

## English

### English Department Curriculum Overview

English at St. Francis is an intimate, collaborative and creative practice.

*Inside the English classroom*, students' desks are ranged in circles or their chairs around a seminar table. For the ten months of the academic year, English teachers and students are members of a small community in which each student's intellectual, aesthetic and personal discoveries are elicited. The heart of English teachers' work at St. Francis is to arrange for, encourage, model, coach, and, when necessary, insist on thoughtful expression in individual voices. The heart of students' work in English is a variety of projects and texts leading a variety of individuals to the pleasures of literacy and of confident, competent self-expression; the heart of students' work is also collegial, as in workshops and seminars they experience the whole as greater than a sum of parts, taking part in a searching, open-minded, many-voiced conversation.

*Outside the classroom*, our communal dialogue begins on the first day of school, when every member of the school community – students, faculty, and staff – shares his or her response to the all-school summer-reading. That discussion continues throughout the year at every Morning Meeting, which ends with a student or staff member reading a poem of his or her choosing. During the Showcase of Student Plays in December, student writing in a variety of genres is performed. The communal conversation comes to a close at the end of the year, with the publication of an ambitious student literary magazine and the presentation of faculty/staff-written speeches about each graduating senior. The collective creative process also involves extra-curricular activities, like the songwriting and theatre clubs, and independent creative projects, such as student-created mix tapes, chapbooks and creative-writing Senior Projects. The St. Francis community is a space of publication and engaged literary discourse.

At St Francis, we believe that to take the time, effort, and care to consider not only what we say but how we say it, and to pay close, careful attention – whether as participants in a revision workshop, readers of a monumental poem, or audience members at a spoken-word performance – to the words of others are not only indispensable human responsibilities but also educated pleasures no one should have to live without.

### English Department Course Offerings

#### English I (1 credit)

In English I we use writing and reading as extensions of thinking. We focus on craft, the writing process, and the use of rhetoric as means of communication and expression. We read texts closely, producing and developing our own ideas and allowing ourselves to be influenced by what we read and question what we read. We learn from past and contemporary masters of English letters. We write academic papers. We write creatively. We use the imagination - stretch, unhinge, create. Please remember "there is no sight without fire." (Ezra Pound, Canto 98).

**English II (1 credit)**

Sophomores study vocabulary in the context of the reading material. Usage and sentence structure will be addressed throughout the year. Students will write frequently in a variety of genres, including journal responses, poems, short fiction, memoir, and formal analytical essays, and will read in all genres, including lyric poetry, drama (a Shakespeare play), short stories, novels, and literary criticism.

**English III (1 credit)**

This course approaches American literature less as a natural evolution or a set of specific stylistic characteristics than as a varying series of responses to the historical, technological, intellectual, and political conditions of everyday life in the United States. In the course of our literary analyses, we will address how American literature grapples with notions of personal and collective identity, the social conditions of marginalized populations, and what being **American** has come to mean over the course of time into the contemporary moment. We will concentrate heavily on honing our writing skills with special attention to strong sentence composition and carefully crafted self-expression. Students will also be asked to reflect upon their roles as part of a larger community of academic inquiry where each personal voice is valued. Assigned readings will include novels, poems, short stories, a play, and a graphic narrative. Since visual culture plays an important role in our investigation of this period, we will also watch excerpts of films during the course of the semester. Class meetings will combine lecture and discussion formats. Passionate and thoughtful participation is required.

**English IV (1 credit)**

Welcome to the final English class of the secondary school experience. For this very reason, this class is designed to ensure students are prepared for what lies ahead in regards to critical thinking and writing. This is a preparatory course. The class focuses on critically reading literary texts and articulating ideas in the form of thesis-driven writing. Critical writing requires creative reading; therefore, the class will engage texts through the lens of different types of literary theory: New Criticism, Critical Race Theory, Gender Studies and Queer Theory, etc. The writing in the class will also depend on varied syntax and proper usage of grammar. A grammar rubric will accompany all major writing assignments, including any creative writing such as personal essays. The class will cover all major literary genres: fiction, poetry, non-fiction, drama.

**AP English Literature and Composition (1 credit)**

*(Prerequisites: B+ in second semester of English III, recommendation of the English III teacher and permission of the teacher of this class)*

*Enrollment in this class is contingent upon successful completion of a summer reading and writing assignment.*

This course will be most appropriate for students with brisk reading speed and good comprehension, some interest in poetry, and a willingness to work hard to improve their writing about literature. Emphasis will be on reading (mostly monumental) canonical works – poems, plays, novels, and essays – and on learning to describe their artistic achievements in a lively personal voice. Historical and cultural contexts as well as contemporary literary theory will be introduced and discussed. Students enrolled in this class are expected to sit for the AP English Literature examination in May.

*The following elective courses are being offered to gauge student interest; they will actually occur subject to sufficient enrollment. Students are advised to put second and third choices for all electives.*

**American Cinema** *(Fall, 1/2 credit)*

This course surveys the history of American cinema, concentrating on those critical moments that not only defined the shape of film in America, but American identity itself. We will consider the evolution of film, from the Classical Hollywood Studio System, to its transition to independent models of filmmaking, to its eventual domination of the global film market. Specific areas of study that we will concentrate on: the Hollywood Studio era, depictions of ethnic Otherness, representations of gender, the American independent movement, and the emergence of the Hollywood Blockbuster. This course imagines American cinema as a perpetual tension between prophets and profits. We will examine the monolith – American Cinema – in all of its grotesquery, beauty, and soul-defining grace.

**Reading and Writing Experimental Forms** *(Fall; 1/2 credit)*

This class will focus on exploring hybrid genres of literature. The class will question what is genre and push its boundaries in writing. The class will read and write flash fiction, prose poems, lyrical essays and other experimental forms that defy genre.

**Drama and Violence** *(Fall, 1/2 credit)*

This class will focus on two mutually dependent questions: What are the ways in which playwrights have dramatized violence? How have productions staged moments of violence in performance? We will work thematically to analyze types of violence in text and on stage, engaging in discussions on the ethics of viewing and creating these performed acts. Students should be prepared to read plays and critical texts, participate in class discussions, watch live and recorded performances, and engage in hands-on activities (e.g. stage combat, creating special effects, and learning techniques of stage make-up including gore and stage blood).

**New Voices Playwriting at St. Francis** *(Fall (during Projects), 1/4 credit)*

In this course students will write several short plays that speak authentically in their own voice. Exercises will prompt students to explore character, dialogue and dramatic action. There will be an emphasis on giving and receiving feedback and revision. Student-written plays will be submitted to the Actors Theatre of Louisville New Voices Young Playwrights Contest, where winning plays are developed and fully produced in an evening of world premieres performed on stage at Actors Theatre by members of the Acting Apprentice Company. In addition, plays written in the class will be eligible for St. Francis School's December drama production, the Showcase of Student-Written and Directed Plays. This class will meet once a week during the Projects period during the first semester. The class is open to students in all grade levels.