



MAY TERM 2027

COURSE CATALOG

SAINT THOMAS ACADEMY



TABLE OF CONTENTS

3

WHAT IS MAY TERM?

4

KEY DATES

5

AT-A-GLANCE COURSE GRID

6

COURSES & COURSE DESCRIPTIONS

12

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS



WHAT IS MAY TERM?

For two weeks in late spring, immediately after exams close, the regular schedule intentionally disappears for juniors, beginning in May of 2027. No bells, no course rotation, no struggling to complete homework from multiple classes on the same evening. Instead, every student takes one immersive course, and that course becomes the whole day. This is a time when students can focus all their attention on a single course experience, finishing the year with a meaningful process and a final product—a portfolio, a panel presentation, a prototype, a performance.

What these two weeks look like depends entirely on the course. It might mean standing in front of a panel of faculty at a school in Istanbul, pitching your research and transportation plan. It might mean recording an album and performing a setlist in front of faculty and peers. It might mean learning wilderness survival skills while reading great survival literature by Jack London and Jon Krakauer. It might mean visiting an NBA front office and learning how mathematics and sport are intertwined. It might mean service learning in Costa Rica. While what each course means to each student will vary, all of these May Term programs are intentionally designed to fully embed students in hands-on learning experiences.

Students select their courses in September, and the choice matters. We ask students to look at these eleven courses and pick their top choices not on the basis of what their friends are taking, but on the courses that genuinely pique their interest — the ones that give them the best opportunity to try a new skill, risk a new experience, and bond with fellow cadets around a common interest. Some of these courses will cross an ocean, and some will happen mostly on campus, but all of them offer unique challenges, exploratory learning, and, we hope, the most meaningful and memorable capstone of the junior year. Even more exciting, this is the pilot May Term, so every student and teacher involved is a pioneer.

We hope you are as excited as we are about this experience. Please take this opportunity to review all eleven course options before our September 8–11 registration window.

Please also note that some courses have specific prerequisites, and that international and domestic travel programs carry additional fees, as noted in each course description. We look forward to meeting with you at Back-to-School Night on September 9 to provide further information.

Please note: Successful completion of May Term is a graduation requirement, and consistent attendance is expected and required.





KEY DATES

September 1, 2026: Course catalog distributed

September 8 - 11, 2026: May Term course registration (in advisory)

September 9, 2026: May Term parent briefing at Back-to-School Night

October 15, 2026: Students meet with their May Term instructors

December 15, 2026: Passport deadline for international programs

January 15 - April 12, 2027: Periodic check-ins with instructors (three to four)

April 14, 2027: May Term parent meeting (on campus)

May 17 - 19, 2027: Junior Final Exams

May 20 - June 3, 2027: MAY TERM



AT-A-GLANCE COURSE GRID

COURSE	INSTRUCTOR	WHERE	COST	SELECTION
Midnight Sun and Minarets: Futures Co-Lab	O'Connell / Krieger	Helsinki & Istanbul	\$\$\$\$	Application
Pura Vida: Costa Rica	Mancebo / Cañete	Costa Rica	\$\$\$\$	Application
American History and Government	McCarthy	D.C. & New York	\$\$\$	Application
Words of the Wild	Marks	North Shore, MN	\$\$	Application
The Amazing Race	Honan	Campus & metro	\$	Open
Building the Metro, Biking the Metro	Hoverson	Twin Cities metro	\$	Open
Iron Sharpens Iron	Larson / Moe	Campus & metro	\$	Open
The Full Stack	Judy / Cañete	Campus	\$\$	Open
Product Design, Engineering & Civic Engagement	Harvalis	Campus	\$	Open
Garage Band	Connolly	Campus & metro	\$	Open
Sports - Statistics Behind the Game	Smith	Campus & metro	\$	Open

Cost key: \$ small transportation fee · \$\$ modest course fee · \$\$\$ domestic travel program · \$\$\$\$ international travel program

Need-based financial aid is available for every course carrying a fee. Please contact David O'Connell at doconnell@cadets.com for further information.

For application materials, please contact course instructors directly.

Ranges shown are estimates; final costs will be confirmed. No course will exceed the top of its stated range.

COURSES AND COURSE DESCRIPTIONS

Midnight Sun and Minarets: Futures Co-Lab — Helsinki & Istanbul

Grade Level	11	Credit	0.25
Instructor(s)	Mr. David O'Connell and Mr. David Krieger	Location	Helsinki, Finland and Istanbul, Turkey
Estimated Cost	\$\$\$\$ — hard-capped at \$5,000	Enrollment	10–12 students; application and essay
Prerequisite(s)	Grade 11 standing; minimum 3.7 GPA; demonstrated interest in STEM or social science.		
Corequisite(s)	None		

Course Description

What does the future look like — and who gets to design it? In this 12-day May Term program, a select cohort of 10–12 students will travel to two of Europe's most innovative cities to find out. Embedded within host schools in Istanbul, Turkey, and Helsinki, Finland, students will spend five immersive days at each site conducting original field research, collaborating on cross-cultural STEM and futures projects with local peers, and grappling with the real-world complexities that no single classroom can teach.

The program culminates in a high-stakes group presentation delivered to a panel at a local university in each city — a professional audience that will push students to defend their ideas, sharpen their thinking, and communicate across cultures. From the layered history and rapid growth of Istanbul to the human-centered design philosophy embedded in Finnish education and civic life, students will return home with not just a passport full of stamps, but a broader lens for understanding global systems, a deeper appreciation for collaborative inquiry, and the confidence that comes from pursuing challenges far from home.

Pura Vida: Costa Rica

Grade Level	11	Credit	0.25
Instructor(s)	Mrs. Graciela Mancebo and Mrs. Gema Cañete	Location	Costa Rica
Estimated Cost	\$\$\$\$ — hard-capped at \$5,000	Enrollment	Application required
Prerequisite(s)	Completion of Spanish 2; teacher recommendation required.		
Corequisite(s)	None		

Course Description

Take your Spanish beyond the classroom and into the real world. This immersive May Term experience in Costa Rica offers students a unique opportunity to live the language through daily interaction, meaningful service, and authentic cultural exchange. By engaging directly with local communities, students will gain confidence communicating in real-life contexts. Through hands-on service projects, collaboration with community partners, and learning from local families, students will develop a deeper understanding of the local culture and experience firsthand how language connects people, builds relationships, and fosters mutual understanding.

The program also includes enriching experiences such as visiting a wildlife rehabilitation center, exploring an organic farm with sustainable agriculture initiatives, and participating in a leadership-focused zip-line challenge. Daily reflection encourages students to think critically about their role in a global society, helping them grow as thoughtful, culturally aware individuals. By the end of the program, students will not only have improved their Spanish skills but also developed greater cultural awareness, empathy, and a strong sense of global citizenship — key competencies for thriving in an interconnected world. The experience culminates in a bilingual presentation where students share their learning and personal growth with the school community.

American History and Government in Washington, D.C. and New York City

Grade Level	11	Credit	0.25
Instructor(s)	Mr. Nick McCarthy	Location	Washington, D.C. and New York City
Estimated Cost	\$\$\$ – \$3,252	Enrollment	10–12 students; application and essay
Prerequisite(s)	GPA above 3.0; genuine interest in American history or government.		
Corequisite(s)	None		

Course Description

Where did America come from, and what values helped shape it? Where is America going, and do we still hold those same values? It is impossible to answer the second question without some knowledge of the first. In this 13-day May Term program, 10–12 students will travel to two of the most consequential cities in our nation’s history to find out.

Washington, D.C., and New York City will become our classroom as we travel to sites that embody the values that shaped our nation. To define these values, students will be placed in groups with other students from across the country who bring different pasts, backgrounds, and viewpoints. Along the way, STA students will also get a crash course in how our government works, including several policy workshops and a mock congress in which they will try to pass a bill about an issue facing the country. They will also meet with lawmakers to bring their thoughts and concerns to their elected representatives. Students will not merely be working from 8:00 to 3:00, but long into the evening. After a year of studying American history, juniors will get to see it up close in the places where much of it was made.

Words of the Wild: Outdoor Adventure Literature

Grade Level	11	Credit	0.25
Instructor(s)	Mr. Luke Marks	Location	North Shore of Lake Superior, Minnesota
Estimated Cost	\$\$ – \$300	Enrollment	Maximum of 12 students
Prerequisite(s)	Physically prepared for strenuous hiking, camping, and extended time outdoors.		
Corequisite(s)	None		

Course Description

What can the wilderness teach us about perseverance, purpose, and character? In this immersive May Term experience, students will journey through the rugged landscapes of Minnesota’s North Shore while exploring the enduring themes of classic outdoor literature. Through backpacking, camping, navigation, and wilderness skills, students will complete a demanding physical expedition that challenges them to develop resilience, discipline, and teamwork.

Along the way, students will connect their experiences with reflective readings and discussions examining the relationship between nature, masculinity, and personal growth. The program culminates in a reflective synthesis that integrates students’ lived experiences with the literature, demonstrating how challenge and the natural world can shape character and leadership.

Additional required meetings: October, January, and March.

The Amazing Race

Grade Level	11	Credit	0.25
Instructor(s)	Mr. Nick Honan	Location	Campus and greater Twin Cities
Estimated Cost	\$ — small transportation fee not to exceed \$40	Enrollment	Open enrollment
Prerequisite(s)	Grade of A (90% or above) in ML; signed parental permission slip.		
Corequisite(s)	None		

Course Description

This program introduces students to navigating physical terrain without the assistance of electronic mapping devices. Students will begin in the classroom, learning how to read various maps and orient themselves in a given geographical location. Practical application will then consist of using these skills to locate designated points throughout a land navigation course.

The class will then progress into an urban variation, in which students will be given starting points and destinations throughout the greater Twin Cities area. Using various forms of public transportation — or their legs — cadets will once again have to rely on maps and terrain features to find their way to a variety of destinations without the use of their cell phones. This will not only decrease students' dependency on electronics for navigation, but also build an appreciation for life without a personally owned vehicle.

Building the Metro, Biking the Metro

Grade Level	11	Credit	0.25
Instructor(s)	Mr. Doug Hoverson	Location	Twin Cities metro area
Estimated Cost	\$ — small transportation fee	Enrollment	Open enrollment
Prerequisite(s)	Must provide own bicycle suitable for road and rail trails; good physical condition (able to ride 25 miles per day at 14 mph).		
Corequisite(s)	None		

Course Description

Approaching the study of neighborhoods through cycling will encourage students to examine how communities work and how they can work better. Goals include exploring metropolitan development over time, identifying major styles of architecture, applying the basics of bicycle care and maintenance, and understanding the importance of non-car forms of transportation. Students will apply their lessons to policy-making, historic preservation, and personal fitness while working with others to expand opportunities for bicycle use.

Iron Sharpens Iron: Shaping the Modern Man Through Challenge

Grade Level	11	Credit	0.25
Instructor(s)	Mr. Justin Larson and Mr. Logan Moe	Location	Campus and metro
Estimated Cost	\$ — small transportation fee	Enrollment	Open enrollment
Prerequisite(s)	Good physical and mental capacity for hiking, rock climbing, high ropes, and rafting.		
Corequisite(s)	None		

Course Description

Iron Sharpens Iron is a course designed to help students grow through challenge, reflection, teamwork, and service. Through physically, mentally, and emotionally demanding experiences, students learn that true strength is not measured only by physical toughness, but also by self-awareness, honesty, resilience, and the ability to support others.

Activities include rock climbing, hiking, a high ropes course, white water rafting, team challenges, mindfulness practices, sports psychology, and community service. By the end of the course, students will leave with a deeper understanding of themselves, a stronger connection to their peers, and the belief that leadership begins with humility, integrity, and service.

The Full Stack: Circuits, Computers, and Coding

Grade Level	11	Credit	0.25
Instructor(s)	Mrs. Melissa Judy and Mrs. Gema Canete	Location	Campus
Estimated Cost	\$\$ — technical resource costs	Enrollment	8–12 students
Prerequisite(s)	Interest in engineering and AI; no record of unethical technology use.		
Corequisite(s)	None		

Course Description

This course guides students through the complete lifecycle of a modern computing system — from electrical fundamentals and hardware assembly to software development and deployment. Students will design and troubleshoot basic circuits, assemble a functional desktop computer, develop a 2D video game using Python, and deploy a personal portfolio website.

The course uses generative AI tools responsibly for debugging and code scaffolding while maintaining human oversight. The experience culminates in a public Demo Day, where students test and present the completed systems and software they built.

Additional required meetings: November, February, and April.

Product Design, Engineering & Civic Engagement

Grade Level	11	Credit	0.25
Instructor(s)	Mrs. Jillian Harvalis	Location	Campus Innovation Center and local community partner sites
Estimated Cost	\$ — small transportation fee	Enrollment	Open enrollment
Prerequisite(s)	CAD training and/or Introduction to Engineering preferred.		
Corequisite(s)	None		

Course Description

This program introduces students to the full product design engineering cycle through authentic civic engagement. Students will work in teams to identify real needs within the school or local community, interview stakeholders, define requirements, and design functional prototypes. The program emphasizes empathy-driven design, ethical decision-making, and iterative problem-solving. Students may extend their project through the summer to earn service hours.

Garage Band

Grade Level	11	Credit	0.25
Instructor(s)	Mr. Dan Connolly	Location	Campus and metro
Estimated Cost	\$ — small transportation fee	Enrollment	Open enrollment
Prerequisite(s)	At least one year of experience with guitar, bass, keyboard, drums, or vocals.		
Corequisite(s)	None		

Course Description

In this course, students will work together to create their own band or project and spend two weeks living the life of a recording artist and producer. Students will gain experience recording and editing music using a digital audio workstation (DAW), rehearsing for public performance, and touring professional recording studios and venues. The course culminates in the release of a class EP and a live performance at the school assembly on the final day.

Sports - Statistics Behind the Game

Grade Level	11	Credit	0.25
Instructor(s)	Mr. Jeff Smith	Location	Campus and metro
Estimated Cost	\$ — small transportation fee	Enrollment	Open enrollment
Prerequisite(s)	None		
Corequisite(s)	None		

Course Description

This two-week experiential course explores how statistics and data shape the world of professional sports far beyond the traditional box score. Through site visits, conversations with industry professionals, and real-world examples, students will examine how sports organizations and the surrounding community use data to forecast, solve problems, evaluate results, and make everyday decisions. The emphasis is not on calculating statistics, but on understanding how information is collected, interpreted, communicated, and ultimately used to make decisions.

Students will explore how statistics and data are used in areas such as:

- **Sports business and operations:** ticket pricing, attendance, marketing, merchandise, concessions, staffing, scheduling, sponsorships, finance, and fan experience.
- **Cities and major events:** public safety, traffic, transportation, crowd management, event costs, and the economic impact of professional sports.
- **Sports journalism:** finding meaningful stories in data, questioning statistics and their sources, distinguishing correlation from causation, and communicating what the numbers actually mean.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Q1. Are all juniors required to enroll in May Term?

Yes. May Term is a graduation requirement, and this is posted in the Student Handbook.

Q2. Do students receive credit for May Term?

Yes. Students who successfully complete May Term through consistent attendance, meeting collaborative goals, and completing an effective final product or deliverable — a final presentation, portfolio, pitch, or project — will receive 0.25 credits on their transcript. This is similar to our Senior Speech credit.

Q3. What is the attendance policy?

Because May Term is a compressed two-week schedule that demands commitment, collaboration, and completion of a substantial final product, missing one day is tantamount to missing one week of school. Illness and family or personal emergencies happen, and absences will be excused according to our normal system. However, frequent absences and tardies that adversely affect a student's ability to complete his May Term process and final product may result in additional independent project work to meet the graduation requirement.

Q4. What is the schedule for each day?

Students traveling out of state or to wilderness areas will need to confirm that these extended absences will not adversely affect their participation in athletics. For courses on campus, the day-to-day schedule follows the typical 8:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. arrival and dismissal timeline, with students focused on a single course.

While we will work with the Athletic Department to minimize the impact of early dismissals on May Term coursework, students scheduled for early dismissal due to athletics will have those dismissals honored. We encourage students to notify their instructors in advance of any early dismissals.

Q5. Are there additional costs?

The international travel programs — Finland/Turkey and Costa Rica — are hard-capped at \$5,000. The Washington, D.C. and New York City program is priced at \$3,252. Words of the Wild includes a \$300 fee. All other courses carry a small transportation fee similar to what families are charged for athletics.

While international and out-of-state travel programs are more expensive, need-based financial aid is available. Please email financialaid@cadets.com with any questions about financial aid. We do not want cost to be the reason a student decides not to pursue a great program.

Q6. How will registration work?

Registration takes place during advisory, September 8–11, 2026. Students will review all eleven course descriptions and submit their choices with their advisor. Courses marked “Application” in the course grid require materials submitted directly to the course instructor; instructors will notify students of selection decisions. Students with questions should speak with their advisor or contact David O'Connell.

Q7. How will lunch work?

Students on campus or in regional programs will eat lunch in the cafeteria, or sack lunches will be provided when they are on a field trip.

Q8. What is the dress code during May Term?

Because students will be taking field trips and engaging in a variety of activities on and off campus, they will not be in military dress. Expectations will range from casual on physical outings to business casual for site visits, and students may be asked to dress more formally for final presentations. Each May Term instructor will communicate specific expectations to students during the required February check-in.

Q9. What about electives that run past AP exams? Are students missing learning?

All regular courses end for juniors on May 19. All juniors begin May Term on May 20. These courses are designed to be meaningful, intensive, immersive, and hands-on. Students are not missing learning — they are taking a deep dive into one substantial course. May Term is designed to be a capstone learning experience.

Q10. Who is responsible for supervision?

The May Term instructor is responsible for tracking daily attendance and for providing consistent, effective supervision of his or her students.

Q11. What are the emergency protocols?

Each of the eleven programs is insured and includes an extensive risk-management and emergency-management plan. These procedures will be published and shared with parents and students during our winter and spring meetings.

Q12. Can students propose their own project?

This is a great idea and will be considered for future May Terms. For this pilot year, our team polled 500 students and 400 parents, and that data informed the courses we designed. Students may not propose an independent project for this May Term, but we will certainly consider it going forward.

Additional questions? Please contact David O'Connell at doconnell@cadets.com.