

Humanities • 12th Grade—Two single-credit courses

In their senior year, Northwest students choose their course of study in both the HUM 12: Social Studies and HUM 12: Writing and Literature tracks. Students pick one course from each track and spend the year delving into a deeper study of that topic. Topics are carefully chosen each year to represent student interest and offer courses that align with the mission of the school in preparing students for college and the world.

A major component of the senior HUM 12: Social Studies track is a focus on civic engagement. We are committed to nurturing the development of every Northwest School student as they find their voice in the world. Students engage with the Constitution throughout their time here, most notably in 10th grade and culminating in their senior year. Each HUM 12: Social Studies class studies the Constitution. This study is connected to the major themes of the specific course, which allows for deeper connections with the real-world issues students have chosen to learn more about.

As part of the Civic Engagement Project seniors volunteer their time to an electoral campaign, social justice project, nonprofit, or other approved political project of their choosing. Through these projects, students are encouraged to find ways to authentically engage in the political process by channeling their interests. The subsequent study of the Constitution and development of a written, analytical response allows them to reflect on the work they have done as they begin to figure out how to move beyond the school community and into the start of their adult lives.

Humanities 12 Social Studies • (Meets state requirements for History & U.S Government)

Social Justice • Harumi LaDuke (Block C) HUM12.1

What does it mean to believe in social justice? Why do social justice movements still need to exist? How can we act our values and engage in social change? This course roots students in a historical and contemporary understanding of the individual, institutional, and systemic underpinnings of oppression. We will examine race, gender, ability, sexual orientation, religion, and other forms of identity, power, privilege, and oppression through primary sources, historical analysis, literary excerpts, research, and other classic and contemporary texts on social justice. We will also examine how the rule of law upholds systemic oppression through the U.S. Constitution and subsequent legislation and decisions, and we will apply the lenses of critical race theory and intersectional feminism, among others. Self-awareness and understanding about our own positions as targets and agents of oppression are critical to this work; to this end, we will develop the knowledge and skills to uproot oppression from the inside out. This course will offer ample opportunities for student input and co-creation of units, such as partnering with local organizations and activists. Ultimately, students will encounter how theory translates into action and engage in their own advocacy work.

The Art of Change • Kate Boyd (Block C) HUM12.2

As we study how the political system was created to uphold (in)justice, we will consider how different social movements challenge structural inequities, in the past and in the present. More specifically, we will focus on how visual art, literature, and other forms of cultural production are connected to activism and intersectional social change strategies.

Animating Questions for the Year:

- What are the channels and obstacles to political power and participation in the US?
- In what ways do these channels and obstacles work toward greater forms of active inclusion/exclusion in the democratic process?
- How can “the art of change” help us better understand the inequities built into our political and social structures?
- How can “the art of change” help us imagine and work towards creating more socially just relationships, communities, and worlds?

Themes include:

- Foundations: the US Constitution, Slavery, and Settler Colonialism
- Black Feminist Abolitionism
- Resisting the Prison Industrial Complex
- The Census, Race and Citizenship
- Voting Rights and Voter Suppression Tactics (past and present)
- Counternarratives: (Re)writing and Revision for Social Justice (a creative and collaborative project)
- Joy and Justice

Nature, Science, and the Construct of Race • *Jeremy Scheuer (Block C) HUM12.3*

What is nature? How do we define ourselves in nature? How have we used science to construct theories of race? In this course, we will study the many different ways that nature has been defined overtime. We will start in the period just after the founding of the United States, when natural science was on the rise, and when slavery was a defining feature of American Society. We will ask, how did scientists from this period define nature? We will also look at the writings of people who were kept out of scientific institutions on the basis of race, gender, or class. These writings will illuminate the political contexts of science, and the scientific contexts of politics.

Next, we will study the Transcendentalists and Romantics from the mid-1800s, who viewed nature as sublime and divine. At the same time, we will study the human and environmental costs of westward expansion, particularly as indigenous people were forced off their land by white settlers. Finally, we will study both 20th and 21st Century threats to nature and humanity, including the atomic bomb and climate change. Students will have the opportunity to add to our syllabus by presenting on topics and texts that matter to them, from fascinating scientific inventions to environmental justice activists who have been overlooked. This course bears directly on current conversations about the future of humanity and the future of the planet by asking, What is the relationship between nature and justice?

East Asia and the Modern World • *Isaac Meyer (Block C) HUM12.4*

East Asia and the Modern World presents a high-focus look at one of the most important regions in the world, with an emphasis on the histories of Greater China, the Korean Peninsula, and the Japanese archipelago. The course covers modern history from the 1600s to the present, with a particular focus on how East Asia has been affected by and has affected the West, especially the growth of Western empires.

Class time is split between two modes of instruction. In the first, we do traditional work on the skills associated with college history classes: reading and analyzing primary and secondary sources, working on our research and writing skills, and organizing and presenting information to classmates. In the second, we use a unique method of instruction: historical simulations intended to help us investigate specific historical questions related to the class content. These simulations require a great deal of reading, writing, and speaking as well as coordinating effectively with your classmates.

Specific lesson topics in the past have included the ethos of the samurai class of Japan, the effect of popular culture on international diplomacy, visual analysis of Chinese Communist Party film propaganda, and an entire unit on North Korea. By the end of the year, students will have a general sense of the major turning points of modern East Asian history, and of the current challenges and opportunities presented by the region.

Law and Society • *Scott Davis (Block C) HUM12.5*

How does the law intersect with our daily lives? How does it reflect our collective values and aspirations and contribute to the creation of a more just and peaceful world? How might it do this better? Law and Society examines these questions through an introduction to the American judicial system and an investigation of contemporary legal issues. The course starts with a comprehensive study of the U.S. Constitution and culminates with a mock trial in which students act as the attorneys and witnesses in a trial held before a King County judge. Topics of study change annually, depending on the cases being heard by the U.S. Supreme Court and student interests, but we always read landmark legal precedents about religious discrimination, race discrimination, and marriage equality, and we meet practicing lawyers. By the end of the year, students will have a broad sense of how the U.S. legal system works, be familiar with many legal terms and concepts, and know their way around the King County Superior Court.

Humanities 12 Writing and Literature • (Meets state requirements for English)

Writing Seminar: To Translate: Who, Whom, What, How and Why? • Françoise Besnard *(Block D) WRITE.1*

This elective will provide an important framework to reflect on our current reality and on our shared humanity across borders. The “other” we translate can touch us, move us, and resemble us. Translation is both a place of learning (about us and others) and a promise of understanding.

Translation is close to my heart and defines, for a large part, my journey as an immigrant, as a teacher, as a writer and as a translator. The class will be both language-intensive and literary, part of a classical education and yet directly linked to contemporary issues we are navigating right now. It will give us a place to be aware and critical of the world we live in, to explore our own languages and cultures, to better understand the mechanisms at work when moving from one domain of knowledge to another, from one register of language to another. It will also offer us a great opportunity to work creatively with language.

Throughout the year, we will read essays, poems, short stories, newspaper articles, excerpts of graphic novels on the question of translation. We will also compare different translations of “canonical texts”, and we will work with texts, particularly by women and people of color, which have not yet been published in translation. We will regularly invite translators and scholars in the fields of linguistics and translation to our classes—as well as interpreters who use translation in the courts and hospitals. Finally, we will engage in workshops together: language translation, trans-lexical translations, visual translations, musical translation etc. The field is wide open!

Comparative Literature: Slavery and the Literary Imagination • Samantha Simon *(Block D) COMPLIT.1*

From debates about the removal of Confederate statues in the South, to critiques of the American penal system, slavery continues to play a part in how Americans conceive of politics, history, and their own American identity. Slavery has haunted the American imagination since the moment that the first captured Africans arrived on North American soil, and remnants and traces of it have appeared in American cultural production since this moment. In this course, we will explore how slavery has been represented in American literature across the 19th, 20th, and 21st centuries. We will look at a variety of different forms of cultural production including autobiographies, novellas, film, art, and documentaries. Of key concern for us is how writers and artists have chosen to narrate the story of slavery in the United States, and the ways they consider (or don't consider) it to be a part of a national historical narrative. As we make our way through the course texts as a class, students will be encouraged to read historiographically in order to decipher the social, political, and historical stakes regarding these representations of the United States's “Peculiar Institution.”

Guiding Course Questions:

- How does, or does not, slavery live in the nation's political and historical memory?
- How has history been mobilized as a political tool in different sociopolitical contexts?
- How does literature serve as a way for narrating national history? What is the relationship between literature and national history?

Course Objectives:

- To become familiar with academic conversations about slavery occurring in American literary studies.
- To begin making claims about how political and historical events are represented in literary texts.
- To develop reading practices attentive to the ways that writers have articulated the relationships among race, gender and sexuality.
- To develop strategies for writing cogently and convincingly about these texts.

Comparative Literature: Introduction to Philosophy • Isaac Meyer **(Block D) COMPLIT.2**

Introduction to Philosophy is a course about questions. What does it mean to be human? What do we owe to each other and our society? Which of our perceptions of the world are real (if any)? What is the difference between faith, belief, and knowledge? These are the kinds of questions we will investigate together. It's very likely you'll end the class less sure of your answers than you were when you started, but you'll also come away with a clearer understanding of the pitfalls involved in trying to unpack the questions at all. The goal of this class is not to follow a linear narrative of the history of philosophy, but to practice philosophy through a structure of reading, reflection, and discussion with classmates. The ultimate goal is for you to get a better grasp on how to unpack complex questions and consider the answers others have provided to those questions, and for you to practice thinking independently and developing your own perspective.

In practical terms, we will focus on four major topics in this class: theology, moral philosophy, political philosophy, and metaphysics. Students will also have a chance to investigate a question, philosopher, or school of philosophy of their choice and present it to their classmates as a part of the final unit of the class. Core texts for the class include Plato's Republic, the Chinese philosophical classics the Mengzi and Han Feizi, and a collection of writings by Hannah Arendt. We will also read two novels with strong philosophical themes: The Parable of the Sower and A Tale for the Time Being. There will also be a course reader containing a variety of texts related to our topics.

Comparative Literature: Hope in Misery: Protest & the Near Future • Kate Boyd **(Block F) COMPLIT.3**

"At its best, science fiction stimulates imagination and creativity. It gets reader and writer off the beaten track, off the narrow, narrow foot path of what "everyone" is saying, doing, thinking—whoever "everyone" happens to be this year."

Octavia E. Butler in "Positive Obsession," Bloodchild: And Other Stories

"Without new visions we don't know what to build, only what to knock down. We not only end up confused, rudderless, and cynical, but we forget that making a revolution is not a series of clever maneuvers and tactics but a process that can and must transform us."

Robin D.G. Kelley in Freedom Dreams: The Black Radical Imagination

This course looks at how **hope** and **protest** are imagined in science fiction stories where the future is presented as bleak and miserable. Joining scholarly and activist conversations, we will work together to think about how our authors imagine protest and social justice community organizing strategies, and we will consider their different visions of "hope in misery." We will study the near future through a science fiction lens to help us better understand the present, as we work towards envisioning and creating more equitable and just futures. Our class texts will include aliens, magic, new technologies and other fantastical qualities, and will inspire new and creative ideas for creating social change today.

Animating Questions of the Course:

- What is the relationship between science fiction and social justice?
- What role does writing (and other forms of communication) play in building solidarity across difference in the future? In the present?
- What counts as effective protest, where and when?
- How can studying the future through science fiction teach us about inequity and social justice today?
- How can looking for "hope in misery" help us work towards imagining and creating the kinds of worlds we actually want?

Comparative Literature: Freedom Dreams and Black Literary Genres • Samantha Simon (Block F) COMPLIT.4

This course explores Black literary genres and considers how the different genres have developed and evolved to perform different cultural work at different moments in U.S. history. Over the duration of the year, we will examine a variety of literary texts including novels, serial fiction, short stories, and film to understand how Black writers and artists have mobilized genre and to what end. We will think critically about the ways genre has enabled these writers to think beyond the confines of national borders as they work to imagine freedom through diasporic solidarity, reversed racial hierarchies, and/or post-racial societies. At the same time, we will also consider the complex ways that issues of gender and race intersect in the course texts as we discuss both the possibilities, as well as the limits, of the work performed through genre.

Guiding Course Questions:

- How have Black writers experimented with genre in order to critique U.S. culture and to what end?
- How has literature allowed writers to envision freedom at different moments in U.S. history?
- How does speculative fiction allow black writers to imagine different pasts, presents and futures?

Course Objectives:

- To become familiar with academic conversations about race and literary genre.
- To begin making claims about how genre operates Black literature.
- To develop reading practices attentive to the ways that writers have articulated the relationships among race, gender and sexuality.
- To develop strategies for writing cogently and convincingly about these texts.

Writing Seminar: Identity, Joy, Justice, and Action • Harumi LaDuke (Block F)

This is a reading, creative writing, discussion, and project-centered course that challenges students to consider the power of diction to construct and obstruct meaning, identity, awareness, justice, and change. A few of the questions that we will explore include: How do words shape who we are and how we encounter the world? What pleasure or new understandings can be derived by reading or writing lines of prose, poetry, and other genres? How do individual and institutional uses of language uphold systemic inequities, and how can this be changed? We will examine contemporary literature to develop an awareness of diverse perspectives. Units of the course include: observation and identity; 20th and 21st Century literature from communities of color and activists in the feminist and queer communities; and using humor and film as tools to encounter, expose, and educate. Designed for students who wish to become better readers and writers, this course will also expose students to a variety of writing styles and genres—fiction, poetry, creative nonfiction, humor, the media, and film—to support the process of becoming a better writer and critic. As we study each genre, you will write your own creative pieces in that genre, develop skills to constructively critique the work of others through workshops, and learn to produce your own distinctive voice on the page. We will also engage in activism projects in The Northwest School and broader communities.

Watercolor and Experimental Drawing • Lisa Beemster (Blocks D and G)

“Do Both: Paint with Watercolor and Draw!”

This new class will offer students an opportunity to learn and combine both drawing and painting techniques. We will use (among others) graphite, colored, and watercolor pencils as well as watercolor and gouache (opaque, squishy watercolor) paints. Students will create both “abstract” and “realistic” works. We will begin by learning basic drawing and watercolor techniques followed by an enjoyable overview of practical color theory. Subsequently, we will practice depicting the human form with a focus on the head, hands, and feet. This work will culminate in the portrayal of in-class “life” (nude) models. We will also create an work using white media on a black surface, a mixed media/technique collage, and a realistic image of a carefully observed small subject. A to-be-decided project, designed with student input, will be added after the start of school. Class critiques, discussions of art-related issues, and presentations of a diversity of contemporary artists will take place periodically throughout the year. This class is open to students of all skill levels; no prerequisites required.