

English Department Philosophy

The English discipline offers students a lens through which to more deeply understand themselves and the world around them and to communicate those understandings to others.

What we do

Our mission is to help students develop skill and confidence in three areas:

- 1) **Critical thinking.** Students learn to react thoughtfully to texts. They inquire, research, analyze, and propose and defend arguments about abstract ideas, as well as moral and ethical issues emerging from texts of all kinds.
- 2) **Communication.** Students learn to communicate meaningfully in written and spoken discourse. Effective communication skills include mastery of narrative and argumentative structure, sentence construction, tone, and grammar, as well as sharing and responding to ideas and perspectives during class discussions.
- 3) **Awareness.** Students develop their awareness of the individual and others on a local and global scale, finding connections and building empathy with those unlike themselves.

How we do it

Through our courses at every level, we provide students access to the following:

- 1) **Texts** that are relevant, meaningful, and broadening. They emphasize the richness of language in its capacity to communicate and to spark joy in reading.
- 2) **Writing opportunities** that are varied and authentic. They emphasize students' ownership of ideas and structure and encourage positive academic risk-taking.
- 3) Opportunities for **discussion and collaboration** with peers, both formal and informal, that emphasize a balance of listening to, sharing, and exchanging ideas.

Core Concepts & Skills

Concepts and skills covered in this course align with the Reading, Writing, Speaking & Listening Standards of the [Massachusetts English Language Arts and Literacy Framework](#).

Course-End Learning Objectives

- Students will demonstrate an ability to generate and organize ideas and then draft and revise written pieces for clarity, coherence, and awareness of purpose and audience.
- Students will demonstrate writing skills for personal/creative writing.
- Students will demonstrate command of the conventions of English grammar and usage.
- Students will demonstrate how literary form and content determine meaning in a text.
- Students will understand the literary, thematic, historical, cultural and/or subject-driven context of each text and its connection to their lives.
- Students will demonstrate oral communication skills to present information so that listeners can follow a line of reasoning that is appropriate to the purpose and audience.

Essential Questions

How do authors respond to the social, cultural, and political conditions of their times?

What is the “natural state” of mankind?

In what ways do the rules of society reflect, amplify, or conceal what is at our core?

What is a leader’s role in society? What should people expect of good leadership?

What allows some people to resist an oppressive authority?

Why do humans pursue knowledge?

What do we risk and sacrifice for progress?

Is progress worth the risk it entails?

When considered in the context of the world’s future, what responsibility do we have when pursuing knowledge?

How do people come to understand themselves and what is “at their core”?

How does a legacy of power, colonization, and enslavement influence relationships between people and nations?
How do literary representations of groups of people reflect and shape our perceptions of them and of ourselves?
How does a person find “home” in an increasingly globalized world?
What identities are permanent and which do we have the power to change?
When is loyalty to an idea or tradition an asset? At what point does it become a liability?
What does it take for a person to rebel against the conventions he/she has been taught?
How do changing relationships within and between nations affect the lives of individuals?

Representative Core Texts

Shakespearean Play

Romantic or Victorian Novel

Dystopian Novel

Non-Western Perspective on British Literature

One full-length work written in or about Britain

Macbeth

Jekyll & Hyde

Frankenstein

Pride and Prejudice

Picture of Dorian Gray

1984

Lord of the Flies

Homegoing

Purple Hibiscus

Exit West

Angela's Ashes

Annie John

Beowulf

Grendel

The Canterbury Tales

Sir Gawain and the Green Knight

The Ghost Map

The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie

The Remains of the Day

Silas Marner

A Man for All Seasons

The Importance of Being Earnest