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 skills 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.
- Demonstrate writing skills for personal/creative writing.
- Demonstrate how literary form and content determine meaning in a text.
- Understand the literary, thematic, historical, cultural and/or subject-driven context of each text and its connection to their lives.
- 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.
- Demonstrate command of the conventions of English grammar and usage.

Senior Project Overview

Components of the project include research, an annotated bibliography, an interview, a written synthesis, an oral presentation with a visual or audio component, and participation in the Senior Project Exposition.

Course Essential Questions

How does engaging with the ideas of artists and writers over time help individuals become agents of social change?

What can an individual do to effect positive change in their community?

Representative Core Texts

Between the World and Me by Ta-Nehisi Coates
Handmaid's Tale by Margaret Atwood
Salvage the Bones by Jesmyn Ward
The Things They Carried by Tim O'Brien

Interpreter of Maladies by Jhumpa Lahiri
The Great Gatsby by F. Scott Fitzgerald
Nonfiction choice read (project-based)