

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 the relationship between fantasy and reality?
- How can fantasy, as both a genre and a concept, reflect a truth about society?
- What are the risks and benefits of sharing information with other communities?
- Do the languages we speak affect the way we think and perceive?
- How does our perception of time affect the way we live our lives?
- How does our society define gender roles?
- What are the responses to those who break rules assigned to their gender?
- How does leaving the familiar inspire personal growth?
- What responsibility do we have toward others?
- How does power affect our choices?
- What is the legacy of injustice, and how does it affect a community attempting to progress?
- What is the relationship between fulfillment and happiness?

Representative Core Texts

The Handmaid's Tale by Margaret Atwood

Severance by Ling Ma

Foundation by Isaac Asimov

The Underground Railroad by Colson Whitehead

Beloved by Toni Morrison

On A Sunbeam by Tillie Walden

The Lord of the Rings: The Fellowship of the Ring by J.R.R. Tolkien

Brave New World by Aldous Huxley

“Story of Your Life” by Ted Chiang