

BLAIR ACADEMY

— INTERSESSION COURSE CATALOG —

2026–2027



HELLO, BUCS!

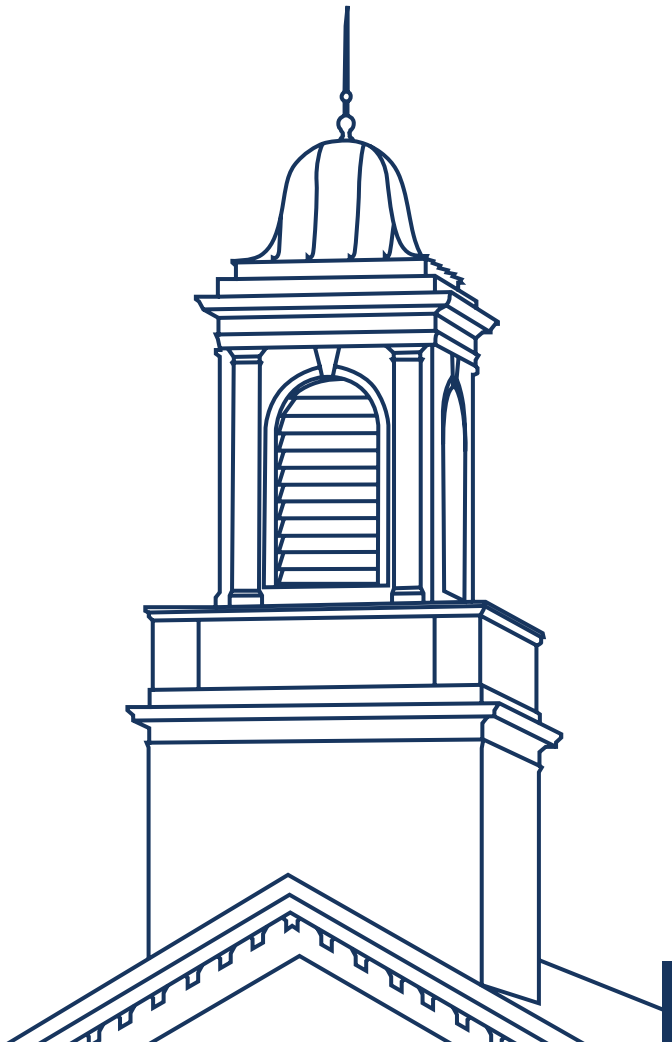
We are pleased to present this year's Intersession Course Catalog. Your teachers have worked diligently for the past several months to invent, redesign and curate the following unique courses for you!

You will soon have the opportunity to fill out a Google Form to indicate your top several choices. The form is distributed based on seniority, so 12th graders will have the option to choose first, then the subsequent grades. BEFORE you choose your options, please take the time to read through all of the courses and their descriptions, and ask the instructors questions if you have any.

Please keep in mind that you may not get your first or second choice, but all of the courses being offered are fantastic opportunities to learn something new and make new connections. These courses could lead you to discover new interests, new ways of thinking and seeing the world through different perspectives.

Show care for yourself and your learning this year by spending time reading through every course option.

—Mr. Manni-Brennan
Director of Intersession





COURSES WITH ASSOCIATED FEES

Each of the following courses involves some kind of regional, overnight travel or a certification. Therefore, any student who chooses to enroll in one of these courses will be charged the fee listed with the course description. Financial aid is available and will be prorated to match the percentage of financial aid received for tuition.

EXPLORING THE NATIONAL PARKS OF THE EAST COAST

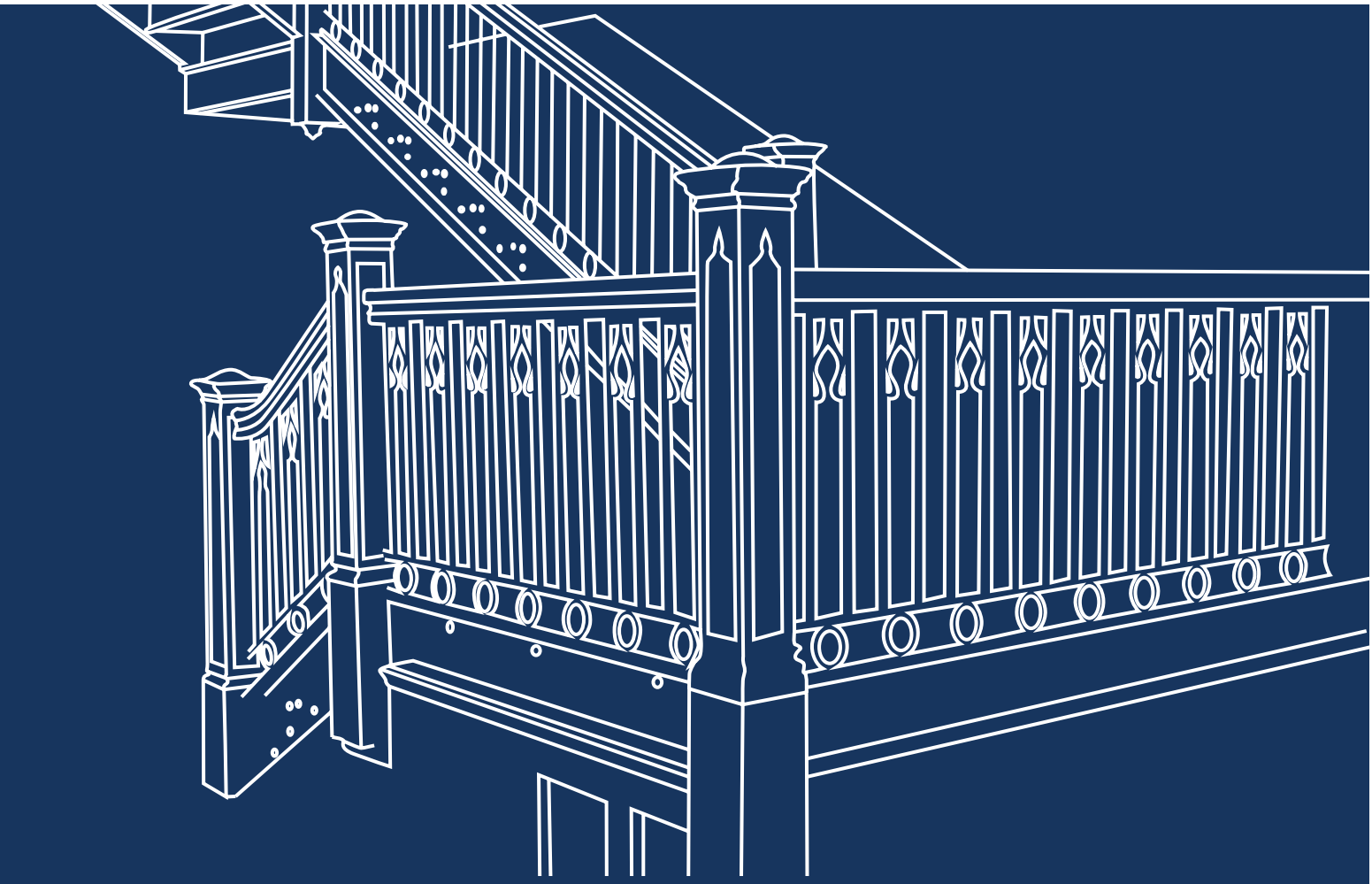
Embark on an immersive Intersession journey through notable East Coast national parks. Through field exploration, students compare diverse flora, fauna and geological features while mastering essential outdoor skills, including navigation, excursion planning and trail leadership. This experiential course challenges students to become one with nature and step outside their comfort zones to build resilience and teamwork. Students will investigate park history, human environmental impacts and sustainable stewardship, discovering how individual and collective action can preserve our natural world long after the trail ends.

Instructors: *Mrs. Hadden & Mrs. Donlon*
Cost: *$600/student*

KEEP CALM AND GUARD ON

Join this course to gain a better understanding of fire, water and EMT safety techniques. You will get your lifeguarding certification over the first three days of the course (a swim test will be administered in January). Afterward, we will analyze different media pertaining to lifeguards and go on a day trip to a museum where you will learn about other types of first responders and the responsibilities that people in these professions carry. Our course will culminate in a presentation to the School where students will demonstrate the different types of saves that they learned during their certification. Have you ever thought "We're never gonna use this in the real world" while sitting in math class? Do you feel the strong pull of the fresh air and running water but fear the elements? Are you looking for an amazing and relevant Intersession course that will teach you lifelong skills? If so, this is the course for you!

Instructors: *Ms. Rice & Mr. Dollhopf*
Cost: *$300/student*



AVAILABLE COURSES

AFROLATINIDAD: ROOTS, RHYTHMS AND RESISTANCE ACROSS LATIN AMERICA

This course explores the rich and diverse experiences of African-descended populations throughout Latin America and the Caribbean. Through documentaries, guided research and experiential learning—including field trips, food, music and dance—students will uncover the cultural, historical and artistic legacies of Afro-Latin communities. From the Garifuna of Central America to the Afro-Ecuadorians of the Chota Valley and the Bomba and Plena traditions of Puerto Rico, just to name a few, students will analyze how African heritage continues to shape Latin American identity. The course culminates in a student-designed multimedia project celebrating Afrolatinidad.

Instructors: *Mr. Ince & Mr. Chery*

AIRPLANE MODE: STORIES HIDING IN PLAIN SIGHT

Have you ever wanted to use your technology to create something you're proud of? In "Airplane Mode," you'll uncover stories at Blair and bring them to life through photography, sound and creative projects. Explore familiar places with fresh eyes, interview people and experiment with tools in the maker space. Along the way, discover how AI can help you ask better questions and develop your own ideas. Working individually or in small teams, you'll create a physical or multimedia piece to share with the Blair community in a final exhibition. Bring your curiosity and get ready to make something worth sharing.

Instructors: *Mr. Coronado & Dr. Mundo*

THE ART OF QUILTING

How can quilting serve us individually and as a community in terms of practicality and artistry? We will start by discussing the art form and history of quilt-making and take a trip to a local museum to learn more about quilting's history in New Jersey. Then, we will learn about the anatomy of a sewing machine and how quilters use them to make quilts. Finally, we will put together everything we learned in a final project: finding a story to tell and telling it with your own homemade quilt! No experience necessary.

Instructors: *Ms. Schrope, Mrs. Conforti-Browse & Ms. Manstein*

BACKSTAGE PASS

The stage is set, the lights come up, the costumes dazzle the audience. Each of these elements is critical in creating the immersive experience that is live theatre. But how much work really goes into designing a set, light plot, costumes and more? Join the Ryersons as we explore the backstage world of dramatic production! This course includes a Friday night trip to Lehigh to see *Eurydice* and an all-day Sunday trip to New York City to see *Hadestown*. For our final product, students will design their own original set or costumes for a show of their choosing.

Instructors: *Mrs. & Mr. Ryerson*

BAKING OUR STORIES

How can a baked food tell the story of a family, culture, place or personal memory? In this hands-on course, come ready to find out as you share recipes and stories connected to your family and community. Along the way, you will learn baking techniques, kitchen safety, recipe planning and collaboration, and the course will culminate in sharing more about who you are, through your bakes, with the Blair community. Tell the story of you through the foods you love! No experience is required; students are encouraged to join with curiosity and an adventurous mindset about food.

Instructors: *Mrs. Shaw & Ms. Beccarelli*

BLAIR PROJECT SPRINT

This is not an Intersession with a map—but you may go quite a distance in your own creative process. You can go any direction you want for eight days to leverage some of Blair's greatest minds and resources to solve a problem of interest. Creativity springs forth from need and connection so either collaboratively or independently, you'll spend your Intersession diving deeply within the framing question you select to find and demonstrate an answer through skills you already have including—but not limited to—writing, engineering, art, music, research…or skills you build to meet the requirements of your vision.

Instructors: *Mr. Molteni, Mr. Wagner, Dr. Abascal & Mr. Moore*
Proposal Required

BREAKING THE BRAIN OF A FRUIT FLY

When Google published an entire mapped brain of a fruit fly, researchers began experimenting with scientific opportunities. And then, regular people began to teach the digital brain to play games, parallel park, dance and trade stocks. We'll explore how the chemistry of the brain allows for decision making, and applying it to a digital brain through partnership with large language models (ChatGPT and/or Claude). Through applying emphasis to dopamine, serotonin, cortisol and octopamine receptors, we'll design applications or tools that allow the relatively simple brain of a fruit fly to perform tasks in a digital landscape.

Instructors: *Ms. Smith & Mr. Cholnoky*

CHESS: THE MENTAL GAME!

Let's play chess! In this course, you'll be introduced to the game of chess as a tool for developing critical thinking, concentration, mindfulness and problem-solving skills. As you learn to play, you'll also practice the essential life skills of focus, nervous system regulation under pressure, mindset evaluation and reconstruction, and intentional presence. You will record and analyze your own chess games, practicing sportsmanship and decision-making while having fun! At the end of the class, we'll have an open challenge to the School as our final project. Are you up for the task?

Instructors: *Ms. O'Neil & Mr. Facciani*

A COMMON THREAD

In "A Common Thread" we will explore the complex intersection of clothing, communication and performance. You'll challenge the silent runway by creating your own piece and developing a story that communicates some social, political or personal meaning. Working with Ms. G, you'll learn the skills to create a garment true to your vision, and working with Mrs. Carter, you'll give the piece a voice through reflection. The week will culminate in a gallery walk where your creative visions of art and performance will converge!

Instructors: *Mrs. Carter & Ms. Glosenger*

DATA ANALYSIS AND MODELING: FROM FUNDAMENTALS TO AI

This course introduces students to applied data science, traditional mathematical modeling and AI-driven analytics. Students will first learn foundational methods for manually analyzing data and building predictive models. They will then explore how to responsibly use AI tools for data collection, cleaning and model testing, culminating in team preparation

for the prestigious MathWorks Math Modeling (M3) Challenge.

Instructor: *Mrs. Chen*
Limited Space

DEAR YOU, WITH LOVE FROM MR. HARVARD AND COACH LOHR

In a world of texts, emails and instant messages, the art of letter writing is slowly fading. Join us as we bring back the magic of putting pen to paper. In this course, you will explore the power of handwritten letters through gratitude, storytelling, reflection and meaningful connection. From heartfelt notes to letters that make someone's day, you will discover how a few thoughtful words can leave a lasting impression. Grab a pen, find your voice and rediscover the joy of sending something worth keeping.

Instructors: *Mr. Harvard & Ms. Lohr*

DUNGEONS AND DRAGONS LIVE PLAY: SHARE YOUR STORY

Create a Dungeons and Dragons live play. You will play Dungeons and Dragons in a group with your own characters and create your own story. You will also go into the behind-the-scenes work that goes into filming and producing this ever-growing form of media. The play sessions will be recorded and edited to create a show that tells the story of the table. Along the way, we will explore the potential of role-playing games from therapeutic to cultural as research continues to emerge in this still new field of structured play.

Instructors: *Mr. Patzelt, Mr. Link & Mr. Uhlig*

ENGINEERING WITH PAPER

Why does a piece of paper flutter to the floor but a paper airplane flies well? Where and when did the art of origami originate? We will research ways and reasons to use paper for our mini-projects, experimenting with different designs, developing our building skills and testing the desired outcomes. This includes the engineering cycle called "iteration" as we progress through the steps of research-design-build-test-evaluate-redesign, etc. The final project will be on the order of a paper track marble roller coaster, or something equivalent, given several design and performance criteria. Who can design and construct the highest and fastest roller coaster?

Instructors: *Mr. Thatcher & Mr. Anthony*

FILIPINO MEXICAN CULTURAL CUISINE

Explore the shared roots of Filipino and Mexican comfort foods in a hands-on culinary course. Grounded in the historical Manila-Acapulco trade, students will understand the historical Manila-Acapulco Galleon Trade routes that linked Filipino and Mexican culinary traditions, confidently source and evaluate specialty ingredients through guided market and restaurant immersions, and master essential kitchen techniques, enabling students to execute both authentic regional menus and innovative cross-cultural fusion dishes with professional precision.

Instructors: *Mr. Clavel, Mr. Gitomer & Ms. Fleming*

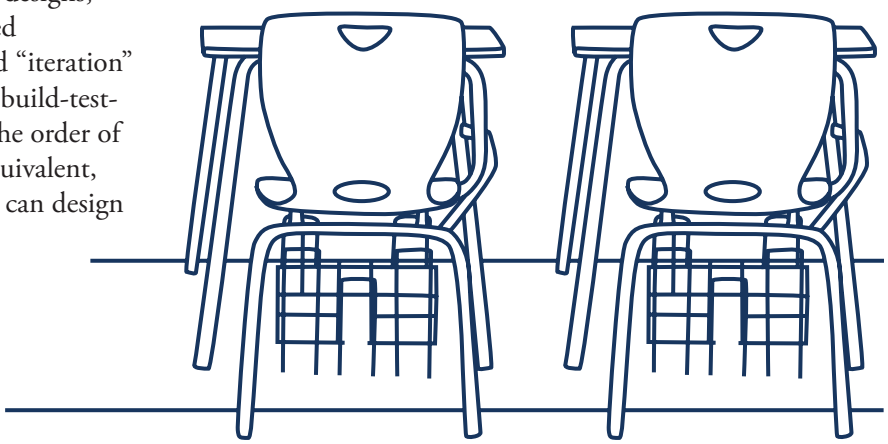
FINANCE AND GLOBAL MARKETS

Partnering with "Train the Street," this course will give you a highly tailored finance immersion program normally offered only to Wall Street professionals. This course is for students interested in investment banking, consulting, financial planning and analysis (FP&A), private equity, entrepreneurship and corporate finance. We will dig into complex topics and emerge with a real understanding of how financial markets support an economy. You will also work with outside professionals both on campus and in New York City.

Instructors: *Mr. Beck & Mr. Pagotto*

GAMING FOR LIFE

Ever wanted to be an entrepreneur? Railroad tycoon? How about a dream catcher? Or superhero? Or oligarch? Or gambler? Do you like to use your wits to outsmart your opponents? Do you like to work with teammates to create the best outcome? We play games for lots of reasons: to try on roles outside our usual experience, to socialize, to compete, to coordinate and cooperate with teammates, and, mostly, to have fun. In this course, we will bypass the immense popularity of digital games and instead take on the rapidly growing world of board games. Why not exercise your mind and have fun in the



process by learning a dozen or more critically-acclaimed games that will hook you for life?

Instructors: *Mr. Devaney & Mr. Parauda*

GLASS BREAKERS

This hands-on course introduces students to the art and craft of stained glass. Participants will learn the complete process from start to finish, including selecting patterns, cutting and shaping glass, applying copper foil and soldering pieces into a finished design. Along the way, students will explore color, texture and light as they gain confidence with both the artistic and technical aspects of the medium. By the end of the course, each student will complete a unique stained glass project to take home while gaining the foundational skills needed for future glasswork.

Instructors: *Ms. Chamberlain & Mrs. Link*

GOT FEAR?!

Have you ever wondered what scares people? What inspires or creates fear? Have you ever considered what scares you? Join us as we explore the concept of human fear through the lens of horror media. You should be comfortable watching one to two horror films, several excerpts from various horror media, and exploring the fears alive within said media. You will encounter pictures, podcasts, video games and fear-related articles. Beware: This course is recommended for students who want to experience and dissect horror content and want to develop their own fear concept through storyboarding, script writing and world-building.

Instructors: *Ms. Shokr & Mr. Johnson*

HARLEM EXPLORATION

Explore the history, art and music of Harlem through an immersive visit to the community, conversations with local guides and literature. After visiting and reading literature from the Harlem Renaissance, you will be asked to reflect on the confluence of place, history and artistic aesthetic. In the same way creators in the Harlem Renaissance were experiencing collaborative inspiration, we will explore the intersections of different art forms through that collaboration and creation. For your final project, you'll further research a particular art form, artist or historical moment, and you may also choose to emulate the artistic style inspired by your exploration.

Instructors: *Mr. Compton & Ms. Gardner*

LORE ACCURATE NONSENSE: MYTH ME OUTSIDE

Do you enjoy *Percy Jackson and the Olympians*? Do you have thoughts on Christopher Nolan's *The Odyssey, Jujutsu Kaisen* or *Black Myth: Wukong*? Have you ever wondered about mythologies from around the world? Have you ever wondered who would win in a fight between world mythology's most obscure gods and heroes? Then "Lore Accurate Nonsense" is for you! In this course, we will explore primary and secondary sources, modern adaptations of gods and heroes and more. Who would win in a fight? It's time to battle!

Instructors: *Dr. Carroll & Ms. James*

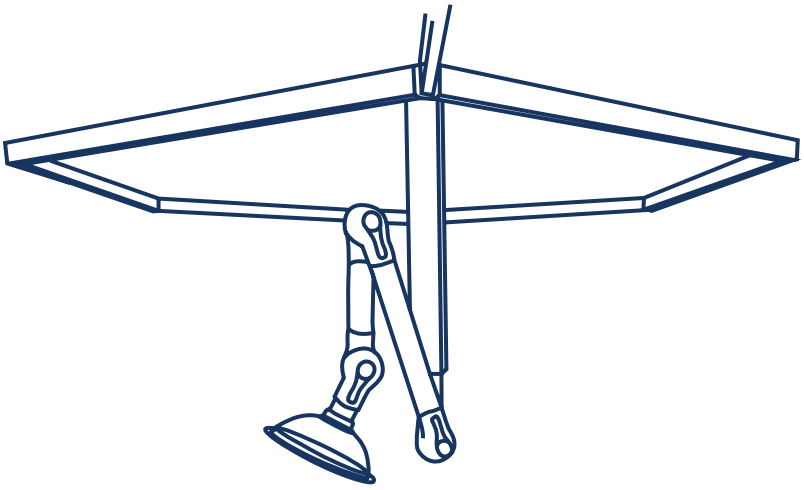
PROFIT AND PUNISHMENT

Join us as we examine the for-profit prison system in the United States and its intersections with mental health and community well-being. Students will explore how privatization, inequity and social stigma can shape the experiences of incarcerated individuals and their families. Through media, discussions, guest speakers and creative projects, students will analyze the moral, psychological and civic implications of incarceration and consider community-based alternatives to the carceral state.

Instructors: *Mr. & Mrs. Thomas*

PURL AND PRESENT

Discover the timeless art, history and practice of textile creation in this hands-on, immersive course. "Purl and Present" will introduce students to the foundational techniques of yarn manipulation using both traditional knitting needles and hand-knitting techniques (finger and arm knitting). Beyond developing practical crafting skills, students will explore the rich history of fiber work across global cultures—from utility and historical commerce to modern artistic expression. Through discussions and reflective projects, the course



examines the true value of handmade textiles in an era of mass production, emphasizing sustainable craft, labor appreciation, and the emotional and economic worth of artisan-made goods.

Instructors: *Ms. Ehrenwerth & Mrs. Patterson*

THE SOUNDTRACK OF NEW YORK CITY

Go beyond the Spotify playlist and step into the living history of American sound. In this course, you will explore how New York City's legendary venues—from historic jazz halls to world-famous concert stages—have shaped cultural movements and defined musical genres. Through critical listening, historical analysis and active discussion, you'll examine the artistic and social impact of these landmark institutions. The experience culminates in a trip to New York City, where we'll experience live performances in the venues that made music history.

Instructors: *Mrs. Pagotto & Mr. Kaiser*

STONEWALL TO GROUND ZERO: DESIGNING REMEMBRANCE

How do societies memorialize both tragedy and triumph through design, architecture and public art? Students will examine memorials across New York City (NYC) and beyond—from the 9/11 Memorial & Museum to the Stonewall National Monument—analyzing why designers choose specific materials, forms, and sites to shape memory and emotion. Through guided visits to memorials in and around NYC, students will study the design language of remembrance firsthand. The course culminates in a final project: Each student conceives, designs and presents an original plan for a memorial of their own choosing.

Instructors: *Mr. & Mrs. Sykes*

STORMS AND STRUGGLES: HOW NATURAL DISASTERS SHAPED THE AMERICAN EXPERIENCE

Natural disasters have shaped American history, leaving behind more than physical destruction. From hurricanes and wildfires to floods and tornadoes, these events have exposed deep-rooted inequalities, challenged government institutions and transformed communities. In this course, students will investigate some of the most significant natural disasters in modern American history, including Hurricanes Katrina, Harvey and Helene, examining how environmental forces intersect with race, class, geography and public policy. Through historical case studies, documentaries, firsthand accounts, guest speakers and interactive activities, students will explore why certain communities are disproportionately affected by natural disasters and how government agencies, local organizations and individuals respond in times of crisis. Ultimately, this course challenges students to look beyond the destruction and consider the larger societal questions these events raise about equity, responsibility and resilience.

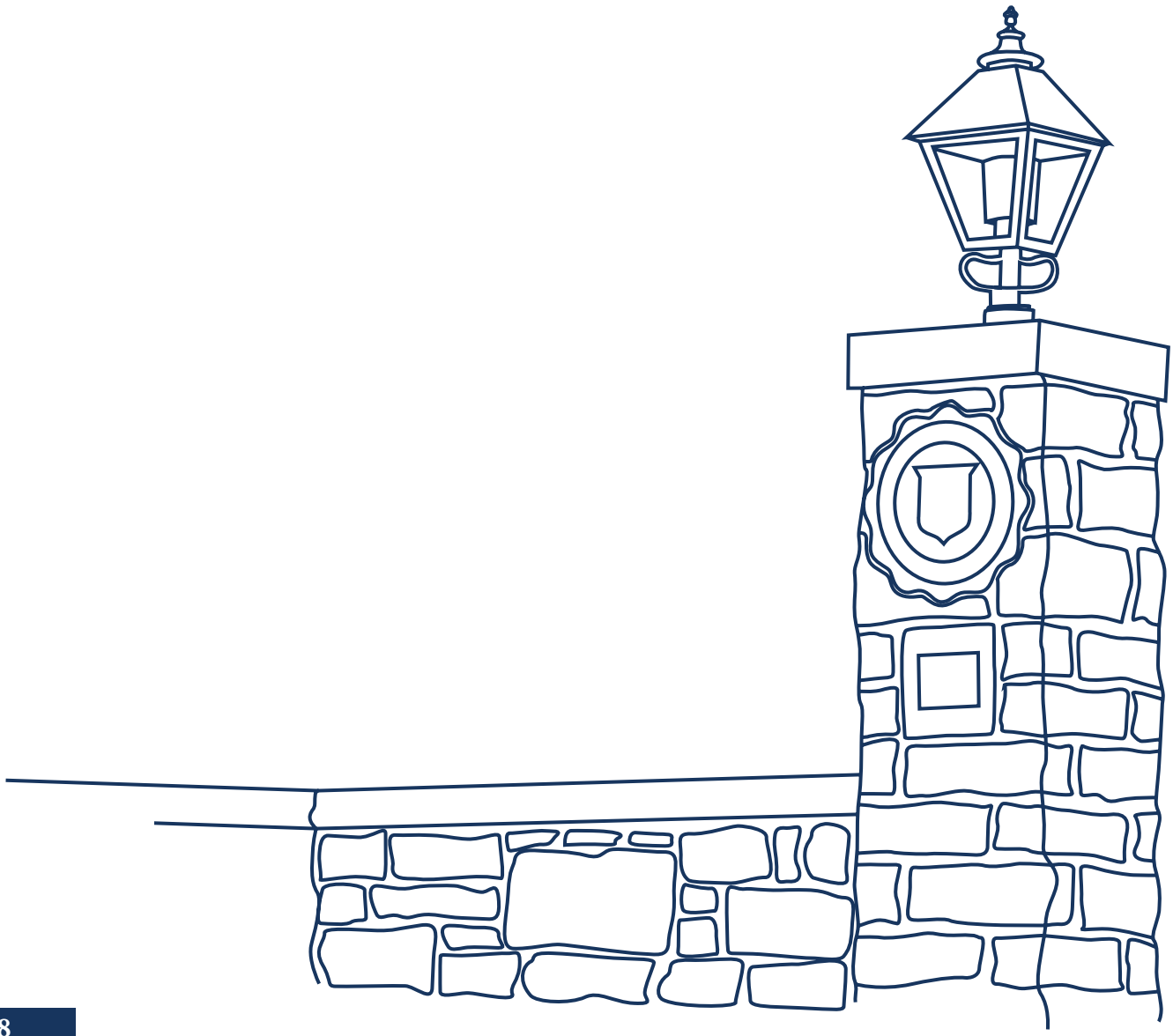
Instructors: *Mr. Grady & Mr. Thornton*

WOMEN IN SPORTS

From Wilma Rudolph to Ilona Maher, the landscape of women's sports has changed immensely throughout history and is still in a state of flux. In this course, you'll explore the history, challenges and triumphs of women in sports, and the barriers we still face today. Through interactive discussions, media analysis and creative projects, you will develop a deeper understanding of gender equity in athletics and discuss your current and soon-to-be favorite female athletes. The course encourages critical thinking, empathy and advocacy, empowering you to recognize and challenge inequality in sports and beyond. The final project allows you to creatively express what you have learned and propose meaningful change.

Instructors: *Ms. Doldoorian & Mrs. Mantegna*

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