



EMMA WILLARD
S C H O O L

Jestermester Course Catalog 2026–2027

Students, please enjoy this year's Jestermester Course Catalog! Read through it carefully: many of last year's Jestermesters are running again, but there could be slight variations in the course descriptions. There are also a number of **brand new** Jestermesters running for the first time this year!

On Friday, September 18, you will have an opportunity to learn more about these courses at our Jestermester Fair, where you can ask more specific questions of the teachers leading each experience. You will then have an opportunity to fill out a registration form indicating the ten Jestermester courses you are most interested in. The preference form is due at midnight on Friday, September 25.

If a course has prerequisites or an associated cost, those will be listed immediately below the description in italics. If you see nothing there, assume the course is for everyone and free of charge! For those courses that involve overnight travel and therefore do incur a cost, financial aid is available. Tentative itineraries for each Jestermester will be listed on MyEmma on the dedicated "Resources" tile.

Mr. Calos and Ms. Carton are available to answer any initial questions that you may have about Jestermester. Please don't hesitate to reach out!

Courses:

A Different Land: Peace & Justice for the Forcibly Displaced

Most of us can't begin to imagine the horror of having no choice but to leave our own homes in the most dire of situations. The millions of people from vulnerable populations around the world who *do* have to face this reality are usually doing so in desperate cases of life or death: whether it is a result of war, persecution, rampant crime and lawlessness, economic hardship and poverty, famine, drought, or natural climate or geologic disasters that render a region uninhabitable.

Through this darkness, we can find a light of hope as we take a look at the important humanitarian work being done by a multitude of global, national, and local non-profit organizations that support those who have been forcibly displaced. In this human-rights-focused Jestermester, students will have opportunities to learn about and engage with some of the organizations that support individuals and families

through their displacement and resettlement in a new and different land. Participants will grapple with challenging subject matter focusing on the tension between geopolitics and human rights, including the current state of immigration in the United States. Through food, film, guest speakers, children's storybooks, and a one-day trip to New York City, participants will dive deeply into the vast array of stories and experiences of those who have been forcibly displaced. They will leave with the knowledge and skills needed to amplify the voices of the displaced and to support resettled members of our communities with tangible actions. The facilitators are Ms. Halfi, Dr. Cecilia, and Ms. Yardumian.

Note: This Jestermeister is mostly on-campus and local, but there is a one-day trip to New York City to visit refugee & immigrant support organizations. This day trip is at no additional cost. Departure on this day will be early morning and return time will be around 9pm.

Ascent

"Ascent" is a 7-day climbing and hiking course that takes place in Red Rock National Conservation Area, just outside of Las Vegas, Nevada. Deep canyons, rocky crags, tall spires, and striped sandstone cliffs dominate the landscape. The course will begin with basic camping skills—base camp set-up and maintenance, Leave No Trace camping techniques, cooking, and stove use—as well as beginning rock climbing skills, such as belaying, tying knots, rope handling, communication, top-roping, and rappelling. Lead climbing may also be possible for students who arrive with previous climbing experience. Climbs will be interspersed with long day hikes, giving students the opportunity to learn map reading, route finding, and navigation, all while appreciating the unique geology, plant and animal life, and human history of the region.

Throughout this course, students will be encouraged to practice different leadership skills and roles, both as "team members" (active followers) and "team leaders" (designated leaders). They will have the opportunity to exercise individual decision-making while facilitating the success of the larger team. The overarching goals of this trip are to develop students' technical wilderness skills, interpersonal skills, and leadership skills, while fostering an appreciation for the natural environment. The facilitators are Ms. Carton and Ms. L-D.

Estimated cost: \$4,600

Prerequisites: Participants should be willing and able to engage in strenuous physical activity. All participants will also be required to attend a pre-trip, full-day training hike on Tuesday, October 13 (fall long weekend).

A screencast with more information regarding this trip can be found [here](#).

Camphill Village

What do we really mean when we talk about purpose and community? Community can be a buzzy word, but it is also essential to who we are as humans. So how does community happen? What are the practical and logistical inner workings needed for a community to function? How does community lead to purpose and allow people to thrive? To explore these questions we will be spending the week at [Camphill Village](#)

in Copake, New York. Camphill is an [intentional community](#) and working village that supports adults with developmental differences. In their own words, the village is a “lifesharing community [that] assist[s] people of all abilities in unfolding their gifts together through shared experience, mutual support, and introspection.” During our week at Camphill we will be getting some hands-on experience in workshops and homes, learning about how they sustain their village, and hopefully walking away with a deeper understanding of community. Some of the workshops students will participate in include candlemaking, weaving, baking, woodshop, herbal gardening, and biodynamic farming.

Not only are we visiting an intentional community, but our Jestermeister cohort will practice aspects of community living in preparation for and during the week. We will stay together at a house in Copake where students will develop shared values, practices and resources. Other topics that students will learn about include: disability advocacy, sustainability and biodynamic farming, Waldorf educational models, and spiritual life practices. The facilitators are Ms. Delgado, Ms. Robbins, and Ms. Price.

Estimated cost: \$350

Prerequisites: Participants should be comfortable doing physical work outside and being exposed to farm animals.

A screencast with more information regarding this trip can be found [here](#).

Citizen Journalist

“Journalism is what we need to make democracy work,” said Walter Cronkite, because it gives us the information we need to understand the perspectives of the community we are a part of. In this Jestermeister, we will explore the role of journalism in our democracy with a special focus on telling the stories about the people we live among, the issues that affect them, and *why* these stories are necessary for building a stronger society. As a citizen journalist, you will put your knowledge into practice by reporting on our very own community during Jestermeister!

During this Jestermeister, students will consider and expand their news diet (how they engage with news); analyze the purpose of the news, both generally and for their immediate community; visit local publications and talk to journalists; and learn how to read and how to write ‘the news.’ The facilitators are Ms. Norton and Dr. Shilo.

The Eternal City

They say all roads lead there. They say it wasn’t built in a day. They call it the Eternal City. Rome has loomed large in people’s imaginations for millennia, and we are going to explore it. We’ll analyze the Colosseum, the Forum Romanum, the collections of the Borghese Gallery, and other iconic monuments and artworks. For a different side of Rome, we’ll also take a cooking class. Visits to Pompeii and Naples will show us Rome from other perspectives. Students will apply their “classroom” knowledge of Latin and Art History as we read ancient primary source documents, standing face-to-face with masterpieces of art and architecture where Caesar was assassinated, where people scrawled love poems onto city walls in the shadow of a volcano, and where the tides turned in the struggle to unite Italy for the first time since

the fall of the Roman Empire. Then we'll ponder the meaning of Rome and the nature of history over gelato. The facilitators are Dr. Matera, Ms. Snyder, and Mr. Doherty.

Estimated cost: \$5,300

Prerequisites: Priority will be given to students who have taken or who are currently enrolled in Latin or Art History at Emma Willard. This Jestermeister will include a lot of walking on a daily basis. Students will need to have appropriate shoes and be able to walk long distances and stand for long periods of time.

A screencast with more information regarding this trip can be found [here](#).

Ethics and Justice: Dilemmas Through the Ages

Join us for a week of exploring big ideas. What is right and wrong? Where do our values come from? What does it mean to live a good life? These are just a few of the questions we will dive into over the course of five days of thinking, talking, writing, and engaging in the community. From a day of service to classroom simulations to thought exercises, we will use a variety of mediums and activities to explore dilemmas that humans have been discussing for millenia.

The facilitators are Ms. Robson, Ms. Evans, and Dr. Chanslor.

Exploring Race Relations in America

This Jestermeister guides students through multisite, mostly outdoor learning that explores race relations in the U.S. The plan is to move beyond Black/White binary to include Native American, Latino/Hispanic, Asian, and other communities, past and present. Through museum visits, film analysis, journaling, collaborative discussions, and historical inquiry, students will deepen their understanding of race relations in America and examine how different groups have experienced issues of identity, freedom, discrimination, resistance, and belonging. As a culminating project, students will work collaboratively to create a professionally designed, publishable book that documents their learning journey and presents historical insights, personal reflections, photographs, research findings, and discussion questions for the broader school community. The book will be written for the Emma Willard community, requiring students to communicate complex ideas clearly, accurately, and thoughtfully. The facilitators are Dr. Ofori, Ms. Labbate, and the College Counseling team.

Note: The Jestermeister will leave campus early (i.e. before 9am) and return to campus late (i.e. after 3:35pm) on several days.

Fitness Flurry

In this fun and challenging Jestermeister course, students will experience a variety of fitness, wellness, and athletic-related activities that will help to propel their personal journey as student athletes. Fitness Flurry will encourage students to examine and actively work on improving their athletic goals by developing a holistic approach.

Students in this Jestermeister will engage in daily activities that will provide them with a wide variety of fitness and wellness offerings. These are targeted to create a toolbox that will help students to further their strength, agility, endurance, flexibility,

and balance. Examples of activities are Zumba on land and in water, yoga, boxing, Pilates, and Barre, HIIT exercises, nutrition and mental performance information sessions, reflexology, and more. Course members will also learn from multiple guest speakers from the sports medicine and nutrition fields and will be enrolled in a course to become Adult CPR/AED and First Aid certified. No prior experience in sports or athletics is required, but students in this course should be excited to engage in joyful movement each day. The facilitators are Ms. Parry, Ms. Shields, and Ms. Rojas.

Prerequisites: Students must be able to engage in significant physical activity.

Food for Thought

Have you ever wondered where our food comes from and how farmers feed everyone on our planet? Are you curious about what working on a farm feels like? If so, come and join us for exciting, hands-on farming experiences! We will be visiting and helping local farmers, hearing what inspires them, and seeing how their work connects to social justice. This trip will involve a two-day overnight stay. Students will help on a local farm, and cook their own meals with food sourced from local farms. Students will also meet and eat with people working at local food organizations and restaurants. The facilitators are Ms. Lovenduski, Ms. Duglin, and Ms. Davis.

Estimated cost: \$400

Prerequisites: Students with allergies to hay or fur-bearing animals may find this course challenging due to the widespread presence of these allergens on the farms. In addition, during the overnight stay, students will only be eating food produced on the farm; in March that mainly includes beef, pork, lamb, chicken, eggs, dairy products (yogurt, milk, sour cream, butter), root vegetables, fermented vegetables, honey, and maple syrup. Students with dietary restrictions are encouraged to speak with the course facilitators before enrolling. Participants will also need clothes and appropriate shoes for the farms (but we can help you find what you need).

A screencast with more information regarding this trip can be found [here](#).

Horsin' Around: Equine Science and Horses for Sport

Love horses? Can't get enough time in a barn? Always wanted to learn more? Join Horsin' Around! This Jestermeister will provide students with a look into some of the various aspects of the equine world. This course is designed so there is a little something for everyone. Experienced equestrians will get a chance to see some areas of the horse world they might not normally get to interact with such as a tour of an equine surgical facility and an equine rehabilitation center, visiting the museum of racing, working with a therapeutic riding & driving center, visiting an equine rescue center, getting a glimpse into the ISHA opportunities for continuing riding in college, visiting a hunt club and working with the beagles and foxhounds and/or riding and groundwork.

Students new to horses will get a chance to learn basic horse safety, how to groom a horse and basic horse care as well getting a nice introduction to the world of horses on the aforementioned trips. More experienced students will get a chance to share their knowledge with their peers as well. This course is primarily focused on horsemanship and will not be riding focused. There will be one opportunity to ride

during the course. This Jestermeister will not involve any overnights, but will have trips to various places nearby. Expect most days to have a 1-2 hour car ride to our destination for the day. The facilitators are Ms. Utterback, Ms. Robinson and Dr. Matthews. Some days are longer than others, but generally expect to be on campus from 8:30-4pm. There will likely be one longer day with a 5:30pm return to campus.

Prerequisites: No experience with horses is required. However, students will need sturdy footwear with a low heel that covers the ankle. Students should be comfortable around horses and dogs as well as other farm animals; students with allergies to hay or fur-bearing animals may find this course challenging due to the widespread presence of these allergens. Students must also be comfortable with long car rides on country back roads.

Medical Explorations

Are you interested in a career in medicine? Doctors and nurses are visible professionals you've no doubt met before, but there are many others that contribute to a successful patient outcome and overall public health. Join Ms. McGivern and Ms. Graham as we explore a variety of roles. There will be a mix of hands-on experiences (including learning basic first aid and CPR), opportunities to get to know professional providers both locally and internationally, and daily trips off campus to meet medical professionals and observe them in action, whether in a patient care office, hospital, lab, ambulance or other location. To succeed in this opportunity, bring your curiosity. It helps to not be overly squeamish. Early start times or late finish times are possible, depending upon off-campus trip scheduling. If you are interested but the schedule presents a challenge, please talk with Ms. McGivern! The facilitators are Ms. McGivern and Ms. Graham.

Miniature Warfare: The Saratoga Campaign, 1777

The year is 1777 and New York City is in British hands. The King's armies stand poised to crush the nascent American Republic as General John Burgoyne leads the (British) Canada Army south down Lake Champlain towards Albany. However, the campaign proved disastrous for the British. It resulted in the surrender of the entire (British) Canada Army and France's entry into the war, making it the turning point of the American Revolution.

In this Jestermeister, students will become the generals of this campaign and attempt either to destroy the American Revolt or resist British forces and turn the tide of war. Students will build and paint miniature regiments and assemble their forces on the tabletop to reenact the events leading up to and including the Battle of Saratoga. Throughout the week, students will navigate a series of small battles and make strategic decisions that will affect the campaign, the final battle, and possibly the war as a whole. Will the British change the course of history and seize Albany, or will the Americans hold off the King's legions yet again? The outcome is in your hands. The facilitators are Dr. O'Brien, Mr. Lorino, and Mr. Trask.

The Music Biz

In this Jestermeister, students will step into key roles of the music industry - functioning as songwriters, composers, arrangers, producers, recording artists, audio engineers, and performers. After touring local professional recording studios to see industry standards in action and attending a live Open Mic in Saratoga's legendary Caffe

Lena, we will conceptualize, write, and record an original song individually or in creative teams. Using the cloud-based Digital Audio Workstation BandLab.com, students will learn how to structure tracks, capture audio, and mix their final project into a fully realized demo by the end of the week.

The facilitators are Mr. Calabria and Mr. Atkins.

Pura Vida, Costa Rica

Embark on an unforgettable journey to Costa Rica, where travelers will leave their phones behind and fully immerse themselves in the country's natural beauty and vibrant culture. Explore stunning waterfalls, soak in hot springs, trek through lush rainforests, walk along pristine beaches, visit a local school, and experience the thrill of white water rafting. This is more than just a trip—it's an opportunity to practice mindfulness and live fully in the moment.

In Costa Rica, students will embrace the spirit of Pura Vida, celebrating simplicity, joy, and connection. Without technology's distractions, students engage in sensory training and language immersion, enhancing their Spanish through authentic interactions with locals. This adventure will help reduce stress, improve well-being, and foster personal growth, leaving you with a deep connection to nature and a richer appreciation for the world around us. Join us in Costa Rica to experience Pura Vida, find inner peace, and return home transformed. The facilitators are Dr. LeBel, Ms. Egan, and Ms. Petulla.

Estimated cost: \$3,900

Prerequisites: All participants must be currently enrolled in a Spanish class at Emma or have taken Spanish at Emma in a prior year. Priority will be given to students with Spanish III competency or higher, but students in Spanish II are encouraged to apply as well. All participants must have passed the swim test by October 15.

A screencast with more information regarding this trip can be found [here](#).

Reality Check: A Week of Experimental Shorts

Spend the week exploring film from its earliest origins to the age of AI. Each day, you'll learn a new experimental filming technique, view short works that use it, and then create your own short film using those tools. We'll work with stop motion, green screen, and AI, using smartphones or iPads to capture footage and iMovie for editing. Midweek, we'll take an off-campus trip to an art museum or film festival for inspiration. The week will culminate in a collaborative group project that brings together everything you've learned. No prior experience necessary! The facilitators are Ms. Valites and Ms. Curtin.

Sustainability: Get Inspired By Local Heroes!

Have you ever wondered how to sustainably address fashion, find outfits locally, choose green energy, or source healthy food? Would you like to meet and find inspiration from people who are making differences in our local community? In this local, hands-on Jestermeister, you will explore real-world sustainability through the lens of upcycling, solar energy, regenerative agriculture, fashion, and how to be smart with our resources. You will take day field trips every day, in the Capital District

and Catskills. You will also experiment with assembling a solar panel, with growing food, with upcycling clothes, among other activities. Get inspired about how you can make an impact right here in our own backyard! The facilitators are Mme. Sabatier, Ms. Sterantino and Ms. Brouker.

Taiwan Kaleidoscope: An Immersion in Nature, History, Culture, and Identity

Taiwan Kaleidoscope is a nine-day Chinese language and Taiwanese cultural immersion experience that invites students to discover Taiwan through multiple perspectives. Through hands-on workshops, cultural exchanges, historical site visits, outdoor adventures, and interactions with local communities and school, students will explore Taiwan's democracy, history, Indigenous cultures, natural environment, arts, education, industries, and culinary traditions. Moving beyond observation, students will actively engage in authentic cultural experiences while using Chinese in meaningful real-world contexts. As they encounter diverse stories, traditions, and ways of life, they will reflect on the role of language and culture in shaping identity, fostering connections across communities, and deepening their understanding of themselves and their place in an interconnected world. The facilitators are Ms. Hao, Dr. Riley, and Flawson.

Estimated cost: \$5,200

Prerequisites: Students who are currently enrolled in the Chinese program at Emma will get priority registration, followed by students who already finished the Chinese program at Emma, then heritage speakers (i.e. students who learned Chinese from their family but have not lived in a Chinese-speaking country), and finally native speakers.

A screencast with more information regarding this trip can be found [here](#).

Totes & T's: An Exploration in Screenprinting

In this Jestermerster, students will learn and experiment with the art of screenprinting on both paper and fabric! You will learn multiple different ways to make images including abstract, hand-drawn images and photos. The course will also consist of learning to screenprint on different surfaces, including t-shirts and tote bags. There will be an adventure to some local thrift stores to find some unique items to add your own personal touch too! Students will reflect on the process through sharing their thoughts and images through group discussions and personal notes. The facilitators are Ms. Kralovic and Ms. LaSalle.

#TouchGrass

Take a break from your device and explore different ways of engaging with nature, both hands on and out in the world. Students will propagate seeds and cuttings, build terrariums and kokadamas, construct bonsai, select a houseplant to study and care for, and make macramé plant hangers to display their new plants. Students will also visit plant nurseries and conservatories, enjoy lunch at a few plant-filled restaurants around town, and learn about how people make connecting with nature a significant part of their lives through small-scale farming, hiking, and native plant cultivation. The facilitators are Ms. Bennett, Sarah Mlnarczyk, and Ms. Ross.

Unleashing the Senses: Travel Edition

Get ready to experience Boston in a whole new way! Unleashing the Senses is a four-day creative adventure that invites students to explore art, science, music, nature, and culture through all five senses. Students will visit some of Boston's most exciting cultural institutions while learning to look closer, listen deeper, notice more, and see the extraordinary in the everyday. Through immersive experiences, lively discussions, observation, reflection, and creative experimentation, students will develop their sensory observation skills and discover how the world around them can become a source of artistic inspiration. The trip will culminate in time to transform these experiences into original creative work and share what they have discovered. Come curious. Leave seeing the world differently. The facilitators are Ms. Slaughter, Dr. Spiro-Allen, Ms. Schmidt, and Ms. Wilkins.

Estimated cost: None! This course is made possible thanks to a generous gift from a donor. Students will need to bring enough money to cover the cost of their own lunches while in Boston. Students are also welcome to apply for Student Opportunity Funds to cover the cost of lunches, if needed.

Prerequisites: This course is open to 10th-12th grade students only. Participants should have one visual course and one performing arts course completed or in progress to register. As they register for Jestermeister in the fall, they can be in one course in the fall and plan to be in the other in the spring semester.

A screencast with more information regarding this trip can be found [here](#).

Woodworking

Do you want to learn woodworking and gain DIY skills that will last a lifetime? In this Jestermeister, you will learn how to use power tools and use them to make projects out of wood. You don't need any prior experience. We'll start with the basics and progress to more advanced techniques. After completing two introductory projects, you will design and build one of your choosing. Need something to organize your desk, room, or locker? Want a hand-crafted box to store your valuables? Want to gain skills that will help you build theater set pieces or props, create art, or build functional pieces? This Jestermeister is for you. The facilitators are Mr. Bardos, Mx. Robison, and Ms. Mroczka.

The Writer's Retreat

Do you like creative writing but have trouble finding the time to focus on your craft? Do you envision seeing your name trickle down the spine of a best-seller? The Writer's Retreat offers students—no, writers—the opportunity to step away from their regular Emma lives and enter a world of words and imagination. Over the course of the week, writers will work in whatever creative genre they'd like—fiction, poetry, playwriting, screenplay, or nonfiction—writing both in community and on their own and sharing their work in a supportive community of fellow writers. We will also take a day trip to shop for books and sip on coffee, visit with a local writer, and present our work in an off-campus reading. The facilitators are Mr. Druckenmiller and Ms. Wild.

Yoga and Meditation Retreat

Do you need to slow down and take a step back from your everyday stresses? Are you interested in yoga and meditation? In this Jestermeister, we will take the time to

foster a calm and contemplative atmosphere as we explore common yoga asanas (poses), the fundamentals of yoga philosophy, and mindfulness/meditation practices. Students can expect to spend time in a technology-free setting, moving and meditating, reflecting in creative ways, discussing their experiences with peers, and building community through games and other fun activities. This is not a “desk learning” course, but we will take a little time to study the history of yoga’s roots, and to talk about the appropriation of yoga by the Western fitness industry. We hope that students will be able to use this week to experiment with lots of different ideas and techniques, so that they can incorporate the ones that they find useful into their everyday lives. This course is for all body types and abilities, and for people with any level of experience with yoga and meditation. It is especially geared toward people who are new to these practices. The facilitators are Ms. Mariah and Ms. Del Brocco.