

### 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 these 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:

- 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 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 and a knowledge of rhetorical methods to present information so that listeners can follow a line of reasoning that is appropriate to the purpose and audience.
- Students will demonstrate command of the conventions of English grammar and usage.

## Course Essential Questions

- How do authors use literature to create perspective?
- How do we understand another person's identity?

## Unit Essential Questions

### *Privilege:*

- How can understanding privilege increase perspective and empathy?
- What cultural, familial, and environmental factors influence an individual's sense of self?
- How can shared experiences with others promote self-understanding?
- How do we combat systemic racism and oppression?

***Morality:***

- How does the individual's capacity to respond to adversity define that individual?
- How can oppression disrupt the family structure?
- How can individuals and society heal from traumatic pasts? How is trauma inherited?
- How can individuals overcome restrictive, or limiting points of view?

***Tradition:***

- To what extent does family/heritage/legacy define the individual?
- To what extent are we defined by our choices? By the language we have used?
- How does history (familial, cultural, national) inform one's sense of purpose?
- How can individuals be resilient in the face of restrictive societal norms and structures?
- What are the barriers to an individual's sense of belonging?

**Representative Core Texts**

*The Great Gatsby* by F. Scott Fitzgerald

*Salvage the Bones* by Jesmyn Ward

*Beloved* by Toni Morrison

*The Things They Carried* by Tim O'Brien

*Hamlet* by William Shakespeare

*Tess of the D'Urbervilles* by Thomas Hardy

*Jane Eyre* by Charlotte Bronte

*Fences* by August Wilson

*Interpreter of Maladies* by Jhumpa Lahiri

*Handmaid's Tale* by Margaret Atwood

*The Bluest Eye* by Toni Morrison

*Joy Luck Club* by Amy Tan

*Death of a Salesman* by Arthur Miller

*Wuthering Heights* by Emily Bronte