

English Senior Electives

Stuck deciding among which English courses to take? Check out some thoughts from the teachers of each class below.

Creative Writing: *Thoughts from Mrs. Jepsen*

What is Creative Writing?

Creative Writing is designed for students who like to write with imagination. We do not write traditional essays. This class is for students who want to explore writing beyond the traditional essay, including memoirs, scrapbooks, fiction, reviews, travel writing, humor, original lyrics and music using Garage Band, and poetry. Students are encouraged to design their own writing projects and topics.

What kind of students best succeed in the class?

Students who are self-directed and desire freedom with their writing. Students who are comfortable sharing their work with others and encouraging their peers to be the best version of themselves. We are each others' cheerleaders. We write for a real audience, and this includes submitting our work to writing contests and *Teenink*.

What kinds of things do you do in the class and what books do you read (or films do you watch)?

- We are always journaling.
- We go on a field trip to the American Writers Museum on Michigan Avenue.
- No Red Ink is an important tool to improve our writing. We use it to explore sentence structure and sentence variety in addition to improving our grammar.
- We enrich our writing with small art projects.
- The first quarter of the class is built around writing our memoirs. We read the memoir [The Glass Castle](#) by Jeanette Walls as our mentor text. We watch the film *Juno* to learn about the role of narration in memoir writing. This is a non-fiction unit when we write about events from our lives.
- We watch the film *Stranger than Fiction* for our fiction unit. Students write short stories - collaborative horror stories, realistic fiction, science fiction, dystopian fiction, and even romance. Our stories can even be short graphic "novels" or comic strips.
- We write poems/songs and share them in class Coffeehouses. We improve the

volume of our Snaps.



Sometimes we watch the film *Il Postino*.

· We write humorous nonfiction and satire using articles from The Onion as mentor texts.

- We write reviews of all sorts: movie reviews, music reviews, food reviews, and reviews in the form of Listicles.

What potential career options come from this class, or what skills will come from your course that will help students in their future career/lives?

Students who want to pursue any career that involves creativity and/or writing, including journalism, would benefit from Creative Writing. Students who plan to pursue a degree in art also benefit from this class. The most common feedback I receive from students who come back to visit is, "Creative Writing forced me to come up with ideas on my own. This helped me so much in college because the professors don't give you the topics." Student comments from this year include: "I learned so much about myself in Creative Writing. I used to hate writing and now I actually like it. I loved that we could write about whatever we wanted. " Students will also improve their vocabulary, for we focus on using vivid verbs, imagery, figurative language and strong diction in our writing.

Anything else that would be good for kids to know?

This is a class for students who crave more independence in their writing.

Dramatic Arts: *Thoughts from Mrs. Truffa*

1. What is your class and why should students take it?

This is a performance based class in the areas of improvisation, scene and character study, writing monologues and scripts. In addition to these performance based areas you will also learn theatre basics and theatre history.

2. What kind of students best succeed in the class?

This is a class for students who want to be a team player to develop a tight knit classroom community of performers. This is for the students who listen, take direction and constructive feedback to improve their performance. This is for students who feel comfortable being asked to be vulnerable and supportive of one another. This is for students who like to take risks!

3. What kinds of things do you do in the class and what books do you read (or films do you watch)?

We learn about different genres of theatre, and how they came to be by learning about theatre history. We read plays like "Fences" and short scenes from various types of plays. We write and read each other's short monologues and/or scenes. We also watch many different types of plays and short scenes throughout the semester.

4. What potential career options come from this class, or what skills will come from your course that will help students in their future career/lives?

This class is great for students who want to go into a career that requires creativity, problem-solving, and collaboration--which is any modern day career. It is incredibly beneficial for students who want to go into careers that involve public speaking as students will be performing in front of audiences.

5. Anything else that would be good for kids to know?

Every student that has taken this class LOVES it. They have told me how much fun they had throughout the semester. They enter my class a bit nervous, but excited to try something new. They leave feeling accomplished because they have done something that pushes them out of their comfort zone, while at the same time they worked to build a tight knit community with their classmates and teacher.

Film and Literature: *Thoughts from Mr. Walery*

What is your class and why should students take it?

Literature and Film is a class that looks at the visual art of film making as another way of telling a story. Films have plots, characters, and conflicts just like literature, but filmmakers get to share their stories on screen using multiple cinematic techniques to enhance it for the viewer. Students should take this class to explore the world of film and see its similarities and differences with literature.

What kind of students best succeed in the class?

Students that succeed in this class enjoy a balance of watching films and reading literature. We will explore the artform of filmmaking, but being interested in that is not a prerequisite for this course. Novice film buffs are welcome with open arms. Attendance is important as we watch and analyze a large number of film clips and about 4-5 full length films. Watching these clips or films on your own is not the same as breaking them down, analyzing, and discussing them in class with your peers.

What kinds of things do you do in the class and what books do you read (or films do you watch)?

We study 7 major cinematic techniques used in filmmaking

We read short stories (*Secret Life of Walter Mitty*, *Occurrence at Owl Creek Bridge*, *Minority Report*) that have been adapted to film

Do a novel and film study of Stephen King's *Rita Hayworth and the Shawshank Redemption*

Write an independent Research Paper based on a classic American Film of your choice

What potential career options come from this class, or what skills will come from your course that will help students in their future career/lives?

This course will change the way you watch movies for the rest of your life, you will start to notice things you used to take for granted.

Any student who is interested in a career in a creative field (film making, producing, acting, directing, theater, drama) inspiring artists or just movie buffs will love this class.

Anything else that would be good for kids to know?

What other class do you get to pick a film and watch it on your own for a Research Paper?

Come join us for a deeper dive into the art of telling a story on the screen.

Interpretation of Literature: *Thoughts from Mrs. Odeh*

1. The ideal student for this course is someone who loves deep discussions and creative projects vs busy work, and reading novels, both popular and classics. Are you a student willing to challenge your own beliefs and values about society? Are you fascinated by the interconnectivity of humanity and how reading can help you discover it in your own life?
2. We often have large and small group discussions. We explore cultures and identities different than our own. We read novels like *Frankenstein*, *The Kite Runner*, *The Hate U Give*, *Like Water for Chocolate* and listen to podcasts like *Serial* season 1.
3. This course will help students strengthen their reading, writing and oral communication skills, as well as investigate evidence for bias. Students will learn to consider multiple perspectives and understand the complexity of human nature.

Literary Expressions: *Thoughts from Mr. Kallenborn*

- 1.) **What is Literary Expressions?** Literary Expressions is a senior elective where literature and art merge. With the book *How to Think Like Leonardo di Vinci* as our guide, students in the course will explore how to develop life-long skills such as the importance of being curious, adventurous, and living a healthy life. This class is centered around self-reflection and self improvement.
- 2.) **What kids of students best succeed in the class?** Students with an open mind and a desire to explore self-reflection will LOVE this course. It's an open and honest environment where students will not be judged by their thoughts and feelings.
- 3.) **What sorts of things do we do in the class?** While each teacher brings their own flair to the table, you can count on possibly discovering some poetry, fiction, non-fiction, video, audio, and maybe even a snack or two as we discover the senses in one of the units. There are seven different di Vinci Principles, and each is its own journey.
- 4.) **Possible career skills developed from this course?** Students taking this course will learn to discuss and explore their personal feelings, beliefs, and journey. Communication is key in Literary Expressions. Students engage in conversation on the daily, and those communication skills are applicable to the modern workplace. We do not get enough time to put down the phone, pick up the pencil, reflect on life, and chat about it with actual people in a face-to-face

environment. You will hopefully leave this class feeling more confident in your ability to express yourself and your feelings to others in a positive way.

Speech: *Thoughts from Mrs. Perras*

What is Speech class?

Speech (Communications) - Helps with critical thinking, researching, confidence, creative writing, divergent thinking, critiquing others tactfully and growing as a person in a safe, supportive environment.

What kind of students best succeed in the class?

Motivated students who want to overcome their fears (not those who don't), creative minds who have been stunted by the system that drives obedience and perfectionism over creativity and innovation. This class will feed off of your personality.

What kinds of things do you do in the class and what books do you read (or films do you watch)?

We read what YOU WANT because you pick topics based on YOUR interests. There is a lot of research but it's only research for something YOU ARE INTERESTED IN. There is an electronic textbook but we only use it as a resource and we might pull up some sample speeches.

What potential career options come from this class, or what skills will come from your course that will help students in their future career/lives?

Everyone I know in the professional world either wishes they took a Speech class or praise the Speech class they took for building their confidence, improving their ability to think critically and improve their writing to a real audience skills. Also, if entrepreneurs want to help their business grow, this class teaches effective video making techniques as we learn from each other.

Anything else that would be good for kids to know?

There may be some awkward improvisation games performed in order to increase our listening skills. Speaking and Listening go hand in hand.