an understanding of country music's historical development, stylistic diversity, and cultural significance.

Open to Grades 9-12

1/3 Credit

Prerequisites: None

Survey of Rock and Roll

In this one-trimester elective, students study American music from the birth of Rock and Roll until today. Students study elements of music such as melody, harmony, rhythm, instruments, and how technology has influenced music. The class looks at significant performers, writers, composers, and cultural events that have shaped the contemporary musical landscape. Students learn how to listen critically and develop their own interests and personal preferences. No background in music needed, just an interest in the language of music.

Open to Grades 9-12

1/3 Credit

Prerequisites: None

Visual and Performing Arts – Theater

Course Title	Grade(s)	Credit
Black Box Theater	9-12	1/3
One-Act Play*	9-12	1/3
Stagecraft	9-12	1/3
Performance Workshop*	9-12	2/3

Black Box Theater

This one-trimester elective offers students the opportunity to step into a dynamic performance space and collaborate on ensemble-driven theatrical work. Students gain theater experience by working on a project that allows them to explore multiple facets of theater, including acting and directing. Through this hands-on approach, students gain a deeper understanding of how different roles and responsibilities come together to create a cohesive performance. The course culminates in a staged performance in Thaden's Black Box Theater.

Open to Grades 9-12

1/3 Credit

Prerequisites: None

One-Act Play*

In this one-trimester advanced elective, students experience theater as a live performing art as they move from page to stage. The class spends the trimester working on the staging of a selected one-act play. Everyone in the course must participate in some element of the production, whether it be acting, stagecraft, or technical theater. Toward the end of the trimester, the show is mounted on the main stage for a minimum of two performances. This course requires a number of after-school rehearsals, especially as the time of performance approaches. To participate in the production, students should sign up for the class but must receive permission or audition for a spot to be officially enrolled.

Open to Grades 9-12

1/3 Credit (may be taken up to four years for a maximum of 1 1/3 credits)

Prerequisites: audition or instructor approval

Stagecraft

Participants in this one-trimester elective learn shop, theater, materials, and tools safety; explore the fundamentals of metal, wood, and non-traditional materials fabrication; design construction and painting of scenery and props; and craft the lighting, audio, and video for productions. Students gain proficiency in using shop tools, stage equipment, and the lighting and sound systems in the Performing Art Center. Other activities include stage management, event staffing, and preparation for Thaden events, concerts, and theatrical productions.

Open to Grades 9-12

1/3 Credit (may be retaken for up to four years for a maximum of 4 credits)

Prerequisites: None

Performance Workshop*

In this two-trimester advanced elective, students explore theatrical possibilities as they work on a full-length play for performance. They experience all stages of production, from rehearsal to show. To advance in their stage work, students practice fundamental performance skills which include deepening their understanding of acting terminology, voice and speech, physicality, and characterization. To participate in the production, students sign up for the class and then audition for a spot in it. This workshop requires a number of after-school rehearsals, especially as the time of performance approaches.

Open to Grades 9-12

2/3 Credit (may be taken up to four years for a maximum of 2 and 2/3 credits)

Prerequisites: audition or instructor approval

Visual and Performing Arts – Visual Art

Course Title	Grade(s)	Credit
<u>2D Mixed Media</u>	9-12	1/3
<u>3D Mixed Media Sculpture</u>	9-12	1/3
<u>Acrylic Painting</u>	9-12	1/3
<u>Drawing</u>	9-12	1/3
<u>Empty Bowls (CBL)</u>	9-12	1/3
<u>Fashion and the Fabric of Social Change</u>	9-12	1/3
<u>Fiber Arts</u>	9-12	1/3
<u>Louise Thaden Museum (CBL)</u>	9-12	1/3
<u>Sculptural and Functional Ceramics</u>	9-12	2/3
<u>Advanced Studio Art*</u>	10-12	1

2D Mixed Media

This one-trimester elective introduces students to a wide range of materials and techniques used in two-dimensional mixed media art. Students explore abstract, representational, and expressive approaches to image-making while working with materials such as paper, acrylic paint, charcoal, graphite, printmaking tools, pastels, markers, and colored pencils. Through guided instruction and hands-on studio practice, students study composition as well as the elements and principles of design in preparation for experimentation and final projects. Emphasis is placed on creative risk-taking, personal expression, and thoughtful decision-making in material choice. The course supports students who benefit from flexibility and creative freedom while building foundational skills in two-dimensional design.

Open to Grades 9-12

1/3 Credit

Prerequisites: None

3D Mixed Media Sculpture

This one-trimester elective introduces students to three-dimensional mixed media sculpture through hands-on exploration of a wide range of materials and construction techniques. Students create sculptures of varying scale while working with materials such as clay, wire, plaster and plaster wrap, wood, cardboard, paper, and recycled or upcycled objects. Through guided studio practice, students study spatial composition as well as the elements and principles of design in preparation for experimentation and final projects. Emphasis is placed on problem-solving, material choice, and creative risk-taking as students develop personal approaches to sculptural form. The course supports learners who thrive with flexibility and freedom while building foundational skills in three-dimensional design.

Open to Grades 9-12

1/3 Credit

Prerequisites: None

Acrylic Painting

In this one-trimester elective, students learn foundational skills such as color theory, principals and elements of design, and the procedures and techniques needed to develop a work of art in the opaque medium of acrylic painting. Students create both abstract and realistic original paintings in acrylic within prescribed themes and themes of their choice. Study work from different time periods and art movements and gain a deeper appreciation and understanding of the way art and culture interact, inspiring and informing student work. Students engage in independent and personal reflections as well as group critiques and collaborations.

Open to Grades 9-12

1/3 Credit

Prerequisites: None

Drawing

In this one-trimester elective, students explore a variety of drawing tools and materials, emphasizing procedures and techniques in Betty Edwards' *Drawing on the Right Side of the Brain*. This course exposes students to various historical artists, drawing styles, and art vocabulary. Students break down the process of drawing into its multiple foundations, such as line, volume, shading, and composition. Drawing focuses on direct observation, from quick sketches to longer, developed studies. Projects may include perspective drawings, still life, portraits, and non-objective work that explore the qualities of drawing tools. Sketchbook activities and peer and instructor feedback are also critical components of the course. By the end of the trimester, students develop drawing skills and a critical eye, building foundations that encourage individual and creative work success. Students with advanced drawing skills also explore using the medium for personal expression.

Open to Grades 9-12

1/3 Credit

Prerequisites: None

Empty Bowls (CBL)

The Empty Bowls movement is a loose collection of artists who use ceramics to highlight issues around hunger. In this one-trimester elective, students investigate local food-related charitable organizations. They then design and sculpt ceramic bowls in support of one of these nonprofits. Their bowls incorporate different hand-building techniques, including using templates and plaster batts to mold bowls, adding colorants to employ Neriagi and Nerikomi techniques, coiling bowls, and creating matching bowl sets. Students then partner with the Meals program to create an Empty Bowls event in conjunction with Harvest Festival. This CBL-designated course helps students build their artistic skills while also exploring how art can encourage social change.

Open to Grades 9-12

1/3 Credit; CBL

Prerequisites: None

Fashion and the Fabric of Social Change

This one-trimester interdisciplinary course challenges students to see clothing as a tool for transformation. Students investigate the aesthetic, social, and political significance of fashion by combining historical and contemporary research with hands-on technical skills. Students move from being passive consumers to informed creators; whether through mending, interviewing community members, or producing original media, they leave this course with a deeper understanding of how the things we wear shape the world. In addition to the socio-political context of clothing, students explore the environmental impacts of the fashion industry – including textile waste and labor conditions – as well as emerging sustainable practices. Reflecting on our readings, class discussions and exercises over the trimester, students have creative options to address a specific personal, social, or political theme as a final project.

Open to Grades 9-12

1/3 Credit Visual and Performing Arts or History and Social Sciences

Prerequisites: None

Fiber Arts

In this one-trimester elective, students learn the fundamentals of fiber arts. Beginning with spinning yarn on handmade spindles, students gain an understanding and appreciation for this ancient craft. Students are exposed to sewing, knitting, crochet, cross stitch and needle felting. We also experiment with bleach dyeing, patching techniques, and weaving. Students engage in discussions around fashion trends and sustainability and hear from artists and craftsmen working in the trade. In doing so they learn how to operate and troubleshoot a sewing machine, follow a pattern, upcycle clothing, and dye fabric and wool using a variety of methods. The course culminates with a student-driven project based on and combining the methods learned.

Open to Grades 9-12

1/3 Credit

Prerequisites: None

Louise Thaden Museum (CBL)

This one-trimester elective examines the life of pioneering aviator Louise McPhetridge Thaden and explores the culture, challenges, and achievements of the 1920s and 1930s. Through collaboration with community partners and local museums, students learn how to use object-based learning strategies to enhance an audience's understanding of Louise's story. The curriculum extends beyond traditional lessons by utilizing AI tools to modernize museum storytelling and practice responsible digital ethics. As a culminating project, students act as curators and designers to construct displays showcasing Louise's memorabilia generously donated by the Thaden family.

Open to Grades 9-12

1/3 Credit Visual and Performing Arts or History and Social Sciences; CBL

Prerequisites: None

Sculptural and Functional Ceramics

In this two-trimester elective, students learn the fundamentals of handbuilding with clay. Working with a variety of clay bodies such as porcelain and different colors of stoneware, students learn how to elaborate on the basic concepts of pinching, coiling, and slabs. Students construct work that is both functional and sculptural while studying techniques from around the world – such as colored clay, slip-casting, and slump molds – to add complex dimensions to their work. Students also create sculptural pieces that are both figurative and abstract using a variety of glazes, mason stains, and other decorative techniques to embellish original creations.

Open to Grades 9-12

2/3 Credit

Prerequisites: None

Advanced Studio Art*

In this year-long elective, students use the skills learned in prior art electives to undertake a concentration: a series of works of their choosing that communicate a connecting theme, concept or medium. Media may include, but is not limited to: acrylic painting, color pencil, pastel, experimental media, printmaking, drawing, clay, multi-media sculpture, and fiber arts. Students in this course are expected to have an existing knowledge and skill set in the medium that they choose. This course provides the opportunity to independently (within the guidelines and expectations of deadlines) explore their chosen area in more depth. Students are required to develop an artistic habit of weekly sketchbook assignments, follow through on check-ins with accountability partners, develop timelines, and exhibit time management.

Open to Grades 10-12

1 Credit (may be taken up to four years for a maximum of 4 credits)

Prerequisites: Minimum of 2/3 credit in Upper School Visual Arts or instructor approval

Wellness and Physical Education

Students in Grades 9 and 11 are required to take a one-trimester Wellness course. All Upper School students must earn 1/3 credit in Physical Education (PE) each year. The PE credit may be earned by taking a one-trimester PE elective or by participating on a Thaden athletics team.

Course Title	Grade(s)	Credit
Required Courses		
Wellness I	9	1/3
Wellness II	11	1/3
Elective Courses		
Wellness: Special Topics	9-12	1/3
Physical Education: Lifetime Sports	9-12	1/3
Physical Education: Mindful Movement	9-12	1/3
Physical Education: Strength and Conditioning	9-12	1/3
Peer Leadership Seminar (CBL)	12	1

Required Courses

Wellness I and II

These one-trimester courses inspire and enable students to practice healthy living with an emphasis on interpersonal communication, decision-making, conflict resolution, nutrition, anatomy, and physiology. Both courses address identity development and forming a clear and unique sense of self, including values, beliefs, and goals. Wellness courses enhance academic performance and encourage positive lifestyle habits among students.

Wellness I required for Grade 9

Wellness II or Wellness: Special Topics required for Grade 11

1/3 Credit each

Prerequisites: None

Elective Courses

Wellness: Special Topics

This trimester-long elective is designed to help students develop life-long social and emotional habits essential for mental well-being. With an emphasis on creating a supportive and productive environment, students will cultivate skills and learn tools to address emotional regulation, personal distress, interpersonal effectiveness, and healthy habits of the mind. Course objectives include learning and practicing skills necessary for:

- Coping with stressful situations
- Balancing and working through powerful feelings and emotions
- Managing anger in healthy ways
- Navigating interpersonal relationships effectively
- Overcoming rejection and failures
- Staying focused in the moment
- Effective and productive communication
- Understanding common mental health diagnoses and their impacts
- Developing peace of mind

Open to Grades 9-12

Wellness II or Wellness: Special Topics required in Grade 11

1/3 credit

Prerequisites: None

Physical Education: Lifetime Sports

Lifetime sports are sports and physical activities that people of all ages and all levels of ability can participate in and enjoy, such as tennis, badminton, golf, shuffleboard, table tennis, pickleball, washers, and cornhole. In this one-trimester elective, students discover the joy of staying active while exploring different sports, recreational pursuits, and fitness routines tailored to promote a healthy and active lifestyle.

Open to Grades 9-12

1/3 Credit (may be retaken for up to four years for a maximum of 4 credits)

Prerequisites: None

Physical Education: Mindful Movement

This one-trimester elective is designed to guide students on a transformative journey toward holistic well-being. This course focuses on the integration of mindful exercises, incorporating elements of movement, breath, and awareness. Students immerse themselves in a nurturing environment that encourages self-discovery, stress reduction, and physical vitality. This class is suitable for all fitness levels, providing a safe and inclusive space for self-exploration. This comprehensive course seamlessly blends the ancient wisdom of yoga, the serene practice of meditation, the flowing movements of Tai chi and Qigong, the core-strengthening principles of pilates, and the joyful connection of acroyoga to cultivate a mindful approach to exercise that can enhance overall quality of life.

Open to Grades 9-12

1/3 Credit (may be retaken for up to four years for a maximum of 4 credits)

Prerequisites: None

Physical Education: Strength and Conditioning

This dynamic course is designed to elevate students' physical fitness. This comprehensive one-trimester elective integrates weightlifting, plyometrics, and cardiovascular exercises to optimize

strength, endurance, and agility. This course is designed for students of all skill and experience levels, and all students can benefit from a structured approach to developing their physical fitness. Throughout the course, students gain knowledge and practical skills to enhance athletic performance, build lean muscle, and improve overall fitness.

Open to Grades 9-12

1/3 Credit (may be retaken for up to four years for a maximum of 4 credits)

Prerequisites: None

Peer Leadership Seminar (CBL)

This year-long leadership seminar prepares seniors to mentor younger students. Working closely with a partner peer, students serve the needs of groups of Grade 9 students as they move through their first year of Upper School. This program gives seniors the opportunity to develop and apply their leadership skills. Students work extensively on group facilitation skills and discuss specific topics that may arise in their mentorship groups. Coursework entails learning about group dynamics, conflict resolution, communication skills, and issues of common concern to high school students. Throughout the course, students develop ways to facilitate the discussion of these topics.

This program requires students to demonstrate maturity and responsibility, as students in Grade 9 regard their peer leaders as role models and will be influenced by their behaviors and attitudes. Peer leaders are also expected to make a substantial commitment to the students they mentor. Peer leaders lead outreach activities with Grade 9 students during the Friday advisory period about every two weeks and other required events may emerge throughout the year. All students must be in good academic standing and have a record of strong citizenship within the Thaden community. If the amount of interest shown during course selection exceeds the number of seats available in the course, enrollment will be determined by random selection.

Open to Grade 12

1 Credit; CBL

Prerequisites: instructor approval

Intensives

Intensives are one- or two-week periods of study in which students eschew their regular weekly schedule to participate in one course that meets all day, every day. This allows students to engage in educational experiences that are not always easily facilitated during our typical 60- and 90-minute class periods. Intensives also allow for the development of creative interdisciplinary course offerings that are complementary to but distinct from Thaden's core curriculum.

Intensive courses carry academic credit. All Intensive courses are graded on a Pass / No Credit basis, and credit earned during Intensives can be used to fulfill graduation requirements in Community-Based Learning (CBL), Signature Programs, Visual and Performing Arts, and Additional Courses.

The descriptions below are representative samples of Intensive course offerings. Students receive the Intensives Course Offering Guide and the Intensives Course Selection form in December. They receive their Intensives course assignments in February.

Representative Intensives Courses

Dollars and Sense

This one-week Intensive covers the essentials of managing money and making informed financial decisions. Students learn practical skills that apply directly to their lives, such as creating a budget, understanding how bank accounts and credit work, and setting savings goals. This course also covers the basics of investing, the importance of credit scores, and how to avoid debt traps. Real-world examples and activities help students connect financial concepts to everyday situations, like paying for college, buying a car, or planning for the future. Finish the week with a toolkit of strategies for making smart money choices, building financial independence, and preparing for long-term goals.

Dopamine Dressing: The Neuroscience of Fashion

Have you ever noticed how a color, pattern, or texture can instantly change your mood? In this one-week hands-on Intensive, students explore the science behind why that happens. Learn how the brain perceives color, interprets patterns, and responds with dopamine, then put that science into action by creating outfits that spark joy and reflect who you are. Using a Thaden t-shirt as a starting point, students will experiment with colors, textures, and patterns through thrift shop finds, mood boards, and hands-on labs. The course culminates in a showcase of each student's signature ensemble, along with an explanation of how each choice connects to neurotransmitters, dopamine pathways, and emotional responses.

Seeking Refuge: Understanding the Refugee Experience in America (CBL)

This two-week Intensive provides students with a comprehensive understanding of the refugee crisis in the United States. Explore the full process of gaining refugee status, including displacement, life in

refugee camps, and the interview and selection procedures required for resettlement in the United States.

This course examines how various organizations assist refugees after arrival, including support with housing, employment, language-learning, enrolling children in school, and adjusting to life in a new country. Students also explore common misinformation about refugees and the differences between refugees and immigrants. Additionally, the course addresses how the political climate in the United States has affected both current refugees and those seeking resettlement. Partnerships with local nonprofit organizations Canopy of Northwest Arkansas and Clothed with Compassion allow students to engage directly with refugee support work in their local community.

Sonic Sculptures

In this STEAM-focused, two-week Intensive, students explore the world of interactive artworks designed to come alive through sound when touched, moved, or engaged. Study contemporary and historical artists who merge sculpture, technology, and sound to create immersive experiences. Alongside this artistic exploration, students investigate the physics of sound, discovering how vibration, resonance, and materials affect tone and pitch. Through hands-on activities inspired by instrument-making – including examining examples from strings, woodwinds, brass, and percussion to understand their physical anatomy and design principles – students gain a deeper understanding of how sound behaves and how structure and form influence what we hear. Students experiment with different construction methods, materials, and simple sound-making devices to create their own interactive sculptures. By the end of the course, each student designs and presents an original sound-producing artwork that combines creativity, craftsmanship, and interactivity.
