

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.

Essential Questions

- What is “fair,” and how do we determine it?
- Are humans capable of having a shared view of justice?
- How should we compensate for inequity in society?
- What kinds of conflicts arise when people attempt to adapt to new surroundings and also retain a strong sense of their roots?
- What gives us a sense of belonging to a place or with a person?
- How well can people really know each other? What are the possibilities and limits of interpersonal communication?
- What is the connection between purpose and happiness?
- Where does a sense of fulfillment come from?
- How do we find beauty in things that are broken? Is that a worthy pursuit?
- How do we balance a desire for permanence and the reality of transience?

Representative Core Texts

Interpreter of Maladies by Jhumpa Lahiri

Brave New World by Aldous Huxley

Severance by Ling Ma

History of Love by Nicole Krauss

Everything is Illuminated by Jonathan Safran Foer

Shorter works including the following examples: excerpt from *Strangers Drowning* by Larissa MacFarquhar; excerpt from *Justice:*

What's the Right Thing to Do by Michael Sandel; "Famine, Affluence, and Morality" by Peter Singer; "God Says Yes to Me" by

Kaylin Haught; "Power" by Corinne Hales; "The Accordion" by Al Zolynas