



# Branson

COURAGE • KINDNESS • HONOR • PURPOSE

## 2020-2021 Curriculum Guide



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## WELCOME!

Branson's Curriculum Guide is a comprehensive resource for planning a student's academic program for the coming school year. It offers detailed descriptions of courses that will be offered, it reviews Branson's graduation requirements, and it points out things to keep in mind when selecting courses. We hope you find it helpful and easy to use.



Though students are certain to have a wonderful experience in whatever Branson course they take, we recognize that some courses make for a better fit than others, so we encourage all students, parents and guardians to have thoughtful conversations about the student's needs, interests and longer term goals as they select courses.

In many cases, students will need the approval of a teacher or department chair in order to register for a course. In all cases, students will need the approval of their advisor in order to formally authorize their course selections. We encourage students to have thoughtful conversations with each and every one of these individuals as well, to ensure they are taking into account all of the factors at play and making the best possible choices.

There are few things as rewarding for a student as a complement of classes that are engaging, stimulating and rewarding. Please let us know if we can do anything to help create that for you.

Rich Parsons  
Director of Studies



## **BRANSON'S GUIDING PRINCIPLES**

The statements and affirmations below communicate the principles that Branson operates by, and we encourage students and families to keep them in mind as they plan their Branson program.

### **THE BRANSON MISSION STATEMENT**

Branson develops students who make a positive impact in the world by leading lives of integrity, purpose, learning and joy.

### **BRANSON'S COMMUNITY VALUES**

Courage, Kindness, Honor, Purpose

### **THE BRANSON HONOR CODE**

In choosing The Branson School as a place to learn and a place to work, each member of the community – student, faculty, staff and parent – agrees to sustain an environment of honesty and integrity. We will, individually and collectively, do our part to create and maintain trust, respect and care throughout school life by accepting responsibility for our own actions and those of others. We make this commitment to ensure that each of us may grow both in knowledge and in wisdom and that we may leave this school having enriched it by our presence.

### **THE BRANSON DIVERSITY MISSION STATEMENT**

Branson believes that diversity, equity and inclusion are essential components of an excellent learning environment and a vibrant, caring community. We aspire to create a community in which every member feels a deep sense of belonging and inclusion.

### **BRANSON'S BELIEFS**

- WE BELIEVE student well-being and growth should be at the center of every decision we make.
- WE BELIEVE an excellent education includes not only deep intellectual inquiry and engaged learning but also a commitment to instilling values and building character to shape effective leaders in a complex and changing world.
- WE BELIEVE an essential component of an outstanding education is a diverse and inclusive community in which each member feels a deep sense of belonging.
- WE BELIEVE that students are most engaged when the curriculum presents opportunities for them to examine issues relevant to their lives and future.
- WE BELIEVE dedicated mentors, in partnership with parents, are critical in helping adolescents grow into principled adults.
- WE BELIEVE taking risks is an integral part of learning and growing.
- WE BELIEVE ongoing, honest self-examination is healthy and makes us a better school.

## BRANSON'S GRADUATION REQUIREMENTS

Students must complete a minimum requirement of sixty (60) units of academic credit and 90 hours of community engagement to graduate from The Branson School. Unless otherwise indicated, yearlong courses receive 3 units of credit and semester-long courses receive 1.5 units of credit.

BRANSON GRADUATION REQUIREMENTS BY DEPARTMENT	
<b>ARTS</b> <i>6 units (2 years)</i>	Students are encouraged to complete the requirement in Arts during their freshman and sophomore years to best prepare themselves for upper level electives.
<b>ENGLISH</b> <i>12 units (4 years)</i>	All students take English I in the ninth grade and English II in the tenth grade. In the eleventh and twelfth grade, students choose from semester electives and must take an English class each semester.
<b>HISTORY</b> <i>9 units (3 years)</i>	Beginning with the class of 2022, all students must take Modern World History, US History Honors, and two semester electives during the junior and senior years. Students in the class of 2021 fulfilled their requirement by taking Roots of Civilization, Modern World History and US History Honors. They are welcome to take history electives during senior year.
<b>HUMAN DEVELOPMENT</b> <i>2 units (2 semesters)</i>	All students take The Developing Mind in the ninth grade and Healthy Sexuality in the tenth grade. Human Development classes meet once per 6-day cycle, do not have homework, and are graded on a pass/fail basis.
<b>LANGUAGE</b> <i>9 units (3 years) of one language or 12 units (2 years each) of two languages.</i>	Students are welcome to sign up for any first year language, or take a placement test to determine placement into a higher level. The Language Department strongly encourages students to take four years of one language to derive maximum benefit from the program.
<b>MATHEMATICS</b> <i>9 units (3 years) and completion of Algebra II</i>	The core curriculum of the Mathematics program comprises the sequence Algebra I, Geometry, Algebra II, Precalculus and Calculus. Students enter the program in the course that best suits their ability and background. Regardless of where they begin, all students must complete at least three years of math and complete all courses through Algebra II.
<b>SCIENCE</b> <i>9 units (3 years) that includes Physics, Chemistry and Biology</i>	All students take Physics in the ninth grade, Chemistry in the tenth grade, and Biology in the eleventh grade. Students may take elective courses in Science during the junior or senior year, and they may take AP courses in Science during the senior year.
<b>PHYSICAL EDUCATION</b> <i>4 units (1 unit each year)</i>	Students must complete at least 36 hours of Physical Education each year. This can be fulfilled by playing on a school-sponsored team, taking a Branson Dance class, or completing an Alternate Activity Program. Dance classes taken for PE credit cannot also be taken for Arts credit. Alternative Activity Programs must be school approved, and seniors must complete all AAP's by April 1st.
<b>COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT</b> <i>90 hours</i>	Students must complete 5 Core and 10 Support hours in the ninth grade, and 15 Core and 10 Support hours in each of the tenth, eleventh and twelfth grades. School service hours can fulfill ten Support hours for ninth graders and up to five Support hours for tenth, eleventh and twelfth graders.

## THINGS TO KEEP IN MIND

Branson students are encouraged to create a program that is rewarding, appropriately challenging, and balanced. To do this takes care, and there are many things to keep in mind. The following items offer useful guidance and reminders.

### MINIMUM COURSE LOAD

Each student must be enrolled in at least five Branson academic courses each semester. A Branson course is defined as a course offered in the Branson Curriculum Guide, including all arts courses. For a sixth course, students may take a regular Branson course, a course offered through the Bay Area BlendEd Consortium, or some other rigorous semester or yearlong course offered outside the school and approved by the Director of Studies. In order to remain competitive in college admissions, the school recommends that students carry a load of six academic courses at all times.

### DOUBLING UP

Branson encourages students to create a well-balanced schedule for themselves, which generally involves taking one class in each academic department -- Arts, English, History, Language, Math and Science. There are times, however, when a student would like to pursue a particular area of interest and take more than one course at a time in the same department. Branson calls this “doubling up”. Some students drop one or more subjects in order to double up in a particular subject. Some students continue to take courses in all departments and double up by taking a seventh course. In either case, students wishing to double up must complete a Petition to Double Up form that must be approved by the advisor, appropriate class dean, department chair and Director of Studies.

### MAXIMUM COURSE LOAD

The Branson schedule has seven blocks, which means that during any given semester it is possible for a student to take 7 classes. Such a course load can be extremely demanding, however, and the school strongly recommends that students take care not to overload their schedule.

Enrollment in seven classes is not automatic and the school reserves the right to deny a request to take seven classes if it is felt that doing so is not in the student’s best interest. Before deciding to take seven classes, students are strongly encouraged to consult their parents/guardians, advisor and teachers for guidance. Freshmen may not take seven classes. In addition, due to time constraints, students who qualify for extended time accommodations on assessments may not take seven classes. Finally, seniors are strongly discouraged from doubling up during the fall semester because they will be writing college applications.

### SINGLETONS

While we value the depth and breadth of our course offerings for the rich educational experience they offer to our students, we frequently can offer only one section of a particular course, particularly at the upper levels of the program. We call such courses singletons, and when a student

registers for multiple singletons, they are often faced with having to choose between or among singleton courses. Each department has designated the singleton courses it will offer during the 2020-2021 school year with a diamond symbol (◊) on the summary page for their program. Students are encouraged to be aware of singletons they sign up for and to consider alternatives if they are unable to fit that course into their schedule.

## **ADVANCED COURSES AND AP CREDIT**

Each department offers advanced courses that give students the opportunity to study a rigorous curriculum in depth. Some of those courses are Advanced Placement courses, which follow curricula established by The College Board and culminate with a national examination in May. Branson offers AP courses when the AP curriculum follows and builds upon the solid curricular foundations supported by the school. Each department also offers rigorous courses that do not follow the curriculum of an Advanced Placement course. These courses, which are on par with or exceed the rigor of the AP program, build upon our own pedagogical priorities, draw on the expertise of our teachers, and allow students to do a variety of advanced work.

We will order and proctor AP exams for students who wish to take the AP exam for a particular AP course we do not offer. Interested students should take to their advisor and teachers to make sure they will be fully prepared for the exam, and they should make their intentions known to Frances Dillon in the College Counselling Office ([frances\\_dillon@branson.org](mailto:frances_dillon@branson.org)) by mid-January to allow sufficient time to order the test and arrange for proctoring.

***All students enrolled in AP courses must take the AP exam in order to receive AP credit designation on their transcript.***

## **COURSE AVAILABILITY**

Some courses in this guide may not be offered if there are not sufficient sign-ups.

## **GRADUATION REQUIREMENTS AND THE UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA**

A student who meets the Branson graduation requirements also meets the minimum course requirements for the University of California and California State University systems as long as all grades earned are C-minus or higher in every required course.

## **COLLEGE COUNSELING AND CLASS RECOMMENDATIONS**

Many college websites have a list of their required and/or recommended classes. Please keep in mind that a college's required or recommended courses are not a comprehensive list of what they expect of applicants. Many selective colleges admit students who exceed the official requirements. The College Counseling office recommends that each student challenge him/herself appropriately and enjoy the process of learning. During the registration process each spring, students receive guidance from department chairs, teachers, advisors, and the Director of Studies

## BRANSON'S CURRICULAR OFFERINGS FOR 2020-2021

All of Branson's course offerings for the 2020-2021 school year are described on the following pages. For each department there is a brief statement regarding the department's goals and values, a recap of the department's graduation requirements, a table showing the department's curriculum at a glance, the brief statement of the department homework philosophy, and, finally, short descriptions of each course.



# ARTS

The Branson Arts Department believes that the arts are an essential part of the human experience that take you on a journey of creation and inquiry. Our studio practices weave a balance between artistic literacy, authentic expression, and collaboration. The process urges students to redefine boundaries and use their creative voice in service to their vision for a more healthy, vibrant, and equitable world.

Beginning with the 2020-2021 school year, Branson will offer several new Arts courses that comprise what have traditionally been extra-curricular activities. These courses will be known as Branson's Extended Arts Offerings. They will earn credit, but they cannot be used to meet Branson's graduation requirement for Arts, and they will be graded on a Pass/Fail basis.

The graduation requirement in Arts is six units or two full years of study. Students may take courses in all areas of the arts or specialize as they choose.

ARTS CURRICULUM AT A GLANCE	
DANCE	INSTRUMENTAL AND CHORAL MUSIC
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Dance I CO-ED</li> <li>➤ Dance II CO-ED</li> <li>➤ Dance III CO-ED</li> <li>➤ Dance IV: Intermediate CO-ED</li> <li>➤ Dance IV: Advanced CO-ED</li> <li>➤ Dance Performance Ensemble CO-ED</li> <li>➤ Athletic Dance for Men</li> <li>➤ Athletic Dance for Men II, III, IV</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Music and Performance</li> <li>➤ Intermediate Ensemble</li> <li>➤ Chamber Singers Honors</li> <li>➤ Performance Seminar: Classical</li> <li>➤ Performance Seminar: Jazz</li> <li>➤ Performance Seminar: Rock</li> </ul>
THEATRE	VISUAL ARTS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Beginning Acting</li> <li>➤ Intermediate Acting</li> <li>➤ Advanced Acting</li> <li>➤ Acting Performance Honors</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Survey of Visual Arts</li> <li>➤ Intermediate Drawing and Painting</li> <li>➤ Intermediate Photography</li> <li>➤ Intermediate Sculpture †</li> <li>➤ Advanced Visual Arts: "Taking A Stand: Messaging the Masses" (Fall Semester Only)</li> <li>➤ Advanced Visual Arts: "SuperNatural: Artistic Explorations of Utopian Solutions" (Spring semester only)</li> <li>➤ Portfolio Review/Portfolio Review Honors (may be taken in fall semester or as a yearlong course)</li> </ul>
EXTENDED ARTS OFFERINGS	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Boys A Capella</li> <li>➤ Girls A Cappella</li> <li>➤ Stagecraft</li> <li>➤ Fall Musical</li> </ul>	

† Intermediate Sculpture will not be offered during the 2020-2021 school year.

◇ With the exception of Survey of Visual Arts, all Arts courses are singletons.

## **ARTS DEPARTMENT HOMEWORK AND PERFORMANCE/EXPOSITION PHILOSOPHY**

Arts courses are studio based classes. As such the vast majority of course work is dependent upon deep engagement in class time activities. Most classes require little in the way of traditional "homework." Practice, rehearsal and event participation are necessary aspects of every art offering. Expectations vary among the disciplines. Students and parents can expect a detailed explanation of these requirements at first class meetings. While we work with all Branson constituencies to minimize rehearsal and performance conflicts, it is ultimately the responsibility of the student to review rehearsal and event expectations and communicate any potential conflicts with their teachers well in advance.

### **DANCE COURSES**

Notable for their comprehensive and professional approach to dance, Branson's dancers learn modern, ballet, jazz, and contemporary dance techniques in a collaborative and supportive atmosphere. Instruction in technique, improvisation, and composition, as well as choreography by guest artists prepares dancers to present two concerts per year -- Body Talk in the winter and Festival of Arts in spring. Other performing opportunities include the fall musical and the Branson Dance Performance Ensemble. As a member of the National Dance Education Organization and California Dance Education Organization, the Branson dance program honors those students who achieve artistically and academically by induction into the National Honor Society for Dance Arts.

*Note: If a student chooses to use a term of dance to fulfill a PE requirement, the student will not receive Arts credit for that term. One must inform the instructor at the start of the class.*

#### **DANCE I CO-ED**

3 units

*Prerequisite: None.*

Dance is for everyone. This yearlong course teaches the fundamental ideas and techniques of dance. Students develop an understanding of body alignment while increasing strength, flexibility, coordination, and musicality. Students are introduced to hip-hop, jazz, modern, and ballet skills. No previous dance experience is necessary.

#### **DANCE II CO-ED**

3 units

*Prerequisite: By audition or approval of the instructor.*

This yearlong course is for students with previous dance experience. Students study modern and contemporary dance techniques, jazz, ballet, improvisation, and basic choreographic principles. Introduction to dance history, a review of vocabulary and anatomy, and attendance at professional level dance concerts serve as the written portion of this course.

### **DANCE III CO-ED**

3 units

*Prerequisite: Dance I or II or approval of the instructor.*

This yearlong course strengthens and challenges the intermediate dance student and builds on the concepts and skills learned in Dance I and II. The class will emphasize increased technical ability, more complex combinations, weight changes, level and floor patterns, use of momentum, use and understanding of classical and contemporary dance vocabulary, understanding of performance skills and the ability to choreograph dance phrases to music. Dance history and dance reviews of professional level dance companies serve as the written portion of this course.

### **DANCE IV: INTERMEDIATE CO-ED**

3 units

*Prerequisite: Dance II or III with approval of the instructor.*

This yearlong course is for the intermediate-advanced dance student and emphasizes contemporary dance technique. Students will develop the ability to shape transitions, self-correct in various dance styles and techniques, collaborate and use improvisation as a choreographic method. The study of dance history, self-inquiry essays, and dance reviews of professional level dance companies serve as the written portion of this course.

### **DANCE IV: ADVANCED CO-ED**

3 units

*Prerequisite: Dance IV Intermediate or approval of the instructor.*

This course is the most advanced dance course offered without extra-curricular performance requirements. Students continue to increase their understanding and ability to dance to a variety of complex rhythms, timings, and patterns with technical proficiency while relating to other dancers. They will also acquire the ability to choreograph an entire dance that has form, structure, and transitions using a wide range of choreographic methods. Self-inquiry essays, the study of contemporary choreographers, and dance reviews of professional level companies serve as the written portion of this course.

### **DANCE PERFORMANCE ENSEMBLE CO-ED**

3 units

*Prerequisite: By audition only.*

This course is for the advanced dancer who has an interest in extra-curricular performance opportunities (including experiences on and off campus) throughout the school year. Dance Performance is by audition only and has after school class and rehearsal requirements as scheduled by the teacher. The dance ensemble is a pre-professional dance company that explores the students' ability to communicate through the medium of dance. Along with the development of advanced performance and choreographic skills, dance students will be expected to develop individual styles and qualities in their dancing and are required to choreograph at least one work

outside of their regularly scheduled class period. In addition, dancers acquire the skills needed to audition for a college dance program. Dance reviews of professional level dance companies serve as the written portion of this course.

*NOTE: The Dance Performance Ensemble course has a variety of on and off campus commitments and students' attendance at these events will be included in the course grade.*

### **DANCE FOR MEN I**

3 units

*Prerequisite: None.*

This yearlong course teaches the fundamental ideas and techniques of dance. Students develop an understanding of body alignment while increasing strength, flexibility, coordination, and musicality. Students are introduced to hip-hop, jazz, modern, and ballet skills. No previous dance experience is necessary.

### **DANCE FOR MEN II, III, IV**

3 units

*Prerequisite: Sophomore, junior or senior standing and Athletic Dance for Men I or approval of the instructor.*

This yearlong course builds on the dance skills learned in Dance for Men I. With an emphasis on athleticism and physicality, male students learn to execute more complex rhythms and patterns, retain more complex choreography and use improvisation as a choreographic method. Dance reviews of professional level dance companies and the study of dance history serve as the written portion of this course.

## **INSTRUMENTAL AND CHORAL MUSIC COURSES**

Our offerings are designed to meet musicians where they are in their music training. Students without prior experience enter into the program with Music and Performance. Experienced instrumentalists and vocalists may audition to participate and perform in a variety of ensembles, including various classical chamber music combinations, jazz ensembles, and rock combos, Chamber Singers, and boys' and girls' a cappella groups. Below is a list of all of our music offerings.

### **MUSIC AND PERFORMANCE**

3 units

*Prerequisite: None.*

This course is designed for the student with an average instrumental background who would like to develop the skills and knowledge required for participation in the Jazz, Classical, or Rock Performance Seminars. Course content includes instruction in musicianship skills such as music reading, rhythmic training, theory, and ensemble techniques. The specific mix of instruction and assignments will be geared to the individual needs of the student. Instrumentalists will have the

opportunity to rehearse with a small ensemble and prepare musical works for performance. All participating students will sing in the chorus for certain productions as determined by the music department. Because the focus of the class is on developing general musicianship and ensemble skills, not specific instrument instruction, all students should be studying with a private teacher. The Branson music faculty can assist the student in finding an appropriate teacher if needed

### **INTERMEDIATE ENSEMBLE**

3 units

*Prerequisite: Music and Performance or equivalent experience and approval of the instructor. Students who take this course are encouraged to take private instruction simultaneously.*

This course is designed for the student with an intermediate instrumental or vocal background who would like to continue developing the skills and knowledge required for participation in the advanced instrumental Performance Seminars (Classical, Jazz, Rock) or Chamber Singers. Students continue to expand their musicianship skills (music notation, rhythm, harmony, and ear training) from Music and Performance. This course places greater emphasis on ensemble playing: rehearsal techniques, understanding arrangements, and performance strategies. The specific mix of music styles and instruction will be geared to the interests of the class. Additional individualized assignments may be given to meet specific needs. Guest artists will contribute their professional insights. Students perform at the Winter and Spring Arts Festivals.

### **CHAMBER SINGERS HONORS**

3 units

*Prerequisite: By audition only, to be held in May.*

The Branson Chamber Singers is a small chamber choir that sings through a variety of genres and styles in the choral literature. Admittance to the class is by audition only, and previous choir experience is highly recommended. Extensive lessons are given during class on good vocal production and vocal technique throughout the year. In addition, students will learn about balance, dynamics, blending, good vowel production, and other essential areas of choral singing, as well as learning how to properly analyze music independently. Students will be given opportunities to conduct, lead vocal warm-ups, and lead rehearsals with the help of the instructor. Basic Kodaly method is introduced as part of the course and will be utilized throughout the year. Chamber Singers will perform in the Winter Concert, Gospel Night and FAB, as well as off-campus outreach concerts. There will be opportunities for workshops with visiting choirs.

### **PERFORMANCE SEMINAR: CLASSICAL**

3 units

*Prerequisite: Intermediate Ensemble or equivalent and by audition only. All students who take this course are highly encouraged to take private instruction simultaneously.*

This upper-level course focuses on the study and performance of small ensemble chamber music. Students taking the course will be instrumentalists with intermediate to advanced proficiency, however previous experience in chamber music is not required. Through the study of chamber music, students will be developing skills including collaboration with peers, proper analysis of the

music, articulating feedback, and much more. Students will have ample opportunity to work with visiting artists and coaches and will be given opportunity to play music of their interest, as well as explore other periods and styles in the classical genre. There will be frequent performance opportunities including master classes, off-campus outreach concerts, the Winter Concert and FAB. Other assignments are introduced in the class that expand and challenge students' knowledge of repertoire and performance, and student participation and engagement are essential in all areas.

### **PERFORMANCE SEMINAR: JAZZ**

3 units

*Prerequisite: Intermediate Ensemble or by audition. Students who take this course must take private instruction simultaneously. Woodwind players may study saxophone or an appropriate double, e.g. flute, clarinet, oboe, bassoon.*

This course is an opportunity for students to experience and develop the specialized knowledge, musicianship and instrumental skills required of jazz musicians. Ensembles range from small combos to a traditional big band. Students will be grouped and regrouped for specific purposes and/or according to common levels of interest and achievement. Rhythm, improvisation, and ensemble playing are equally important to all facets of the program. Music is selected primarily from the vast mainstream repertoire from the mid 20th century on. All students are expected to work on their own to maintain instrumental skills and learn the assigned music. Additional individualized assignments may be given to meet specific needs. Jazz students are expected to work towards meeting the college jazz ensemble audition requirements for entering freshmen.

### **PERFORMANCE SEMINAR: ROCK**

3 units

*Prerequisite: Intermediate Ensemble or by audition. Students who take this course are strongly encouraged to take private instruction simultaneously.*

This yearlong creates a full rock band that, over the course of the year, masters two 90-minute repertoires (approximately 60 songs) drawn from the rock 'n' roll canon to perform in December and May as midterm and final exam concerts. Students will continue to develop expertise on their individual instruments as well as learn how to play in the context of a full band, with special emphasis on collaborative, close listening. In addition to weekly performance labs, students will also learn the history of rock music from 1930s blues through the present day, continue to master the principles of tonal harmony (with special focus on the classic chord and scale building blocks of rock music), and will learn to construct their own charts from recordings. Homework includes focused listening of canonical material as directed by the instructor, and nightly instrumental practice. This course is not designed for beginning players, and moves at a challenging, focused pace.

## THEATRE COURSES

Branson's theatre program strives to challenge students both artistically and intellectually so that they may become critical and creative thinkers while developing professional skills and attitudes. Each course is designed to nurture the student to develop stronger physical, vocal, and emotional expression, while gaining self-awareness and self-confidence. Performance opportunities include

the fall musical, spring play, Theatresports competitions, FAB (Fine Arts at Branson), and other additional pieces.

### **BEGINNING ACTING: IMPROVISATION**

3 units

*Prerequisite: None.*

This entry-level class introduces students to acting through improvisation. The class offers several opportunities for performance based on two schools of improvisatory theatre: Theatresports and Commedia dell'Arte. The course is designed for students interested in exploring theatre as a means of personal development and expression as well as for those who wish to begin to study the craft of acting.

### **INTERMEDIATE ACTING: TECHNIQUE**

3 units

*Prerequisite: Beginning Acting or approval of the instructor.*

This course is designed for students who wish to learn the fundamental skills of text analysis and explore different techniques of acting. The class covers the history of acting from the turn of the twentieth century until the present, studying masters as Stanislavski, Strasberg, Hagen, Adler, Meisner, and Bogart. Students will deepen their mastery of improvisation, analyze and rehearse scenes from contemporary plays, and perform a comedic one-act play at FAB.

### **ADVANCED ACTING: REHEARSAL**

3 units

*Prerequisite: Intermediate Acting or approval of the instructor.*

A conservatory-style class, Advanced Acting is intended for students with extensive prior experience wishing to challenge themselves with textual analysis, development of the actor's body and voice, scansion, creating a character, and working with the camera. Students will analyze and perform a piece from Shakespearean, and rehearse scenes from classic, modern, and contemporary plays and perform an original play at FAB.

### **ACTING PERFORMANCE HONORS**

Acting Performance Honors

3 units

*Prerequisite: Approval of the instructor.*

This class brings together the techniques learned in all Branson acting classes and applies them to performance. Members of the Acting Performance class form the core ensemble of the spring play, learn professional rehearsal techniques, work on audition material, and translate their skills from Branson's acting program to other disciplines. The class comes full circle to performing a completely improvised play at FAB.

## VISUAL ARTS COURSES

The visual arts program seeks to foster effective studio habits, collaboration, process, technique, understanding of context, as well as self-reflection that culminates in creative awareness and understanding. The curriculum and projects develop the creative process through active engagement, perseverance, individual expression and the ability to transform the abstract into the concrete.

### **SURVEY OF VISUAL ARTS**

3 units

Survey of Visual Arts puts a pen, a paintbrush, a camera and a hammer in a student's hand. This beginning course allows each student to experiment with a variety of media while developing his or her own answer to the question "What is art?" Students will explore and compare many styles--including the whimsy of Calder's circus, the compositions of Bresson's travels, and the emotional power of Matisse's line. Through a series of projects based on specific artistic themes and techniques, students will gain deeper insight into our visual culture and develop an individual creative voice as painter, sculptor and photographer. Students will also work in Digital Media. Students will explore the many possibilities of art-making while gaining the necessary fundamental practices of each discipline. Upon completion of the Survey of Visual Arts course, students may continue their visual arts studies in Intermediate Photography, Intermediate Drawing & Painting, or Intermediate Sculpture.

### **INTERMEDIATE PHOTOGRAPHY**

3 units

*Prerequisite: Survey of Visual Arts and/or approval of the instructor.*

Fall term will focus on conceptually based assignments that push students to think about the function of photography as an art form. At this level, students will have the opportunity to work with medium format cameras and experiment with print size. Winter term will focus on collaborative work with an eye towards interacting with the larger world. For the final project of the year, each student will work with the teacher to create an assignment that directly engages individual concerns and interests. Discussions, class work, projects, critiques, and technical skills are the main focus for Intermediate Photography.

### **INTERMEDIATE DRAWING AND PAINTING**

3 units

*Prerequisite: Survey of Visual Arts and/or approval of the instructor.*

Building upon the basic tenets of two-dimensional design and the aesthetic principles introduced in Survey of Visual Arts, students will further their study in the mediums of drawing, watercolor, acrylic painting, and printmaking. Students will be assigned a variety of related projects asking them to consider the broader question "What does it mean to think like an artist?" Along the way, students

will further their technical ability and expand their aesthetic knowledge while developing a deeper sense of their own artistic voice. Projects will be based on contemporary approaches to traditional subjects including still life, landscape, and the figure. Projects will also help students further their understanding of the roles of abstraction, expression, and contemporary media as they work to communicate their intentions through visual means.

### **INTERMEDIATE SCULPTURE (NOT OFFERED IN 2020-2021)**

3 units

*Prerequisite: Survey of Visual Arts and/or approval of the instructor.*

By employing both traditional and new media, students expand and refine their understanding of what it means to think and work like a sculptor. Open-ended, studio-based projects allow students to become more fluent in the language of visual art: aesthetics, craftsmanship, and expression. The variety of projects will deepen artistic understanding as students employ digital tools (graphics software, laser cutter) and traditional tools (woodworking, clay, and mold-making) to create three-dimensional forms. Projects include: Psychological Moment, studying the human body and the emotional power of art; Absurd Tool, employing found objects; and INside/OUT, utilizing multi-media to create an immersive installation space.

### **ADVANCED VISUAL ARTS: "TAKING A STAND: MESSAGING THE MASSES"**

1.5 units

*Prerequisite: Intermediate Visual Arts and/or approval of the instructor.*

Students will sharpen their technical skills, refine skills of aesthetic valuing and expanding their conceptual ability to employ art as a form of cultural/societal critique or protest. An emphasis on developing an individual process and creative practice underlies the work while students grapple with the question of "What is the Artist's Role in Society?" Examination of contemporary and historic artistic examples along trips to experience art in public and gallery settings will provide guidance and inspiration for each project. Peer review and critical dialogue will play a further role in helping students to better articulate their intentions hone skills of visual analysis. Presentation of work will take many forms as we explore the most socially impactful methods toward culture change. Students will be encouraged to continue their previous area of study (Drawing & Painting, Photography or Sculpture); students may receive yearlong, UC Approved Advanced Arts Credit if they enroll in both Fall and Spring courses.

### **ADVANCED VISUAL ARTS: "SUPERNATURAL: ARTISTIC EXPLORATIONS OF UTOPIAN SOLUTIONS"**

1.5 units

*Prerequisite: Intermediate Visual Arts and/or approval of the instructor.*

This course is focused on the natural world as inspiration to artistic creation. For nearly all of history, humans' relationship to the natural world has shaped their quest for answers to existential questions of life, spirit, and purpose. How can you find unique inspiration in the world around you as you work toward a greater understanding of your relationship and dependence on that world? Along the way we will study a wide array of historic examples from Romanticism to Transcendentalism in the European tradition, sacred objects and rituals of indigenous cultures of Americas, and Contemporary Artist and Architects responses to ideals of sustainability and

harmony. At least one project will be in collaboration with a local institution, group, or event beyond Branson. An emphasis will be placed on developing an individual process and strengthening creative practice routines. Peer review and critical dialogue will play a further role in helping students to better articulate their intentions and hone skills of visual analysis. Students will be encouraged to continue their previous area of study (Drawing & Painting, Photography or Sculpture); students may receive yearlong, UC Approved Advanced Arts Credit if they enroll in both Fall and Spring courses.

### **PORTFOLIO REVIEW/PORTFOLIO REVIEW HONORS**

1.5 units or 3 units (\*)

*Prerequisite: Seniors standing and two semesters of an advanced visual art seminar, or approval of the instructor.*

*(\*) May be taken as a fall semester course or a yearlong course. Must be taken as a yearlong course for UC approval and Honors designation.*

Portfolio Review challenges the committed fourth-year visual arts student to step outside of the role of student and into the role of artist. Primary interests in this course are the development of individual creative voice, an understanding and deftness with conceptual concerns, and willingness to take risks and experiment. All projects are generated collaboratively between student and teacher using the throughline of "Who am I as an Artist?" As well as covering the creative endeavors of the artist, this course also provides extensive guidance in the more practical elements of working as an artist. In the fall term, students will learn to document their work in a precise and professional manner, polish the ever-evolving artist statement and use both of these elements to build an artist's website. In the Spring, students will refine their artist statement and expand upon their portfolio. Additionally, we will dissect what writers have to say about art and artists, and learn how to write about visual art. Throughout the year, students will engage in a dialogue with professional artists and peers outside of their discipline.

### **EXTENDED ARTS COURSES**

Extended Arts courses are offerings that meet outside of the daily block schedule. These courses cannot be used for credit toward the two-year graduation requirement in Arts, but given the regularity of meetings, depth of commitment and study required for these groups, these courses are recognized as credit worthy endeavors of study.

Each course requires 40 hours of meeting time for semester credit (1.5 units) and is graded on a Pass/Fail basis.

### **BOYS A CAPPELLA/GIRLS A CAPELLA**

.75 units or 1.5 units (\*)

*(\*) May be taken as a semester course or yearlong course.*

A cappella introduces students to singing in an ensemble and harmonization, and teaches important skills such as teamwork, communication, collaboration, and accountability. There are two a cappella groups on campus, one for male identifying students and one for female identifying students. An

audition is required in order to enroll in the course; detailed audition information will be provided in advance. Students will preferably have prior experience in singing and basic music theory. A Cappella is an extracurricular elective course which may be taken as a semester and/or yearlong course.

There will be multiple performance opportunities throughout the year including the Winter Arts Festival, Gospel Night, and FAB. Students will meet an average of four hours per cycle with a minimum of 20 hours per semester and attendance at each meeting is crucial in order to be a viable member of the group.

### **STAGECRAFT**

.75 units or 1.5 units (\*)

(\*) May be taken as a semester course or yearlong course.

Stagecraft introduces students to the basics of technical theater operations and design for all areas of performance. Students will get hands-on experience with the performing arts construction tools, digital lighting and audio systems. Students will implement set, lighting, sound, props, and costume designs. The course will demonstrate how to become an effective participant in a group setting, develop camaraderie, and practice emotional intelligence. Students will actively work on the annual Fall Musical, Winter Arts Festival, BodyTalk, Spring Play and FAB. Students may self-select which aspects to focus on during the year. Students who take the course for a second semester (or beyond) further develop their proficiency in stagecraft design skills and take on leadership roles in the production and development of events. The class will be scheduled by student availability in concert with their fellow classmates and the Technical Director. Students will meet an average of four hours per cycle with a minimum of 20 hours per semester. Note: Some after-school and evening times may be required.

### **FALL MUSICAL**

1.5 units

This fall semester course introduces students to the techniques required to perform the musical theater genre. Students will obtain training in singing, acting, and dance, and learn to use correct terminology and vocabulary in written and oral discussion in this course. Participants will achieve a professional and personal understanding of the arts through audition, rehearsal, and performance. The class culminates in the Fall Musical in November. All students are expected to attend all after school rehearsals and performances. Participation is by audition.

## COMPUTER SCIENCE

Branson offers a variety of Computer Science electives that are intended to give students multiple ways to explore the subject. Students may take one or more of the term electives, or take the yearlong Object-Oriented Programming in Java elective. Interested students are also welcome to design their own term or yearlong independent study program in consultation with the Mathematics Department Chair.

For scheduling purposes, term electives are organized into loose sequences that will meet during the same block throughout the year. Students need not feel bound to follow a particular sequence, however. With the exception of Web Page Design with Database Programming and Introduction to Machine Learning in Python, all electives have no content prerequisite and are open to all students. Students are welcome to take any course from either sequence provided that it fits into their schedule.

All Computer Science courses are electives that students may take in addition to meeting their graduation requirements.

COMPUTER SCIENCE CURRICULUM AT A GLANCE	
YEARLONG COURSES	
➤ Object-Oriented Programming in Java	
FALL SEMESTER COURSES	SPRING SEMESTER COURSES
➤ Introduction to the Arduino Platform and C Programming ➤ Responsive Web Page Design ➤ Programming in Python	➤ Mobile Application Development in iOS ➤ Web Page Design with Database Programming ➤ Introduction to Machine Learning in Python

◇ Unless enrollment requests require a shift in offerings, all Computer Science courses will be singletons.

### COMPUTER SCIENCE DEPARTMENT HOMEWORK PHILOSOPHY

The majority of homework in computer science will be project-based, with students continuing with assignments that they have been working on in class. Students should spend their allotted time working on their project and avoid leaving their programming until the last moment. In some cases, students may have up to twelve hours of class and homework time to complete a project, and therefore it is vital that they manage their time well. It is acknowledged that there will be times when students will be unable to fix a problem with their code and they should arrange to meet with their teacher if they are unable to progress.

Occasionally, students will be given short programming exercises and reading assignments to enhance their learning in class. This should be completed during the allotted homework time, which

stipulates that sophomores through seniors should have, on average, approximately 40 minutes of homework per night per subject. Students have permission to stop working on their homework if they have not completed it during the allotted time frame.

## YEARLONG COURSES

### **OBJECT-ORIENTED PROGRAMMING IN JAVA**

3 units

*Prerequisite: Geometry with a B+ or better, or Geometry Honors with a B- or better, or approval of the department chair.*

This yearlong course will give students a comprehensive introduction to object-oriented computer programming and the fundamental concepts of Computer Science. Using the Java programming language, and modeled after the Advanced Placement Computer Science A curriculum, the course begins with an introduction to data types, control structures, data structures and the principles of object design. Students will get hands-on experience implementing a number of standard algorithms for searching, sorting, manipulating strings, and managing compound data structures. Emphasis will be placed on the principles of structured program design, designing elegant solutions to computable problems, and learning to test and debug computer code effectively. The course is project-oriented, with periodic quizzes and short homework assignments designed to give feedback and reinforce understanding. Prior knowledge of computer programming is not required. Note: Students taking this course may take the AP Computer Science A examination in May with some modest additional preparation. Those interested in pursuing this option should consult their course instructor for additional guidance.

## FALL SEMESTER COURSES

### **INTRODUCTION TO THE ARDUINO PLATFORM AND C PROGRAMMING**

1.5 units

*Prerequisite: Sophomores need approval of their advisor to enroll in this course.*

This course will give students the opportunity to use the Arduino platform and learn C programming. The Arduino platform is an open-source computer hardware/software platform for building digital devices and interactive objects that can sense and control the physical world around them. Students will learn how the Arduino platform works in terms of the physical board and libraries and the IDE (integrated development environment). Students will also learn about shields, which are smaller boards that plug into the main Arduino board to perform other functions such as sensing light, heat, GPS tracking, or providing a user interface display. The course is project oriented with periodic quizzes and short homework assignments designed to give students the opportunity to extend their knowledge and demonstrate understanding. All hardware will be provided as part of the course.

## **RESPONSIVE WEB PAGE DESIGN**

1.5 units

*Prerequisite: Sophomores need approval of their advisor to enroll in this course.*

This course will cover the essential elements of responsive web page design, from user interface design to front end coding in HTML, CSS and Javascript. Students will learn how to use CSS libraries such as Bootstrap to create responsive layouts. They will also learn how to use Javascript variables and functions, and respond to user input using Javascript. Students will get hands on experience developing web applications such as a biography and photo gallery. Emphasis will be placed on the project development life cycle and the importance of testing. The course is project oriented with periodic quizzes and short homework assignments designed to give students the opportunity to extend their knowledge and demonstrate understanding.

## **PROGRAMMING IN PYTHON**

1.5 units

*Prerequisite: Sophomores need approval of their advisor to enroll in this course.*

This course will give students an introduction to the Python programming language. Students will learn how to use data types, variables, selection, and iteration techniques. The course will then introduce the concepts of tuples and lists, before covering basic file and error handling. Python has the advantage of being platform independent and is widely used in industry to create everything from websites to computer games. Emphasis will be placed on developing the resilience and problem-solving skills necessary to become an effective computer programmer. The course is project based with periodic quizzes and short homework assignments designed to develop students' understanding of the key programming concepts.

## **SPRING SEMESTER COURSES**

### **WEB PAGE DESIGN WITH DATABASE PROGRAMMING**

1.5 units

*Prerequisite: Responsive Web Design, or proficiency in HTML and Javascript and approval of the department chair.*

This course will build on the topics covered in the Responsive Web Page Design course. The course will begin with an exploration of web-based user authentication, security features, reactive templates and routing. Students will then use the MongoDB programming language to perform key database operations such as inserting, removing and updating data as well as sorting and filtering. Students will subsequently use the Meteor.js platform to write templates that reactively display database contents. Students will get hands-on experience with developing web applications such as a social website aggregator and an advanced photo gallery. Emphasis will be placed on the project development life cycle and the importance of testing. The course is project oriented with periodic quizzes and short homework assignments designed to give students the opportunity to extend their knowledge and demonstrate understanding.

## **INTRODUCTION TO MACHINE LEARNING IN PYTHON**

1.5 units

*Prerequisite: Introduction to Python Programming with a B+ or above, or approval of the computer science teacher after demonstrating sufficient knowledge of Python*

This course will give students an introduction to machine learning algorithms. The course will explore the construction of algorithms which can learn from and make predictions on data. Students will firstly learn how to manage file input and output in Python. They will then learn how to use functions and SQL queries to analyze data. Students will then have an introduction to both the PySpark and Scikit-learn Python libraries and build machine learning models using real data. Finally, students will also learn how to use Kaggle to source their own data for their final project and create a machine learning model for their chosen topic. Emphasis will be placed on the project development life cycle and the importance of testing their models. The course is project oriented with periodic quizzes and short homework assignments designed to give students the opportunity to extend their knowledge and demonstrate understanding.

## **MOBILE APPLICATION DEVELOPMENT IN iOS**

1.5 units

*Prerequisite: Sophomores need approval of their advisor to enroll in this course.*

This course will give students an introduction to the powerful Swift programming language, now widely used to develop mobile applications for Apple products such as the iPhone and iPad. Students will gain the skills necessary to develop an iOS app from scratch. By the end of the course students will be able to demonstrate a completed app, and will have a basic understanding of object-oriented principles and memory management. Emphasis will also be placed on user interface design principles and user acceptance testing. The course is project based with periodic quizzes and short homework assignments designed to give students the opportunity to extend their knowledge and demonstrate an understanding of the key principles.

# ENGLISH

The English curriculum enables students to express and experience the school's four core values through analytical reading, writing, and discussion. All courses develop students' attentiveness to language and meaning, capacity for self-expression in essay and narrative, and the ability to justify interpretations with reference to a text and its context.

All juniors will be prepared for and will take the AP English Language and Composition exam.

The graduation requirement in English is twelve units or four full years of study.

ENGLISH CURRICULUM AT A GLANCE	
YEARLONG COURSES	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>➤ English I</li><li>➤ English II</li></ul>	
FALL SEMESTER COURSES	SPRING SEMESTER COURSES
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>➤ African-American Autobiography ◇</li><li>➤ Immigrant Stories</li><li>➤ Innovation Lab: Environment and Sustainability ◇</li><li>➤ Parallel Lines: Who We Are in the Information Age ◇</li><li>➤ Race and Space in America</li><li>➤ Reconstructing Myth</li><li>➤ Reimagining the Self</li><li>➤ Women Writers: African Diasporic Sci-Fi and Fantasy</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>➤ American Transcendentalism</li><li>➤ Encountering Beauty</li><li>➤ Modern Poetics</li><li>➤ Graphic Novels</li><li>➤ Science Fiction</li><li>➤ The Search for America in Post-WWII Los Angeles ◇</li><li>➤ Shakespeare and Restorative Justice ◇</li></ul>

◇ Courses annotated with this symbol are singletons.

## ENGLISH DEPARTMENT HOMEWORK PHILOSOPHY

In the English classroom we work collaboratively, sharing purposeful talk about literature and ideas and developing skills and understandings that will serve students as lifelong learners. Homework assignments, on the other hand, focus on individual acts of reading and writing.

Reading is a skill that develops with practice, much like driving. Students need hours “at the wheel” to develop fluency with a variety of texts and tasks. Through regular practice at home, reading at their own pace, students develop independence as readers and the ability to animate characters, scenes, and voices in a text. Autopilot does not forge good practice. Rather, the critical element for successful reading is active engagement—observing, noting, connecting, and raising questions in response to an author’s views. Nightly reading then entails finding at least thirty minutes of quiet,

focused time with a pen or pencil in hand. Above all reading is not a passive activity done as one is relaxing or falling asleep.

Writing, like reading, requires time and concentration. The English Department assigns essays of analysis or reflection or exercises in writing narrative or poetry. Teachers guide students in breaking down these varied writing tasks into manageable stages—brainstorming, gathering evidence, developing a thesis, forming an outline or structure, drafting, seeking critiques from others, revising, and finally proofing and polishing--over a series of classes and evenings. Teachers make time in class for collaboration through workshops and peer critiques and offer students opportunities to bring their ideas and drafts in for paper conferences. Finally, teachers specify resources students may consult for any given assignment and require accurate citation of all sources.

Students gain writing skills best by beginning tasks in a timely manner and setting aside thirty to forty minutes of focused time over two or three evenings, rather than postponing and struggling with a writing task late into a single evening. Procrastination is particularly harmful because it inhibits true engagement with the subject and fosters reliance on old writing strategies, bad habits, and “rules,” rather than development of new and original thinking.

## YEARLONG COURSES

### **ENGLISH I**

3 units

English I, a literature-based course, introduces first-year students to the demands of high school reading and writing. The course emphasizes the development of the active reading skills needed for high school work, and the development of proficiency in writing about reading. Readings familiarize students with genres, conventions, and concepts essential to understanding great works of the imagination. Readings are arranged thematically around stories of heroism: how and why individuals operate according to an internal or external sense of ethics. Readings may include Ms. Marvel, *The Odyssey*, *The Handmaid’s Tale*, *Ma Rainey’s Black Bottom*, *Macbeth*, selected poetry, and other short fiction. Summer reading is required.

### **ENGLISH II**

3 units

*Prerequisite: English I*

English II continues the development of students’ reading and writing skills and the study of genres, themes, and concepts begun in the first year. Students strengthen their abilities to support, test, and complicate conclusions drawn from reading and discussion. Fall work introduces the theme of the dangers and rewards of self-assertion through readings in foundation works of Western literature including biblical stories common to both Jewish and Christian traditions. Winter and spring work develops these themes as expressed in works by American writers such as Whitman, Dickinson, Douglass, Luen Yang, Fitzgerald, Williams, and Cisneros. Summer reading is required.

## FALL SEMESTER COURSES

### **AFRICAN-AMERICAN BIOGRAPHY**

1.5 units

At the center of American Literature lies the insights and calls to action of African-American artists, and at the center of that movement is the autobiographical form. Beginning with Frederick Douglass, African-American artists have used their lives as a text to analyze and in so doing have offered the most insightful narrative yet composed into what it means to be (and what it means to be denied being) an American. This course will look at the history and framework of African-American autobiography, culminating with a reading of Toni Morrison's *Song Of Solomon* as a way of understanding how this literary history impacts all African-American artists and art. Students will write analytical essays, self-reflective pieces, write to one another in an online forum, and design and present a final project. Texts may include: Harriet Jacobs—*Incidents in the Life Of A Slave Girl* (Summer), Excerpts from Booker T. Washington and W.E.B. Du Bois, *The Autobiography Of Malcolm X*, Toni Morrison—*Song Of Solomon*.

### **IMMIGRANT STORIES**

1.5 units

For a country built by an immigrant population, the United States can be a challenging place for newly arrived peoples. Many times, things are better here than in an immigrant's homeland, though that doesn't mean things are right here. By examining the stories of immigrants (often told by authors who are immigrants themselves), we will come to a better understanding of the opportunities and challenges presented by immigrating and attempting to acclimate to the United States. Essential questions discussed in class include: How does one become an "American"? Why is it important to maintain a sense of one's culture, and why can it be difficult to do so in the United States? What happens when oppressive elements of one's ethnic culture come up against progressive elements in American culture? And how can an outsider best find acceptance and peace with a larger community? Texts may include *How the Garcia Girls Lost Their Accents*, *Interpreter of Maladies*, *The Brief Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao*, *The Beautiful Things that Heaven Bears*, and *No-No Boy*. Student essays will require close analysis of text and attention to matters of grammar and style.

### **INNOVATION LAB: ENVIRONMENT AND SUSTAINABILITY**

1.5 units

The Innovation Lab class offers students an opportunity to take an interdisciplinary look at a current events topic. Team taught by teachers from multiple subject areas, the course challenges students to work collectively to envision solutions to real world problems. For the 2020–2021 school year, the course will focus on the environment and sustainability. Students will read M Jackson's *While Glaciers Slept*, selections from David Orr's *Hope is an Imperative*, and additional selections of classic and contemporary environmental essays, poetry, and short stories as a base for studying the intersection between art, literature, and science in the search for a way forward in a world under siege from climate change. Though interdisciplinary, this course can be used to fulfill the requirement for a semester English elective.

## **PARALLEL LINES: WHO WE ARE IN THE INFORMATION AGE**

1.5 units

In this class, students investigate ideas of the masculine and the feminine, especially as they pertain to the current moment of toxic masculinity and #MeToo. How do the young men and women of this and the coming generations find ways to see themselves as whole given the ways pop culture and social media work to fracture and distort the self? The course explores how ideas of the masculine and feminine are constructed, both historically and socially, and ways in which art and literature push back against those constructions in order to define concepts of gender anew. The class is particularly interested in the ways in which the inhabitants of this generation face a presumption of who they are before having the opportunity to construct that "who" for themselves. Texts may include: Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*, Junot Diaz's collection of short stories, *This Is How You Lose Her*, Miriam Toews' *Women Talking* and selected critical essays from Roxanne Gay, Vanessa Grigoriadis, Nick Hornby, Peggy Orenstein, Rebecca Solnit, and Jia Tolentino. Assessments include both critical and personal essays and a design-thinking project geared towards an investigation of the interconnections between the self and social.

## **RACE AND SPACE IN AMERICA**

1.5 units

This semester-long course explores the construction of race and identity in 20th century America. The texts focus on ways that individuals create, maintain, and protect unique racial and moral spaces for themselves and the conflicts inherent in doing so within a broader hegemonic framework. Students will examine who has access to an autonomous identity and how the construction of a coherent self is inequitable across American culture. Students will explore texts that foreground the simultaneous invisibility and conspicuousness that marginalized Americans experience. Students will interrogate their own unconscious biases to make visible the invisible assumptions that can invalidate the identities of others. The course develops students' writing skills through frequent compositions and challenges students to craft creative arguments deeply grounded in the language of the course's texts. Readings and viewings may include: Ralph Ellison's *Invisible Man*, Tommy Orange's *There There*, Viet Thanh Nguyen's *The Refugees*, Jordan Peele's film *Get Out*, Joe Talbot's film *The Last Black Man in San Francisco*, and selected short nonfiction.

## **RECONSTRUCTING MYTH**

1.5 units

How do classical myths change when the narrator changes? How do we reconcile different versions of the same story? If a myth can change so much from narrator to narrator, is there such a thing as one "true" rendering of a fictional story, and is it fair or useful to argue that one rendering is more true than another? In *Reconstructing Myth*, students will compare different renditions of classical myths to explore how different narrators construct the same stories. We will explore how a narrator's identity shapes what she pays attention to, and we will consider the impact of translation on meaning. Texts may include: excerpts of both Robert Fagles' and Emily Wilson's translations of Homer's *The Odyssey*, Madeline Miller's *Circe*, Margaret Atwood's *The Penelopiad*, Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, Zachary Mason's *Metamorphica*, Sophocles' *Antigone*, and Kamila Shamsie's *Home Fire*. Students will synthesize their findings in critical essays, a personal narrative essay, and a creative reconstruction of a myth of choice.

## **REIMAGINING THE SELF**

1.5 units

In this course students explore the formation of identity through family, culture, and politics, especially under the conditions of modern and postmodern worlds. We will examine the role of each of these forces in shaping how characters begin to understand both themselves and the worlds they find themselves in. The course looks especially at definitions of the self in the post-industrial, so-called “Information Age.” In a world dominated by social media, the spectacle of the global economy, and materialism as a defining goal, how do we, both as individuals and as a larger society, begin to find spaces where meaningful interaction is possible? In the Information Age are such spaces possible, even desirable? Readings may include: Kazuo Ishiguro’s *A Pale View of Hills* and *Never Let Me Go*; Sayaka Murata’s *Convenience Store Woman*; Haruki Murakami’s *Hard-Boiled Wonderland and the End of the World* and *The Wind-Up Bird Chronicle*. Essay assignments require close reading, analysis, reflection, creativity, and attention to matters of grammar and style.

## **WOMEN WRITERS: AFRICAN DIASPORIC SCI-FI AND FANTASY**

1.5 units

Speculative fiction is an umbrella term encompassing the more fantastical fiction genres, specifically science fiction, fantasy, utopian and dystopian fiction, and apocalypse and post-apocalyptic fiction. The term Afrofuturism seeks to reclaim black identity through art, culture, and political resistance. It is an intersectional lens through which to view possible futures or alternate realities. In this class, students will explore the speculative fiction of the women writers of the African Diaspora who have become staples in the genre as well as the work of celebrated newcomers. Readings may include: Octavia Butler’s *Kindred* and *Dawn*, Nnedi Okorafor’s *Who Fears Death*, Tomi Ayedemi’s *Children of Blood and Bone* and selected short stories. This course will unpack how these writers employ Black and African characters at the center of reflections of the past and future projections of the world, use their medium to deal with socio-political issues dealing with Black identity, and explore the trauma and the triumph of the Black experience in ways that other genres cannot. Writings require analysis, reflection, creativity, and attention to matters of grammar and style.

## **SPRING SEMESTER COURSES**

### **AMERICAN TRANSCENDENTALISM**

1.5 units

This course focuses on an undergirding principle of American literature: defining the individual’s relationship to the collective. The works studied deal with the struggle to be independent of society’s influence while maintaining its acceptance and respect—particularly in the face of gendered and racial hegemony. They illustrate the depth to which Transcendentalism has permeated the American consciousness, and the longevity with which it continues to inform our culture. Texts may include: *There, There*, *The Scarlet Letter* and *Their Eyes Were Watching God*, the seminal essays *Self-Reliance* and *Civil Disobedience*, as well as the play *A Soldier’s Story* and selected works of Kanye West, Chance the Rapper, and the Chicago Footwork scene. Students will hone their writing skills through a balance of analytical and creative compositions and the regular study of grammar and vocabulary, organizing bold, authoritative arguments and personal narratives.

## **ENCOUNTERING BEAUTY**

1.5 units

This is a literature course that examines society's definitions of how we decide who and what is beautiful. In this course, we will read and discuss literature that positions beauty as subjective and challenges normative modes of aesthetics. What are the constructs that determine what is beautiful in humanity? How can we work to deconstruct unhealthy definitions of beauty and to challenge the very systems that dictate our choices? We will read texts that grapple with beauty through the socially constructed lenses of race, gender, and ability. Through diverse narratives we can critique beauty's influence on power and status. Together we will begin to confront our own known and unknown biases and work together to reconstruct new ways of knowing ourselves and others. We will talk about ways in which society reinforces ideas of beauty to determine what matters and why. Texts may include: Toni Morrison's *The Bluest Eye*, Vladimir Nabokov's *Lolita*, Zadie Smith's *On Beauty*, and selections from *Beauty is Verb: New Poetry of Disability* by Sheila Black, and others. Writing assignments will include literary analysis with close reading of a text, personal essay writing, and creative responses.

## **MODERN POETICS**

1.5 units

This semester course—one part creative writing workshop, one part literature seminar—will first travel back in time to dig into Simon Armitage's translation of *Gawain and the Green Knight* in order to consider how medieval conceptions of honor parallel modern ones found everywhere from Compton gang culture to Branson's own community honor board. The course will then explore connections to a genealogy of modern Black American poets, from Langston Hughes to Claudia Rankine to Kendrick Lamar, in order to model a vocabulary of creative expression while reckoning with the fascinating and troublesome relationships between language, power, and cultural responsibility. How do our social circumstances shape what we might consider right or wrong, and what kinds of literary devices allow writers to authentically represent what Hughes would call "a community in transition"? We will explore these questions from both creative and analytical fronts. Mary Oliver's *A Poetry Handbook* will provide a baseline set of tools for our creative writing practices, which will expand as we identify those poetic devices in the *Gawain* poem, Hughes' *Montage of a Dream Deferred*, Rankine's *Citizen*, and Kendrick Lamar's *DAMN.*, culminating in a collection of original poems. Additionally, in discussing and interrogating these texts, we will hone our skills in written argumentation and close reading, while examining our own moral compasses and aesthetic sensibilities.

## **GRAPHIC NOVELS**

1.5 units

Long derided as being neither literature nor art, the medium of comics and the graphic novel, with its complex juxtapositions of word and image, is increasingly esteemed by modern scholars as a sophisticated mode of communication and expression. This course will simultaneously explore the aesthetic and historical parameters of the medium as well as the unique ability of this medium to express the experience of the outsider, and it will be necessarily interdisciplinary in its scope. We will consider the flexibility of the medium by looking broadly at its form -- superheroes, satire, autobiography -- as well as experimental and underground iterations and its crossover with the medium of film. Readings may include two longer novels by Art Spiegelman and Alison Bechdel, and

Gene Yang, and many shorter works and excerpts by comic and graphic artists. Students will learn to analyze and deconstruct visual images and narratives in conjunction with text through analytical writing and discussion.

### **SCIENCE FICTION**

1.5 units

The 20th century witnessed a number of groundbreaking and life changing scientific advances: the ability to harness the power of the atom, the discovery and manipulation of genes, the ability to travel into space, and the creation of the internet. Along with the benefits of these discoveries, a host of new anxieties have arisen as people come to terms with the potential dangers and abuses of new technologies. As a popular genre of literature, Science Fiction provides some of the most reflective, provocative, and critical assessments of society's hopes and fears regarding scientific advancements. This class will study thought-provoking texts in Science Fiction writing and examine the social, moral, and political questions the texts raise. A film viewing and online collaboration examining "sci-fi" themes in popular culture will supplement our texts. Text may include *Beggars in Spain*, *The Left Hand of Darkness*, and *Stories of Your Life and Others*. Student essays will require close analysis of text and attention to matters of grammar and style.

### **SHAKESPEARE AND RESTORATIVE JUSTICE**

1.5 units

*Prerequisite: Students must be 18 by February 10, 2021 in order to be eligible for this course.*

William Shakespeare has famously been called "the inventor of the human" by Harold Bloom. In this course, students examine both the human and the social as a means for re-examining themselves, but also as a means for exploring ideas of restorative justice, especially as they pertain to the U.S. criminal justice system. As the class reads works such as *The Tempest*, *King Lear*, *Measure for Measure*, and *Twelfth Night*, we will also be visiting San Quentin State Prison in order to interact with inmates involved in the Marin Shakespeare Company, "Shakespeare for Social Justice" program. Students engage in exercises and activities with the inmates, and many of the day-to-day in-class activities we use to study the plays mirror the activities used by the program director in her work with the inmates. The class challenges students to reevaluate their place in the world, and the place of institutions that we accept as social givens. Readings may include: selections from Angela Davis's *Are Prisons Obsolete*, Michelle Alexander's *The New Jim Crow*, and Shane Bauer's *American Prison*. Essay assignments require close reading, analysis, reflection, creativity, and attention to matters of grammar and style.

### **THE SEARCH FOR AMERICA IN POST-WWII LOS ANGELES**

1.5 units

This course offers the opportunity to do a deep dive both into a literary and cultural movement as well as a specific place: African-American literature in post-WWII Los Angeles. Starting with an historical investigation of the Watts uprising of 1965, students will study how the physical space of Los Angeles and the culture that sprang from it led to the events surrounding the 1992 uprising and those events' subsequent impact on American race relations. Students will write analytical essays, self-reflective pieces, write to one another in an online forum, and design and present a final project.

Texts may include: Anna Deveare Smith's *Twilight* (Text and film), Paul Beatty's *The Sellout*, and the documentary series *OJ In America*.

# HISTORY

The History Department offers a diverse curriculum that challenges students to engage the past critically in order to better understand and affect the world we live in today. Through a sequenced program of integrated skill-building, students are encouraged to formulate their own questions about the past, analyze primary and secondary sources, design research plans and write papers from a variety of perspectives. The goal is to deepen students' understanding of how the world has come to be what it is and to sharpen their sense of responsibility as global citizens. The History Department believes that the study of the past fosters the compassion, humility and moral vision that Branson strives to impart.

The graduation requirement in History is nine units, or three full years of study, consisting of Modern World History in the freshman year, United States History Honors in the sophomore year, and two upper-level semester courses in History taken over the course of the junior and senior years.

HISTORY CURRICULUM AT A GLANCE	
YEARLONG COURSES	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Modern World History</li> <li>➤ United States History Honors</li> </ul>	
FALL SEMESTER COURSES	SPRING SEMESTER COURSES
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ American Politics Honors</li> <li>➤ American Protest and Reform Honors</li> <li>➤ Bay Area History Honors</li> <li>➤ Ethics and Justice Honors</li> <li>➤ History of American Sports Honors</li> <li>➤ Immigration Honors</li> <li>➤ Journalism Honors</li> <li>➤ Modern Latin America Honors</li> <li>➤ Principles of Microeconomics Honorst</li> <li>➤ Soviet Union Honors</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ American Politics Honors</li> <li>➤ Food: History and Literature Honors</li> <li>➤ History of Hip Hop Honors</li> <li>➤ Modern Africa Honors</li> <li>➤ Modern East Asia Honors</li> <li>➤ Principles of Macroeconomics Honors †</li> <li>➤ Race in America Honors</li> <li>➤ World War II Honors</li> <li>➤ World Religions Honors</li> </ul>

† Principles of Microeconomics and Principles of Macroeconomics cannot be used to fulfill the graduation requirement in History.

◇ All semester History courses are singletons.

## HISTORY DEPARTMENT HOMEWORK PHILOSOPHY

The written source is the essential tool of any historian, and thus the Branson History Department strives to imbue a deep appreciation for historical texts in each of our students. A strong command of critical reading provides a factual foundation for the student to participate in our collective analysis of historical events, trends, personalities and systems of power during each history class meeting. Our homework philosophy stems from this fundamental belief in the power of the source

for historians and for the student of history and the importance of document analysis as one of the key elements needed to create a robust classroom discussion. When assigning reading in preparation for class, we encourage our students to actively read and annotate the text, to seek out thematic trends and connections to past readings, and to retain a critical skepticism of any source that might drift from the author's perspective into polemics.

Invariably students will be required to do some reading prior to the meeting of a history class. While this reading is most often in the form of a textbook in our freshman, sophomore and junior survey classes or more detailed monographs in our senior seminars, the reading might also be a primary source or scholarly article. Regardless, students are expected to come to class with a working knowledge of the assigned reading. Members of the History Department assess this knowledge in class using a number of different techniques, but all strive to ensure that each student masters the content of the reading on a nightly basis. Some techniques for assessment include collecting a written summary of the reading, requiring notes in the margins of the text, occasionally presenting pop quizzes on the material or asking students to complete a series of analytical questions based on the reading.

While our homework philosophy focuses most consistently on the importance of critical reading in preparation for discussion, the History Department also requires students to complete written assignments outside of class. Occasionally, members of the department might require minor assignments such as completing data charts or discussion questions, but the most consistent written homework assignment is the analytical essay. The History Department strives to assign essays that can be tackled over a series of evenings, thus allowing the opportunity for in-class discussion and reflection throughout the course of the writing process. We believe that, like critical reading, analytical writing is best done carefully and deliberately, and thus we strongly encourage our students to manage their time outside of class to the best of their ability. It is through deliberate, focused effort and careful use of time that students best prepare for class discussions and generate the most thoughtful written work.

## YEARLONG COURSES

### **MODERN WORLD HISTORY**

3 units

Modern World History provides a study of the world from around 1500 (Age of Exploration) to the present. The course will introduce students to the habits of mind used in the study of history: close-reading and analysis of primary sources; articulating arguments grounded in evidence; participating in civil discourse; and writing historical analysis essays. Themes of the course include: identity; faith and role of religion; power and authority; and exchange. Units of study include, but are not limited to: European colonialism; revolutionary movements of the modern era; and modern ideologies and their historical roots; and globalization. The course culminates in a History behind the Headlines Project where students analyze the historical antecedents of a current event.

## **UNITED STATES HISTORY HONORS**

3 units

The grade 10 U.S. History Honors course, a comprehensive survey of American history, introduces students to the political, economic, social, intellectual, diplomatic, and cultural developments that have led to the creation of a modern democratic society. Stretching from the colonial era to an examination of Cold War policies and the Reagan Revolution, the course emphasizes the analysis of primary documents and frequent writing of analytic essays. The course reinforces and extends writing, research and historical thinking skills introduced in the freshman year. Through class discussions, primary and secondary readings, and the writing of historical essays, students further develop the ability to communicate their ideas clearly and effectively, to think critically, and to interpret and analyze issues fundamental to an understanding of the American past. The course culminates in a project in which students employ historical research and analytical writing skills. Texts include Research Challenges in United States History, a primary source document reader.

### **FALL SEMESTER COURSES**

#### **AMERICAN POLITICS**

1.5 units

American Politics will examine the development of the American Republic and its institutions, and will investigate the various groups, constituencies, beliefs, and ideas that characterize current U.S. politics. Constitutional questions, political values, political beliefs, political parties, interest groups, the influence of mass media, and the effects of government and public policy both upon the states and individuals will be studied throughout the course. Because 2020 is an election year, a great deal of emphasis will be placed upon studying party politics, the presidential campaigns, and the fall's most significant or trenchant congressional elections.

#### **AMERICAN PROTEST AND REFORM**

1.5 units

Since the American Revolution (the nation's founding protest), the United States has seen three sustained periods of grassroots momentum to change political and social life: the decades following both the First and Second Industrial Revolutions, and the decades following World War II. This class will consider each of these periods to examine what lessons they hold about history and society. The final project will allow students to consider what comparisons can be drawn between these histories and contemporary social movements via a research focus and presentation format of their own design.

#### **BAY AREA HISTORY**

1.5 units

In many ways, the history of the Bay Area is a case study of key questions in American history. What is self-government? What should be the role of the government in people's lives? How should the government interact with other places and other peoples? How did people respond to political, social and economic issues of their time? Using these guiding questions, the Bay Area History course will dig deeper into key moments in our area's history from its indigenous origins to the 21st century. We will take advantage of our proximity to local landmarks and will visit sites from the City

to Marin County to the East Bay. The primary text for the course is California: A History, along with selections from primary sources, films and literature.

### **ETHICS AND JUSTICE**

1.5 units

How do I live a happy, meaningful, “good” life? Sages in Eastern and Western traditions hold that the “good life” is not necessarily the easy life, but the one lived well, according to ethical principles. In this seminar, we will think hard about this assertion, and consider some of the most fascinating – and challenging – issues of ethics and justice. The primary text in the course is Justice: What’s the Right Thing to Do? We will also read Bryan Stevenson’s formative work Just Mercy. Students will study the ideas of the great philosophical writers such as Aristotle, Kant, Rawls, and Mill. We will apply these ideas to the ethical dilemmas we face in our everyday lives as well as considering our communities and broader society. We will explore the ways that ethics and justice play out in unjust systems, analyzing the Juvenile Justice System nationally and in the Bay Area.

### **AMERICAN SPORTS**

1.5 units

While sports are sometimes dismissed as mere games or unsophisticated mass entertainment, organized athletic competition has a long tradition as a defining institution for communities and societies. Consider the fact that, before “The Star-Spangled Banner” formally became the anthem of the nation, it had become the anthem of professional baseball. Or consider how much the language of sports (analogies and metaphors) is used to shape and describe professional and political life. This class considers the relationship of modern (since the turn of the 20th century) American sports to the major themes of U.S. history. The class will also explore sports’ interrelationship with other aspects of individual and communal identity formation: race, gender, class, age, national and local identity, and origin. The class capstone will be an independent student project exploring some aspect of the course’s themes and applying them to a topic of student choice.

### **IMMIGRATION**

1.5 units

What does it mean to be an immigrant? Who is affected by immigration policy, and how? What is the future of immigration in this country and around the world? This course will focus on issues of immigration locally, nationally and around the globe. We will first consider the origins of the concept of immigration: how different groups of people have migrated throughout history and when and how this migration became immigration with the creation of clear borders and the emerging nation-state. We will then look more closely at several case studies of immigration policy and practice, taking care to recognize the perspective of both the host country and the immigrants themselves. As part of this process, we will also investigate what it really means to cross these borders politically, culturally, economically and personally. The course will culminate in an independent research project about a specific aspect of immigration policy or experience of the student’s choice. Students will be encouraged to develop creative and authentic ways to display their findings from this research and share them with their communities.

## **JOURNALISM**

1.5 units

As the only profession whose work is explicitly protected by the U.S. Constitution, journalism is an essential part of living in a democratic society. This seminar seeks to answer questions about the practice of journalism itself and about the ways in which journalism interacts with other segments of American: including politics, social issues and the larger media world. Students in the seminar will consider legal and ethical questions that concern the journalism industry as well as develop practical journalism skills that will allow them to create production-quality news stories, features and criticism. Students will learn the considerations for brainstorming story ideas; the art of interviewing; the structures of different types of stories; the processes for editing; and ideas for incorporating visuals to tell stories. Readings for the course will draw from professional examples in national and local media as well as traditional journalism textbooks.

## **MODERN LATIN AMERICA**

1.5 units

What impact will the US-Mexico-Canada Trade Agreement have on Mexico's economic development? What role does tango play in Argentinian culture? What explains the shift from burgeoning Latin American democratic movements in the early postcolonial era to repressive, radical, and totalitarian control in mid to late 20th centuries? While the course will begin with an examination of the 19th century independence movements, the bulk of the course will be devoted to 20th century developments in Latin America including, but not limited to, the narratives of various dictatorships in Brazil, Chile, and El Salvador and accompanying resistances movements, development of Latin American art, music and dance, and international connections between Latin American countries and the United States. The course will culminate in students completing an original research paper on a topic of their choosing. The goal of the course is to provide students with both a deepening understanding and appreciation of Latin American societies and cultures and to place Latin American history and politics in a prominent global position

## **PRINCIPLES OF MICROECONOMICS**

1.5 units

*Note: Principles of Microeconomics cannot be used to fulfill the graduation requirement in H1story.*

The experience of Microeconomics is the study of how individuals and societies choose to use the scarce resources that nature and previous generations have provided. While studying different economic models, we'll answer core questions. What are these scarce resources and how are they distributed? What is a monopoly? Can monopolies charge any price they want for their products? What is game theory? How does it play a role in economic decision making? The course will also explore behavioral economics, the intersection of psychology and economics. Students will be expected to participate actively in class discussions, apply qualitative and quantitative reasoning, and think critically.

## **SOVIET UNION**

1.5 units

We will be strapping on our boots and marching through various revolutionary Russian and Soviet movements from the imperial Romanov period through Putin. The course will briefly look at the imperial despotic control of Peter the Great, Catherine the Great and other Romanovs to early examples of the tensions between democratic movements and autocratic control that face the Russian people through the twentieth century. A major theme will be the cycle of reform and reaction that marked the 20th century Soviet Union. The course will culminate in an examination of Putin's regime in light of Russian history from the 1917 Revolution onward. The goal of the course is to push students' to look for the historical antecedents of our current world and to continue honing independent research skills.

## **SPRING SEMESTER COURSES**

### **AMERICAN POLITICS**

1.5 units

American Politics will examine the development of the American Republic and its institutions, and will investigate the various groups, constituencies, beliefs, and ideas that characterize current U.S. politics. Constitutional questions, political values, political beliefs, political parties, interest groups, the influence of mass media, and the effects of government and public policy both upon the states and individuals will be studied throughout the course. Because 2020 is an election year, a great deal of emphasis will be placed upon studying party politics, the presidential campaigns, and the fall's most significant or trenchant congressional elections.

### **FOOD: HISTORY AND LITERATURE**

1.5 units

Apple pie, hamburgers, fortune cookies, cioppino, enchilada and chicken bog. Momo, pasty, empanada, pierogi. The food we eat is the story of religion, culture, race and identity. It is the story of the agricultural revolution, the Silk Road, Columbian Exchange, economic hardships, imperialism, immigration ... and Instagram and YouTube. In this course, we will tackle the topic of food by studying its history, by reading works from chefs, food historians and food critics and by diving into the world of food television and documentaries. Finally, we will explore our own histories with food and how food has affected our lives and our families' stories.

### **HISTORY OF HIP HOP**

1.5 units

This seminar covers the evolution of hip-hop as it moved from a counterculture to a multi-billion dollar industry and global movement. The class will explore various socio-economic, political and cultural antecedents that birthed the movement in 1970s New York City, then trace the change of the culture over time. The course is necessarily interdisciplinary in nature, blending social and political history with film study, poetics, and basic introductions to the formal elements of hip-hop's "pillars": DJ-ing/beat making, rapping, dance, graffiti/visual art, and fashion/style. The class considers several hot-button issues pertaining to race, class, gender, language, and sexuality relevant to

hip-hop's spread and commercialization. Ultimately, the course intends to convey an understanding and appreciation of the causes, course, and consequences of hip-hop's trajectory as a movement that has transformed global culture.

### **MODERN AFRICA**

1.5 units

This course will explore African history in the post-World War II period, both in the big picture and through several specific case studies. We will start by laying the foundations of imperialism and colonial rule throughout the continent, and then the bulk of the course will then be about decolonization and the successes and struggles of post-colonial African states. Students will discover which factors led to the wave of decolonization that swept across the continent from the 50s through the mid-70s, how those newly independent countries created a new political, economic and cultural landscape for themselves on their own terms, and what new challenges and successes they have experienced in the last several decades. The course will conclude with student-led lessons and presentations on significant contemporary (political, environmental, economic, technological, etc..) issues facing Africans in the 21st century.

### **MODERN EAST ASIA**

1.5 units

The histories of China, Korea, Japan and Taiwan are distinct yet intertwined, and their geographical closeness and connected histories allow for interesting exploration of their social, political and economic issues of the 21st century. How do cultural diffusion and syncretism manifest in China, Korea, Japan and Taiwan? How do these countries' connected histories affect its modern relationships with one another? Are these East Asian states unique or influenced by one another? The course will begin with a review of East Asian history before the turn of the 20th century and then focus primarily on events of the 20th and 21st centuries. Modern East Asia is the primary text for the course, supplemented by primary source material from historical and contemporary writers and artists.

### **PRINCIPLES OF MACROECONOMICS**

1.5 units

*Prerequisite: Successful completion of Algebra II.*

*Note: Principles of Microeconomics cannot be used to fulfill the graduation requirement in H1story.*

Macroeconomics is the study of how countries function from an economic perspective. This course will explore the role of the Federal Government and the Federal Reserve in affecting unemployment, inflation, interest rates, national debt and the global economy. How is a federal budget created? How are tax and spending decisions made on a federal level? Should we care about inflation and unemployment? What is the debt ceiling and what role does it play in the economy? What is the impact of increasing economic inequality on our society? Students will be expected to participate actively in class discussions, apply qualitative and quantitative reasoning, and think critically.

## **RACE IN AMERICA**

1.5 units

Who gets to define what race someone is? How are race and power related? How did Americans talk about race in 1750, and what will they be saying in 2050? This course will offer students the opportunity to explore the complicated role that race has played throughout America's history, as a means of developing a better understanding of where we are today. We will begin by learning about how *other* countries think about and experience race, knowing that understanding others can often help us better understand ourselves. We will then look at the origin of the idea of race at and before America's founding and the way in which the definition of "white" changed over time with the arrival and assimilation of new immigrant groups. In addition, we will explore the role that race has played in providing - or restricting - access to the American Dream and the topic of racial categorization and identification on official documents and the complicated questions it presents. The course will conclude with an independent research project and presentations on topics of students' choice. Students will be encouraged to find creative, meaningful and authentic ways to share their findings with their communities.

## **WORLD WAR II**

1.5 units

The course will begin with a broad overview of World War II, the chronology of the war, the military actions taken, and the war at home. After that, students in the class will choose what aspects of the war they would like to focus on and our continued studies of the war will focus on your choices. In the past, student-chosen themes of study have included technological advances, political propaganda, ideological rationale, the experiences of minorities during the war, and atrocities. The course culminates in a research project that will produce a period-style piece of media to be showcased on campus.

## **WORLD RELIGIONS**

1.5 units

As T.S. Eliot asks "Where is the wisdom that is lost in knowledge?" In what ways does the study of religious traditions deepen our understanding of what it means to be human? In this seminar, we will explore our own conceptions of faith as we study the major world religions (Hinduism, Buddhism, Christianity, Judaism, Islam) along with other religious traditions such as Shamanism, Mysticism, Taoism, Confucianism and modern religious sects. We will also explore our own systems of belief and experience holy places of worship in the Bay area. We will complete site visits to local places of worship—temples, a mosque, zendo. We will have the opportunity to interview religious leaders, hear personal stories from adherents, and deepen our understanding of the experience of these faiths and philosophies. We will experience faith and study it.

## HUMAN DEVELOPMENT

The Human Development program teaches adolescents interpersonal and self-management skills needed to navigate a diverse and changing world, and make informed decisions that benefit themselves and others, so they can evolve into kind, curious, and self-aware young adults. By providing accurate and relevant information in a nonjudgmental, socially-sensitive way, we create safe spaces to have uncomfortable conversations about real-life situations, where students cultivate their personal agency, a deeper awareness of their role in the community and learn to foster healthy relationships of all kinds.

All Human Development courses are semester-long classes meet once per 6-day cycle during one of Branson's "flex" blocks. Each flex block is 40 minutes long and meets at the end of the school day. In general, there is no homework assigned in Human Development classes, and all classes are graded on a Pass/Fail basis. Students take all Human Development classes in addition to their normal Branson course load. Each Human Development course earns 0.5 credits of graduation credit.

The graduation requirement in Human Development is completion of The Developing Mind and Healthy Sexuality. Upper-level Human Development electives will be announced and added to the Curriculum Guide in May, 2020.

### HUMAN DEVELOPMENT CURRICULUM AT A GLANCE

#### REQUIRED COURSES (TAKEN DURING EITHER THE FALL OR THE SPRING)

- The Developing Mind
- Healthy Sexuality

#### FALL SEMESTER COURSES

- To be announced in May, 2020

#### SPRING SEMESTER COURSES

- To be announced in May, 2020

### HUMAN DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT HOMEWORK PHILOSOPHY

All required work for each Human Development course happens during class time. Homework is only assigned when a student misses a Human Development class, in which case they are asked to do a written assignment that covers the content of the missed class. Instructions for all written assignments are available on the student website.

All Human Development courses cover rich subject areas and there is always far more information available to students than can be covered in class. Students are certainly encouraged to do their own independent research whenever they are curious to dive deeper with the material.

## REQUIRED COURSES (TAKEN DURING EITHER THE FALL OR THE SPRING)

### **THE DEVELOPING MIND**

.5 units

The freshmen Human Development curriculum is rooted in the social and emotional principles of self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision-making, and covers aspects of psychology 101, basic neuroscience, mindset, and health education. The first half of the course will introduce students to a study of the teenage brain and explore ideas on how to become well-balanced high school students by understanding the learning process as well as the impact of habits, sleep and stress on one's well-being. The second half of the course will focus on health and social areas where students may be faced with new challenges. This course offers the opportunity for students to define their personal values and examine their choices more clearly through group discussion, individual reflection, and peer collaboration. Specific topics will include: drugs & alcohol, healthy peer relationships, organization and study habits,

### **HEALTHY SEXUALITY**

.5 units

The sophomore Human Development curriculum explores issues related to sexual health and identity, with the overall goal of providing accurate, current information that will foster healthy decision-making now and in the future. Topics discussed will include gender identity and expression, media influences on sexual development, reproductive anatomy, sexually transmitted infections, and contraception. The second half of the course will focus on developing healthy relationships and recognizing unhealthy or abusive warning signs. The process of discovering what one needs from a relationship requires much self-reflection; students will be given opportunities to ask themselves challenging and important questions to become aware of their own values and boundaries. Through this exploration of self in relationships, we will review and dive deeper into such topics as consent laws, sexual abuse and harassment, drugs and alcohol, mental health issues, and sources.

## FALL SEMESTER COURSES

**TO BE ANNOUNCED IN MAY, 2020**

## SPRING SEMESTER COURSES

**TO BE ANNOUNCED IN MAY, 2020**

## LANGUAGE

The Language Department believes that linguistic and cultural fluency are essential preconditions for becoming responsible and committed global citizens. To achieve the desired level of fluency, we work with our students on the four basic language skills: reading, writing, speaking and listening. In our classrooms, we communicate only in the target language, and whenever possible, we enhance this linguistically rich classroom environment with the immersive experiences of international travel and connection with local communities. At the end of our program, students will feel confident communicating with native speakers both orally and in writing, reading literature and other authentic texts such as newspapers and magazine articles in the target language, and interpreting a culture different from their own through the variegated lenses of the arts, literature, history, politics and geography of the regions where the language is spoken.

The graduation requirement in Language is twelve units, or three full years of study, of one language, or 16 units, or two full years of study each, of two different languages. The Language Department strongly encourages students to take four years of one language in order to experience the full benefits of the program.

LANGUAGE CURRICULUM AT A GLANCE		
ITALIAN	LATIN	MANDARIN
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Italian I</li> <li>➤ Italian II</li> <li>➤ Italian III</li> <li>➤ AP Italian Language and Culture</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Latin I</li> <li>➤ Latin II</li> <li>➤ Latin III</li> <li>➤ Latin IV Honors: Golden Age Poetry</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Mandarin I</li> <li>➤ Mandarin II</li> <li>➤ Mandarin III</li> <li>➤ Mandarin IV Honors</li> <li>➤ Mandarin V</li> </ul>
SPANISH	SPANISH FOR NATIVE AND HERITAGE SPEAKERS	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Spanish I</li> <li>➤ Spanish II</li> <li>➤ Spanish III Honors</li> <li>➤ AP Spanish Language and Culture</li> <li>➤ Spanish V: History, Culture and Literature of the Spanish-Speaking World</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Spanish for Native and Heritage Speakers</li> <li>➤ Spanish for Native and Heritage Speakers Advanced</li> <li>➤ Spanish for Native and Heritage Speakers III: AP Spanish Language and Culture</li> <li>➤ Spanish for Native and Heritage Speakers IV</li> </ul>	

◇ All Italian, Latin, Mandarin, and Spanish for Native and Heritage Speakers classes, as well as Spanish V, are singletons.

## LANGUAGE DEPARTMENT HOMEWORK PHILOSOPHY

The Language Department believes that learning a foreign language is a continuous process that requires dedication and daily practice. The cumulative nature of our academic subject matter and the need to master four fundamental skills (speaking, listening, writing and reading) demand sustained effort both inside and outside the classroom.

We assign up to approximately 30 minutes of daily homework in Levels I and II so that students can reinforce what they have learned in class. Our homework aims to achieve the following goals in the four languages we offer (Italian, Latin, Mandarin and Spanish).

- Memorization of vocabulary
- Correct use of verb tenses
- Understanding of sentence structure in the target language
- Reinforcement of reading and writing skills
- Providing the time students need to process the information they have learned in the classroom

The Department assigns a combination of exercises that range from drills aimed at memorizing vocabulary and grammar to free writing, where students need to combine their basic language skills with their creativity. We also assign short readings and subsequent questions that check for understanding. Taking into account the wide array of reading speeds among students in a class, it is more efficient to assign these kinds of exercises for homework in order to allow students to work at their own pace without adding the pressure of a timed class activity.

In Levels III and IV we assign up to approximately 30-40 minutes of daily homework. The goal continues to be to improve the four basic language skills. In these two levels, homework is entirely related to class preparation. Students work on readings, “thought questions” or do research about a particular topic. Their preparation and acquired knowledge of the topic will make them feel confident to participate actively in our class discussions. For those students who may not be as talkative as others in class, these kinds of assignments are an excellent opportunity to process the material at their own pace and feel better about self-expression. Other assignments are designed to help students organize and prepare for an upcoming longer assessment by breaking the assignment up into smaller and more manageable segments. Finally, some assignments will engage students in a reflection at the end of a unit so that they can process and consolidate what they have learned.

In Level V, the daily homework may take students up to 40 minutes. At this level, our classes are seminar style and we adopt a collegiate approach to daily preparation. On the one hand, homework is considered daily preparation for class, achieved through reading, acquisition of sophisticated vocabulary and thought questions about the material. On the other, homework is an excellent opportunity to perfect analytical skills, the most challenging ones to master in a foreign language. Homework also aids in students’ preparation to lead class discussion at a high level. Finally, homework may provide students the necessary mastery of a topic to act as a teacher for his/her classmates. On these occasions, students explain the material they have mastered, perfect their public speaking and presentation skills, and, finally, add their personal touch and creativity to their lesson.

## ITALIAN COURSES

### **ITALIAN I**

3 units

Italian I is an introduction to the fundamentals of the Italian language. Students of Italian I will acquire a basic proficiency in the four language skills: speaking, reading, listening and writing. They will be introduced to the vocabulary, grammar and syntax of beginning Italian and will demonstrate their command of this material via spoken and written exercises, projects and activities. Readings, music and videos will be used to present Italian culture. The interactive audio program will reinforce weekly grammar lessons and allow students to improve their accents and listening comprehension skills.

### **ITALIAN II**

3 units

*Prerequisite: Completion of Italian I with a C- or above, or equivalent score on the placement test.*

Italian II is a continuation of Italian I and emphasizes precision in intermediate grammar and language usage. Students will read authentic Italian texts, write compositions, and give oral presentations. They will continue to study Italian culture via films, magazines and newspapers. The interactive audio program will continue to be used to reinforce the oral component of the course.

### **ITALIAN III**

3 units

*Prerequisite: Completion of Italian II with C or above, or approval of the instructor and department chair.*

Students in Italian III will further develop their listening, speaking, reading and writing skills. While this course includes a review of grammatical structures and usage, linguistic competency will be achieved primarily through the study of Italian culture. Students will thus enhance their communicative proficiency through the use of authentic materials including literary texts, news clippings, film, music and websites. Students in Italian III will respond to what they read and hear by writing frequent compositions and by completing projects on various aspects of Italian culture. Students in Italian III will be expected to perform these tasks with grammatical precision in an accent that approaches native Italian pronunciation.

### **AP ITALIAN LANGUAGE AND CULTURE**

3 units

*Prerequisite: Completion of Italian III with a B- or above, or approval of the instructor and department chair.*

This course aims to develop the students' reading, writing, listening and speaking skills within a framework that reflects the richness of Italian literature, culture, and language. Students in Italian IV will read a survey of Italian literature from the first examples of Italian poetry, including St. Francis

and Dante, to the short stories, plays and novels of writers such as Ignazio Silone, Alberto Moravia, Italo Calvino and Luigi Pirandello. The Italian IV curriculum also includes seminal films that track our readings, including directors such as Rossellini, De Sica and Visconti. This course also offers a review of Italian grammar within the context of our literary and cultural readings. Students will hone their skills by writing critical essays on the readings, and by giving oral presentations on cultural topics. Students will be expected to write with grammatical precision and to perform their spoken tasks with good grammar in an accent that approaches native Italian pronunciation. All students in this course are required to take the AP examination in May to receive AP designation on their transcript.

## LATIN COURSES

### **LATIN I**

3 units

Latin I provides students with an immersive language environment similar to that encountered in modern language courses. Heavy emphasis is placed on speaking and writing Latin, as well as on listening and reading. The goal of the course is to provide vocabulary and grammar structures that are most common and most useful for personal expression. Topics covered include greetings, descriptions, clothing, talents, pastimes, preferences, the classroom, school life, food, pets, the family, and basic actions. Over the course of the year, students will learn common colloquial idioms and the basics of Latin grammar, including the noun case system, adjectival forms, and simple present and past verb constructions. The course text is a preliminary draft of Dr. de Marcellus' Latin textbook *Colloquendo*, which provides vocabulary, grammar notes, and readings, supplemented by online exercises.

### **LATIN II**

3 units

*Prerequisite: Completion of Latin I with a C- or above, or equivalent score on the placement test.*

In Latin II, students consolidate their mastery of the basics of Latin, while extending their ability to initiate and sustain conversation. Topics covered extend outward from the local area, to national and international topics. As students gain expertise in the past tense and expressions of time, they will focus on storytelling, reading about and discussing ancient history, Roman culture, and Greek mythology. Grammar introduced includes the remaining noun cases, the fourth and fifth declensions, the perfect tense, participles, gerunds, and indirect statement. By the end of the course, students should be comfortable contributing to open-ended class conversation on a range of topics. The course text is a preliminary draft of Dr. de Marcellus' Latin textbook *Colloquendo*, which provides vocabulary, grammar notes, and readings, supplemented by online exercises.

### **LATIN III**

3 units

*Prerequisite: Completion of Latin II with a C or above, or approval of the instructor and department chair.*

In Latin III, students will continue to consolidate their use of indicative verb tenses, while learning more uses of the subjunctive mood to express such concepts as doubt, fear, and hypothetical

situations and further internalizing correct use of Sequence of Tenses through repeated practice. The thrust of the class will move from set- piece grammar and thematic topics to more open-ended discussions centered around provocative readings, including short historical accounts, fables, and myths, with the goal of building practice voicing observations and opinions about the readings, as well as writing longer, discursive Latin compositions. The course textbook will continue to consist of material provided by Dr. de Marcellus, supplemented by readings from ancient, medieval, and modern Latin sources.

### **LATIN IV HONORS: GOLDEN AGE POETRY**

3 units

*Prerequisite: Completion of Latin III with a B- or above, or approval of the instructor and department chair.*

Following a theme of “Love and Loss,” Latin IV Honors presents selections from the epic and lyric poetry of the Roman poets Vergil, Ovid, and Catullus. Students begin with an epic, reading the tale of Dido and Aeneas in Vergil’s Aeneid as well as some of the best-known myths in Ovid’s Metamorphoses. Turning to lyric, students will study Ovid’s Amores and a wide array of poems by Catullus. Throughout the course, Martial epigrams, read at sight, reinforce the salient themes. Our work will focus not only on details of grammar and translation, but also on the poetic techniques and the artistic values of poets of the Golden Age. The primary objective of the course is to teach techniques for a close reading of poetry. To this end, students will write a number of short paragraphs and longer essays in which they will analyze and describe how the poet’s language serves to reinforce his message. In addition, students will practice literal translation of the text, continue to build their Latin vocabulary, develop familiarity with the differences in style and purpose of epic and lyric poetry, learn to scan dactylic hexameter, elegiac couplet, hendecasyllabic, and choliambic verse, and recognize and identify an array of poetic devices and literary figures. The course will include at least one project in which students recast the poetic subjects using their own artistic voice and medium.

## MANDARIN COURSES

### **BRANSON MANDARIN PROGRAM PHILOSOPHY**

In the fall of 2008, Branson began offering Mandarin I and building a program which now includes levels I, II, III, IV Honors, and Mandarin V. When we started our program, we decided to teach Traditional characters, as many schools were doing at the time. To keep pace with the rapid changes in Mandarin instruction, including the trend toward more instruction in Simplified characters, we will shift our emphasis from Traditional to Simplified starting with our Mandarin I curriculum in 2016-2017.

Some context is helpful in understanding the relationship between Traditional and Simplified characters. The Chinese government introduced Simplified characters starting in the mid-1950, simplifying about 2,000 of the most commonly used Chinese characters. Our instructional approach will provide students with a solid grounding in Simplified characters and then extend their knowledge into Traditional characters, which will give them intellectual access to culture, literature,

and the arts from the pre-Simplified era as well as preparing them for communication across Chinese speaking countries, some of which have not adopted the Simplified system.

### **MANDARIN I**

3 units

The first year is an introductory course, and students will practice their communication skills, learn to read and write Chinese characters as well as learn to type Chinese characters using various techniques. In order to allow students to learn to think in a foreign language as well as develop pronunciation, tones and conversation skills, this class is taught only in Mandarin. Daily lessons are presented through various media. During each class period, every student practices sentence structure, pinyin, and reading characters through engaging activities. Students reinforce all skills through daily assignments, partner work and laboratory practice with the use of laptops, audio CDs and workbooks. The course evaluates the four language skills throughout the year and uses Integrated Chinese Level 1 Part 1 as the primary text.

### **MANDARIN II**

3 units

*Prerequisite: Completion of Mandarin I with a C- or above, or equivalent score on the placement test.*

This second year course builds on the foundation of Mandarin I and asks students to go beyond the basic level in each of the four basic language skills. Students will continue to read and write sentences in pinyin and Chinese characters, using a broader vocabulary and more complex grammatical structures to better express their ideas. They will participate in authentic conversations in a growing variety of contexts and they will learn about various aspects of Chinese culture. Students will actively participate in class through group discussions, partner work, and an interactive audio program. The course evaluates the four language skills throughout the year and uses Integrated Chinese Level 1, Part 2 as the primary text.

### **MANDARIN III**

3 units

*Prerequisite: Completion of Mandarin II with C or above, or approval of the instructor and department chair.*

The third year of study continues to build on the basic oral and written skills the students need to communicate effectively in Chinese. Students will continue to improve their reading comprehension and writing composition skills with daily lessons and nightly assignments. Students are expected to use only Mandarin and are always welcome to ask questions during discussion. This stage of Mandarin learning enables students to develop their communicative competence and provides them with a daily opportunity to gain a deeper understanding of Chinese culture. This course uses Integrated Chinese Level 2, Part 1 as the primary text.

## **MANDARIN IV HONORS**

3 units

*Prerequisite: Completion of Mandarin III with B- or above, or approval of the instructor and department chair.*

This advanced course builds upon the skills learned in Mandarin III, focusing on students' ability to present and interpret language in spoken and written form. Films, videos, and podcasts are used to provide students with the opportunity to listen to various accents from native speakers and enhance students' listening skills. Students are expected to speak only in Mandarin and practice speaking skills through class conversations, partner discussions and laboratory exercises. Social, cultural, and historical themes are explored through literature, newspaper articles, films and current events. Students integrate the vocabulary and grammar learned in the classroom by completing projects, writing essays and participating in discussions and debates.

## **MANDARIN V**

3 units

*Prerequisite: Completion of Mandarin IV Honors Chinese Language and Culture with B- or above, or approval of the instructor and department chair.*

This course will continue to build on the skills that students developed in Mandarin IV. The main focus of this course is to engage students deeply in their own language learning process by evaluating what they have learned and what they need to improve in order to engage in conversations with native Mandarin speakers as well as apply the skills they have learned to real world situations. Students will study current events, read works of literature, create projects and investigate issues facing the Mandarin-speaking world. They will shape the course by choosing various texts to analyze and deciding on themes they would like to study.

## **SPANISH COURSES**

### **SPANISH I**

3 units

Spanish I is an introduction to the fundamentals of the Spanish language. Students of Spanish I will acquire basic proficiency in the four language skills: listening, speaking, reading and writing. Students learn to use these skills meaningfully in the context of the Spanish-speaking world. Spanish I is an immersive class, and students speak the target language at all times. An active learning method is used to teach grammar and vocabulary as students begin to express themselves with confidence both in oral and written work. Students are exposed to the culture of Spanish-speaking people through authentic readings, music, and videos that introduce them to the different accents, geography and history of countries where Spanish is spoken. Students will reinforce skills through the use of a workbook, on-line activities, and a textbook. All four skills are tested regularly throughout the year.

## **SPANISH II**

3 units

*Prerequisite: Completion of Spanish I with a C- or above, or equivalent score on the placement test.*

Spanish II completes the introduction of all of the major grammar points of the Spanish language. Students work to build their vocabulary and to incorporate all the material learned in both written and oral self-expression. A variety of visual and audio materials on-line, PowerPoint presentations, videos and songs are used to help introduce cultural topics and improve oral and aural comprehension. An emphasis is placed on oral presentations and original writing assignments. The cultural emphasis is on Latin America.

## **SPANISH III HONORS**

3 units

*Prerequisite: Completion of Spanish II with a C or above, or approval of the instructor and department chair.*

Spanish III is a comprehensive grammar review course as well as an introduction to Latin American societies and their cultures. In the fall, emphasis is placed on the study of the U.S. - Mexico border and the politics, culture and literature that emerge from the immigrant experience. This unit is followed by the study of various Latin American countries and their cultures. An emphasis is placed on the usage of vocabulary and grammar in context. The students develop a high level of proficiency in Spanish and increase their abilities by discussing current cultural topics, reading poetry and short stories, studying contemporary art, debating, and writing essays on films and on brief literary works of moderate difficulty.

## **AP SPANISH LANGUAGE AND CULTURE**

3 units

*Prerequisite: Completion of Spanish III Honors with a B- or above, or approval of the instructor and department chair.*

Spanish IV AP builds upon the integration of grammar and vocabulary achieved in Spanish III, aiming for greater communicative fluency in both speech and writing. The course reviews the most challenging grammar structures, paying close attention to patterns of errors common to native English speakers. Through the reading of short stories and the logical grouping of idiomatic expressions, the course also introduces and practices a rich variety of vocabulary. The emphasis is on deepening students' understanding and active use of complex grammatical structures and significantly expanding their vocabulary base so that they can express themselves with increasing ease and confidence. Social, cultural and historical themes pertaining to the Spanish-speaking world are explored through the study of films, music, dance, art and current events. These cultural units also provide extended opportunities for putting into active use the grammatical concepts and vocabulary studied in the textbook, through discussions, debates, oral and written projects, essays and creative writing assignments. Spanish IV students will also prepare for the Advanced Placement test offered in May.

## **SPANISH V: HISTORY, CULTURE AND LITERATURE OF THE SPANISH-SPEAKING WORLD**

3 units

*Prerequisite: Completion of Spanish IV with a B- or above, or approval of the instructor and department chair.*

This course will explore diverse cultural aspects of the modern Spanish-speaking world through a variety of perspectives and media. The main objective of the course is to engage students as deeply and honestly as possible in their own language-learning experience. It will do so by challenging students to reexamine constantly both what they have learned and what they need to hone in order to: 1) engage in conversation with a native Spanish speaker with ease and confidence; 2) speak knowledgeably about the cultures of the Spanish-speaking world. The materials we will work with will vary, depending on the particular interests of any given group of students. We cannot hope to cover all the rich diversity of the Spanish-speaking universe, but, by capitalizing on students' curiosity and passions, we can delve seriously into specific corners and gain a more complex understanding of cultural traditions and values, as well as of contemporary political, economic and social issues facing Spanish-speaking countries today.

## **SPANISH FOR NATIVE AND HERITAGE SPEAKERS**

3 units

*Prerequisite: Approval of the department chair.*

This course is designed specifically for native or heritage speakers of Spanish. Generally, the term "heritage speaker" refers to students who have a home background in the language and therefore some oral/aural proficiency. Given the wide range of proficiency levels among heritage speakers, the course is structured to accommodate students with varying backgrounds, from those who are minimally functional (can comprehend Spanish but are not able to speak fluently, read or write) to those who are more proficient and/or literate in Spanish. The linguistic and cultural objectives of the course work in tandem. The class builds on the language base students already possess, capitalizing on the wealth of knowledge students bring to the table in order to develop communicative competence in all of the four language skills (listening, speaking, reading and writing). These linguistic goals are achieved by working with a range of materials, specifically focused on Hispanic cultures and the experiences of Spanish heritage speakers in the United States. The dual linguistic and cultural focus allows the course to become a space in which to validate and deepen students' understanding and appreciation of their rich heritage.

## **SPANISH FOR NATIVE AND HERITAGE SPEAKER ADVANCED**

3 units

*Prerequisite: Completion of Spanish for Native and Heritage Speakers with a C- or above, or equivalent score on the placement test.*

This advanced course builds upon the skills and concepts covered in Spanish for Native and Heritage Speakers. Given the wide range of proficiency levels among heritage speakers, the course and instruction will continue to accommodate students of varied backgrounds and competencies. The linguistic and cultural objectives of the course work in tandem. Students will continue to learn grammar concepts while being exposed to the richness of Latino and Latin American culture via

expository readings, videos, literature, current events, and familial stories. Linguistically, the class covers active/passive voice, future, conditional, present subjunctive, and imperfect subjunctive. The class fosters a sense of camaraderie that helps students share their personal experiences and their cultural heritage. Communicative competence continues to be the focal point; students work on all language skills (listening, speaking, reading and writing). These skills are enhanced by actively engaging in oral and visual presentations, daily discussions, debates, daily-writing activities in their diaries and/or in homework assignments.

### **SPANISH FOR NATIVE AND HERITAGE SPEAKERS III: AP SPANISH LANGUAGE AND CULTURE**

3 units

*Prerequisite: Completion of Spanish for Native and Heritage Speakers Advance with a C or above, or equivalent score on the placement test.*

This course will build upon grammar concepts and vocabulary covered in the Spanish for Native and Heritage Speakers Advanced. The course reviews the most challenging grammar structures, considering patterns of errors common to students who have had a formal and informal background with Spanish. Through the reading of short stories, novels and the logical grouping of idiomatic expressions, the course also introduces and practices a rich variety of vocabulary. The reading of novels, or more extensive readings, affords these students the opportunity to delve deeper into the nuances of their native language. The emphasis is on honing students' understanding and active use of complex grammatical structures and significantly expanding their vocabulary base so that they can speak with sophistication, ease and confidence in any situation. Social, cultural and historical themes pertaining to the Spanish-speaking world, specifically countries represented by the students enrolled in the course, are explored through the study of films, music, dance, art and current events. These cultural units also provide extended opportunities for putting into active use the grammatical structures and vocabulary studied in the textbook, through discussions, debates, oral and written projects, essays and creative writing assignments. This course will also prepare students for the Advanced Placement test offered in May.

### **SPANISH FOR NATIVE AND HERITAGE SPEAKERS IV**

3 units

*Prerequisite: Completion of Spanish for Native and Heritage Speakers III with a B- or above, or approval of the instructor and department chair.*

This course will explore diverse cultural aspects of the modern Spanish-speaking world and the United States through a variety of perspectives and media as it relates to Latino students and their families. The main objective of the course is to engage students as deeply and honestly as possible in their own language-learning and cultural experience as a means of empowerment while exploring the overarching theme of identity. It will do so by challenging students to reexamine constantly both what they have learned, experienced and what they need to hone in order to: 1) engage in conversation with a native Spanish speaker or their own next of kin with ease and confidence; 2) speak knowledgeably about the cultures of the Spanish-speaking world and issues that directly and indirectly affect Latinos in the US. The materials we will work with will vary, depending on the particular interests of any given group of students. We will work with literature from Latino and Spanish authors as well as study art, history, and current events of various Spanish-speaking countries around the world. We cannot hope to cover all the rich diversity of the Spanish-speaking

universe, including the US, but, by capitalizing on students' curiosity and passions, we can delve seriously into specific corners and gain a more complex understanding of cultural traditions and values, as well as of contemporary political, economic and social issues that bring about the duality of the Spanish/heritage speaker in the contemporary United States.

# MATHEMATICS

Mindful of the importance of mathematics, the mathematics department is dedicated to maintaining a curriculum that offers students the opportunity to:

- master mathematical skills, understand mathematical concepts, and prepare for continued study of mathematics
- develop the ability to think logically
- develop the ability to conceptualize, to generalize, to visualize and to solve problems creatively
- persevere, build self confidence, and experience a sense of accomplishment
- appreciate and enjoy the beauty of mathematics
- explore the relationship between mathematics and other disciplines

Initial placement into the Branson Mathematics program is based on performance on one or more applicable placement tests, given in late spring. All incoming students must take the Branson Algebra Placement Test regardless of what level math they wish to take. The Algebra Placement Test assesses basic algebra competency, and is used to determine placement into Algebra I, Geometry or Geometry Honors. Students wishing to place into Algebra II or Algebra II Honors must also pass the Branson Geometry Placement Test. Students wishing to place into Precalculus or Calculus should consult the Chair of Mathematics for further guidance. At the conclusion of each year, a student's mathematics teacher will advise him or her on future math course options and make a recommendation for the next year's course.

The graduation requirement in Mathematics is twelve units and completion of Algebra II.

*Note: The TI-84 graphing calculator is required in all mathematics courses.*

MATHEMATICS CURRICULUM AT A GLANCE	
CORE COURSES	ELECTIVE AND AP COURSES
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Algebra I</li> <li>➤ Geometry</li> <li>➤ Geometry Honors</li> <li>➤ Algebra II</li> <li>➤ Algebra II Honors</li> <li>➤ Introduction to Precalculus and Statistics ◇</li> <li>➤ Precalculus</li> <li>➤ Precalculus Honors</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ AP Calculus AB</li> <li>➤ AP Calculus BC</li> <li>➤ AP Statistics ◇</li> <li>➤ Linear Algebra ◇</li> <li>➤ Multivariable Calculus ◇ (Offered through the Bay Area BlendEd Consortium. See BlendEd Course Offerings)</li> </ul>

◇ Courses annotated with this symbol are singletons.

## **MATHEMATICS DEPARTMENT HOMEWORK PHILOSOPHY**

The Branson Mathematics Department considers homework to be an indispensable opportunity for students to practice the skills they have learned in class, deepen their understanding of the course material, and build overall mastery in Mathematics. In its most basic form, homework asks students to work with the concepts and skills presented in class one more time, which serves to promote retention and understanding. Effective homework also stimulates students to think and make connections, develop a deep understanding of concepts and skills, build confidence, and establish an enduring mastery that facilitates success in all future endeavors.

The Mathematics Department does its best to honor the homework time allotment policy of the school, which stipulates that freshmen should have, on average, approximately 30 minutes of homework per night per subject, and sophomores through seniors should have, on average, approximately 40 minutes of homework per night per subject. We also recognize, however, that the same assignment might take different students different amounts of time to complete, so it is impossible to guarantee that every student will finish every assignment in the allotted time. As a result, the Mathematics Department generally gives students permission to stop working on their homework if they have not completed it during the allotted time frame, particularly if they feel they must devote their time to other subjects. Students are still responsible for that material, and they are encouraged to finish their assignment at another time. They are also encouraged to meet with their teacher if they have an ongoing problem with completing their assignments in a reasonable amount of time.

In order to help students get the most out of their homework and complete it in the allotted frame, the Mathematics Department strongly encourages students to do their homework in an environment that is conducive to sustained concentration. A work environment that is quiet, comfortable, and free from interruption or distraction is best, although some students can work effectively with music playing. Texting, using the Internet, watching TV, or talking on the phone all greatly interfere with concentration, and are strongly discouraged.

Some students find that working together with a classmate can be helpful in developing a mastery of new material, and such collaboration is generally permitted. Indeed, good problem solving skills and a deep understanding can be gained from discussing problems, comparing strategies, summarizing concepts and collaborating in general. Unless otherwise prohibited, students are permitted to work together on their homework assignments, provided each does his/her own work and does not simply give others' answers. Students also need to be mindful of maintaining their focus and productivity as they work together, and not inadvertently relying too heavily on each other for support. If students have any doubts or questions about whether their collaboration is acceptable or effective, they should ask their teacher.

## CORE COURSES

### **ALGEBRA I**

3 units

Algebra I offers a comprehensive exploration of the major skills and concepts of elementary algebra, and provides an excellent foundation for the continued study of mathematics at Branson. Topics studied in depth include operations on real numbers, manipulation of variables, and solving equations and inequalities; straight lines, linear inequalities and systems of linear equations; exponents, polynomials and factoring polynomials; rational expressions and equations; square roots and higher index radicals; and solving quadratic equations by completing the square and the quadratic formula. In addition to these core topics, students will receive an introduction to functions, parabolas, and operations on the TI-84 graphing calculator. Most units include applications of the skills under consideration, and an emphasis is placed on developing independent problem-solving skills.

### **GEOMETRY**

3 units

*Prerequisite: Algebra I with a C- or above and a passing score on the Algebra I final exam, or demonstration of mastery of Algebra I concepts on the Branson Algebra Placement Test.*

This course consists of the study of Euclidean Geometry. After learning the fundamental concepts of point, line and plane, students investigate properties of intersecting and parallel lines, congruent and similar triangles, quadrilaterals, other polygons and circles. Area and volume of plane and space figures are covered in depth, and students receive an introduction to right triangle trigonometry. Formal 2-column proofs are stressed throughout the course, along with the development of analytical reasoning skills. Algebra is reviewed and reinforced throughout the year.

### **GEOMETRY HONORS**

3 units

*Prerequisite: Excellent performance on the Branson Algebra Placement Test.*

This course consists of a rigorous study of Euclidean geometry. After learning the fundamental concepts of point, line and plane, students investigate properties of intersecting and parallel lines, congruent and similar triangles, quadrilaterals, other polygons and circles. Area and volume of plane and space figures are covered in depth, and students receive an introduction to right triangle trigonometry. Students in the honors course learn to prove theorems using coordinate geometry methods. Formal 2-column proofs are stressed throughout the course, along with the development of analytical reasoning skills. Algebra is reviewed and reinforced throughout the year.

## **ALGEBRA II**

3 units

*Prerequisite: Geometry with a C- or above, or Algebra I with an A or better and concurrent enrollment in Geometry or successful completion of Branson's summer Geometry course.*

This intermediate algebra course begins by reinforcing and advancing the core skills of algebra proficiency. As the year progresses, the course shifts from an emphasis on algebra skills in isolation to training students how to apply these skills and begin doing the kind of mathematical analysis that will be the focus of Precalculus the following year. The transition begins with the concept of functions, which is introduced early in the year, and is revisited in the context of linear equations, polynomials, rational expressions, conic sections, exponential and logarithmic functions, and sequences and series. Matrices are also covered if time permits.

## **ALGEBRA II HONORS**

3 units

*Prerequisite: Geometry Honors with a B+ or above, or Geometry Honors with a B and approval of the department chair, or excellent performance in Geometry and approval of the department chair.*

This intermediate algebra course begins by reinforcing and advancing the core algebra skills that students learned in Algebra I and reviewed in Geometry Honors. It then quickly shifts from an emphasis on algebra skills in isolation to training students how to apply these skills and do the kind of mathematical analysis that will be the focus of Precalculus the following year. The transition begins with the concept of the function, after which specific families of functions are studied in depth – linear, polynomial, rational, exponential and logarithmic. The course then moves on to consider several additional topics, including sequences and series, and conic sections. Real world applications of skills being taught are integrated throughout the year, and statistical applications are integrated where appropriate. Matrices are also covered if time permits.

## **INTRODUCTION TO PRECALCULUS AND STATISTICS**

3 units

*Prerequisite: Algebra II with a B- or better, or Algebra II Honors with a C- or above. Students passing Algebra II with a grade lower than B- may take Precalculus I with approval of the department chair and successful completion of summer work as demonstrated on a proficiency test at the end of the summer.*

Precalculus I begins with an in-depth review of the skills and functions studied in Algebra II, with the goal of reinforcing and deepening students' understanding of these topics. Polynomial, rational, exponential and logarithmic functions are covered in depth, followed by an exploration of trigonometry. Trigonometry topics include unit circle values, graphs of trigonometric functions, basic trigonometric identities, right triangle trigonometry, the laws of sines and cosines, and an introduction to inverse trigonometry. If time permits, the course will finish with an exploration of statistics. Emphasis is placed on developing a deep understanding of the concepts underlying each skill and topic. Projects are a significant component of this course.

## **PRECALCULUS**

3 units

*Prerequisite: Algebra II with a B+ or above or Algebra II Honors with a B- or above.*

Precalculus begins by reviewing and extending the main topics of Algebra II and Algebra II Honors, with special emphasis placed on functions and their properties and the development of students' problem-solving skills. Polynomial, rational, exponential and logarithmic functions are covered in depth, followed by a thorough treatment of trigonometry. Toward the end of the course, students will be introduced to several additional topics, including polar coordinates and probability and statistics. The course concludes with a study of limits – the foundation of calculus. Applications are interwoven throughout the course.

## **PRECALCULUS HONORS**

3 units

*Prerequisite: Algebra II Honors with an A- or above, or approval of the department chair.*

This demanding and fast-paced course covers all the topics listed under Precalculus II, with a rigorous analysis of functions in preparation for calculus. Matrices, matrix equations and parametric equations are also covered. Problem solving beyond the scope of the text is emphasized throughout the year.

## **ELECTIVE AND AP COURSES**

### **AP CALCULUS AB**

3 units

*Prerequisite: Precalculus II with a B+ or above, or Precalculus Honors with a B- or above and approval of the department chair.*

This yearlong course is a college-level introduction to the theory and applications of calculus. Topics covered include limits, continuity, differentiation, integration, and applications thereof. All students in this course are required to take the AP Calculus AB examination in May.

### **AP CALCULUS BC**

3 units

*Prerequisite: Precalculus Honors with an A- or above.*

This yearlong course is a college-level introduction to the theory and applications of the Calculus. All of the topics in the Calculus AB course will be covered. Additional topics include advanced integration techniques, improper integrals, convergence tests, power series, Taylor series, and the calculus of parametric curves, polar curves, and vector-valued functions. All students in this course are required to take the AP Calculus BC examination in May.

## **AP STATISTICS**

3 units

*Prerequisite: Algebra II with a B+ or above, or Algebra II Honors with a B- or above.*

This course is a college-level introduction to the concepts and techniques of statistical analysis. Topics covered include probability, linear and non-linear regression, confidence intervals and hypothesis testing using binomial, normal, student-t and chi-square distributions. Students will plan surveys, experiments and simulations. They will also learn how to summarize and interpret the results in a meaningful manner. The TI-84 graphing calculator is used extensively throughout the course as a tool for simulation, discovery and analysis. This course is equivalent to one semester of first year non-calculus based college Statistics. All students in this course are required to take the AP Statistics examination in May.

## **LINEAR ALGEBRA**

3 units

*Prerequisite: Completion of Calculus AB or Calculus BC, or concurrent enrollment in Calculus BC.*

This yearlong course is designed for Branson's most advanced mathematics students. It covers the core skills and concepts of linear algebra, including matrix arithmetic, determinants, vector spaces, inner product spaces, eigenvectors and eigenvalues, diagonalization and quadratic forms, and linear transformations. During the year students will also have the opportunity to explore various applications of linear algebra. Proof-writing and abstract reasoning are significant components of this course, and students finish the year with a culminating independent research project.

## PHYSICAL EDUCATION

Physical activity, exercise, and wellness are essential to the Branson School experience. Whether through physical education, participation on an interscholastic sport or club team, or an alternate activity, the goal is for each student to develop an appreciation for an active lifestyle, good character, and a positive self-image. While the program offers diverse opportunities, an emphasis is placed on:

- Lifelong habits that contribute to being a part of something bigger than one's self
- Team building and sportsmanship
- Development of leadership skills
- Cooperation among peers

The program also challenges students to raise their fitness levels and develop an understanding of the relationship between fitness and lifelong physical and mental wellness. Some students will choose to participate on an interscholastic sport or club team. Others will choose to fulfill their requirement through physical education, alternate activity and/or dance.

The graduation requirement in Physical Education is four units, with at least one unit completed during each school year. Seniors participating in an Alternate Activity Program must complete their hours by April 1st. All Physical Education classes, including Dance classes that are selected to fulfill the Physical Education requirement, are graded on a Pass/Fail basis.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION CURRICULUM AT A GLANCE			
	FALL SEASON	WINTER SEASON	SPRING SEASON
Interscholastic Athletics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Cross Country</li> <li>➤ Boys Football</li> <li>➤ Girls Volleyball</li> <li>➤ Girls Tennis</li> <li>➤ Girls Golf</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Boys Basketball</li> <li>➤ Boys Soccer</li> <li>➤ Girls Basketball</li> <li>➤ Girls Soccer</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Swimming &amp; Diving</li> <li>➤ Track and Field</li> <li>➤ Boys Lacrosse</li> <li>➤ Boys Golf</li> <li>➤ Boys Tennis</li> <li>➤ Boys Baseball</li> <li>➤ Girls Lacrosse</li> </ul>
Club Sports	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Crew</li> <li>➤ Mountain Biking</li> <li>➤ Sailing</li> <li>➤ Fencing</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Crew</li> <li>➤ Mountain Biking</li> <li>➤ Sailing</li> <li>➤ Fencing</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Beach Volleyball</li> <li>➤ Crew</li> <li>➤ Mountain Biking</li> <li>➤ Sailing</li> <li>➤ Fencing</li> </ul>
Strength and Conditioning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Performance Training</li> <li>➤ Fitness Training</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Performance Training</li> <li>➤ Fitness Training</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Performance Training</li> <li>➤ Fitness Training</li> </ul>
Dance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Dance at Branson</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Dance at Branson</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Dance a Branson</li> </ul>
Alternate Activity Programs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Ballet/Dance</li> <li>➤ Martial Arts/Boxing</li> <li>➤ Yoga</li> <li>➤ Other (with approval)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Ballet/Dance</li> <li>➤ Martial Arts/Boxing</li> <li>➤ Yoga</li> <li>➤ Other (with approval)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Ballet/Dance</li> <li>➤ Martial Arts/Boxing</li> <li>➤ Yoga</li> <li>➤ Other (with approval)</li> </ul>

## COURSE OFFERINGS IN ATHLETICS

### **INTERSCHOLASTIC ATHLETICS OR CLUB SPORTS TEAM**

1 unit

Participation on one of Branson's interscholastic athletic or club sports teams. In order to earn credit students are required to attend all games and practices as outlined by the Head Coach and Athletic Department. Leaving or being dismissed from an athletic team may result in Physical Education credit not being given for that term. Practice times shall not exceed two hours on weekdays and two hours on Saturdays. There is NO practice on Sundays. Fall athletes are expected to attend practices during August; winter and spring athletes are expected to attend practices and games scheduled during school breaks. Athletes should note that, in many cases, full participation includes a commitment to the sport beyond the term of the regular season.

### **ALTERNATE ACTIVITY PROGRAM (AAP)**

1 unit

The Alternative Activity Program (AAP) is an independent study program, designed to provide students opportunity to pursue organized classes of instruction outside of the school. For example ballet, equestrian, martial arts, competitive dance, etc. Students must select their AAP during the normal class registration period. AAP's must be approved and monitored by the Athletic Department. Students will be required to submit a letter of agreement signed by their instructor, their parents and themselves. This course requires 36 hours.

### **PHYSICAL TRAINING**

1 unit

Our Strength and Conditioning Coach offers Physical Training. Students can elect to follow the Athletic Performance Training Track, which focuses on developing strength, explosiveness, speed and quickness needed in athletic competition or Physical Fitness program which provides general full body workouts to promote healthy and fit lifestyles. This course is 36 hours.

### **DANCE**

1 unit

Students may elect Dance to fulfill the Physical Education requirement but cannot earn Arts credit simultaneously. If a student chooses to use a term of Dance to fulfill a PE requirement, he/she must inform the instructor before the start of the term.

## SCIENCE

The world is a complex place governed by laws of nature as well as the laws of politics and economics. The Science Department is dedicated to enriching students' understanding of the natural world and enabling students to have a more positive interaction with their environment. It is our fond hope that a Branson education will encourage students to pursue the study of nature while making deep and wise impacts on the occupants of this earth, our only home. Additional departmental goals include:

- Developing in students the habits of intelligent inquiry, thoughtful research, organized experimentation, and critical analysis, including the ability to express scientific ideas clearly, interpret data, and organize a diverse body of material into a coherent whole.
- Encouraging students to use these acquired skills in other academic disciplines and in everyday life.
- Fostering in students a spirit of cooperative learning.
- Developing students' enthusiasm for and confidence in all of science so as to maximize their potential for excellence in any future scientific endeavor.
- Helping students gain perspective on, and understanding of, the natural world and the students' role in it.
- Encouraging students to develop an open, yet critical mind so that they can distinguish the wonders of real science from the wishful thinking of pseudoscience.

AP Chemistry and AP Physics are available to students in their senior year. \*Concurrent enrollment in two science classes in the junior and/or senior year is possible, subject to approval by the department chair, advisor, class dean and assistant head of school for academic affairs. Elective science courses are the courses best suited for doubling in Science.

The graduation requirement in Science is twelve units or three full years of study that includes Physics, Chemistry and Biology.

SCIENCE CURRICULUM AT A GLANCE	
CORE COURSES	ELECTIVE AND AP COURSES
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Physics I</li> <li>➤ Physics I Honors</li> <li>➤ Chemistry</li> <li>➤ Chemistry Honors</li> <li>➤ Biology Honors</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Astronomy and Astrophysics ◊</li> <li>➤ Biotechnology, Medicine and Science Research ◊</li> <li>➤ Engineer Your World ◊</li> <li>➤ Marine Biology ◊</li> <li>➤ Microbiology and Infectious Disease ◊</li> <li>➤ AP Chemistry</li> <li>➤ AP Physics 2 ◊</li> </ul>

◊ Courses annotated with this symbol are singletons.

## SCIENCE DEPARTMENT HOMEWORK PHILOSOPHY

To enrich students' understanding of the natural world and enable them to have a more positive interaction with our shared environment, the Science Department assigns homework that provides students with opportunities to develop habits of intelligent inquiry, to apply critical thinking and analytical skills and to practice skills introduced in the classroom.

The Science Department believes homework is meaningful when students have the opportunity to:

- Practice skills independently and at their own pace
- Read background information in preparation for discussion and interaction in the classroom
- Assimilate new information and connect ideas
- Test their knowledge by applying concepts to new scenarios
- Experience another voice (via texts, articles or journals) explaining a phenomenon
- Think abstractly
- Solve problems
- Analyze data
- Apply critical thinking
- Grapple with ideas presented in class

In the freshman year we typically assign 20-30 minutes of homework per class meeting and in the sophomore through senior years 40 minutes per class meeting. Research projects, lab reports and/or problem sets are often spread out over a week or more, enabling students to receive feedback on drafts, collaborate with lab partners and actively engage in class discussions.

The Science Department monitors the effectiveness of homework through verbal check-ins, written feedback, and student performance on assessments.

The Science Department honors the value of homework by addressing homework topics in lessons, demonstrating their connections and importance to understanding the material and giving credit for some of the independent work students have done.

## CORE COURSES

### PHYSICS I

3 units

In Branson's introductory science course students develop skills in experimental design, analysis of evidence, communication, collaboration, problem solving, research, and critical thinking through the study of fundamental physics principles. Students will deduce the laws of nature through first-hand experimentation before applying these laws to solving problems. The course will cover in depth the laws of motion, forces, energy, and other topics. An additional component of the course will be a substantial original research project. Students will be guided through the complete process of posing a scientific question, investigating, analyzing, and presenting their results.

## **PHYSICS I HONORS**

3 units

*Prerequisite: Placement by the Science Department, as determined by superior performance on the Algebra and Physics placements tests.*

In Branson's introductory science course students develop skills in experimental design, analysis of evidence, communication, collaboration, problem solving, research, computational modeling and critical thinking through the study of fundamental physics principles. Students will deduce the laws of nature first-hand experimentation before applying these laws to solving mathematically rigorous problems. The course will cover deeply the laws of motion in two dimensions, forces, energy, and other topics. An additional component of the course will be a substantial original research project. Students will be guided through the complete process of posing a scientific question, investigating, analyzing, and presenting their results. Students in Physics I Honors will be expected to complete a more rigorous literature review in the completion of their science research project. This course will move at a faster pace and will investigate each unit with somewhat greater challenge and depth

## **CHEMISTRY**

3 units

*Prerequisite: Completion of Physics 1 or Physics I Honors and completion of Algebra I.*

In Chemistry, we will examine the composition of matter, and the changes it undergoes. In a course that emphasizes logic and analytical thinking, students will learn to understand the world on an atomic level. Students will explore atomic structure, periodicity, stoichiometry, chemical reactions, bonding, gases, thermochemistry, equilibrium, and acid-base chemistry. Additionally, there will be several opportunities to research and study the chemistry of the environment, particularly as it relates to global warming and other areas critical to the environment and scientific literacy. Students will develop their analytical abilities through lectures, discussions, and laboratory experience. At several points during the year, students will be asked to design their own protocols in order to investigate given questions. Students who perform at a high level in Chemistry will be prepared to take AP Chemistry in their senior year.

## **CHEMISTRY HONORS**

3 units

*Prerequisite: Completion of Physics 1 with an A or Physics 1 Honors with an A- or better, concurrent enrollment in Algebra II or a more advanced math class, and recommendation from current science teacher.*

The Chemistry Honors course is ideal for the student who has a strong mathematical background and seeks to be challenged in a higher-level, faster-paced science course. Chemistry is all around us, and students will explore the atomic view of the world utilizing critical thinking skills and the scientific process as well as deductive reasoning and inferential logic. Some of the key topics include atomic structure and bonding, periodicity, stoichiometry, dynamic equilibrium, acid-base reactions and thermodynamics. Weekly experiments allow students to experience the magic of chemistry first-hand. In the laboratory, students will have the opportunity to independently design investigations and to develop their deductive analytical skills while solving open-ended questions.

Students who perform at a high level in Chemistry Honors will be prepared to take AP Chemistry in their senior year.

## **BIOLOGY HONORS**

3 units

*Prerequisite: Completion of Physics 1 or Physics 1 Honors and completion of Chemistry or Chemistry H.*

Biology is the study of living things. This course focuses on biochemistry, cell biology, genetics, evolution, ecology, and human body systems. The course will also expose students to new research and ethical debates on the leading edge of modern biology. Students will participate in regular investigations where they will make observations, formulate hypotheses and critically analyze data. Students develop analytical abilities through daily activities, group discussions, laboratory experiences, formal presentations, and research projects. Students will apply their understanding using a variety of assessments during the year. Emphasis is placed on understanding how scientific information is obtained and how models and theories are formulated based on our knowledge and exploration of biological concepts.

## **ELECTIVES AND AP COURSES**

### **ASTRONOMY AND ASTROPHYSICS**

3 units

*Prerequisite: Completion of Physics and Chemistry, and completion of or concurrent enrollment in Algebra II.*

Modern astronomy is filled with amazing discoveries, like gravitational waves caused by black hole mergers, planets around other stars, clues about the formation of the Earth, and the search for life in the solar system. This class will provide a foundation to understand it all. Learn basic astronomy principles like how to find and identify constellations and the cultural significance of astronomy across history. Learn what we do and don't know about the formation of the Earth and solar system, and how to use a telescope. Learn how to analyze astronomical images and apply those skills to projects like measuring the mass of Jupiter, the distance to the Moon, and the speed of an asteroid. Students have a lot of choice, as they do projects about historical astronomical sites, space missions to the planets, observatories around the world, current astronomical research, and more. There are even opportunities to do publishable research about binary stars! Topics of study include: eclipses, measuring huge distances in space, supernovas, detection of exoplanets, black holes, gravity, the Milky Way galaxy, and the expanding universe; all riddled with beautiful photos and humbling truths.

### **BIOTECHNOLOGY, MEDICINE AND SCIENCE RESEARCH**

3 units

*Prerequisite: Completion of or concurrent enrollment in Biology Honors.*

Biotechnology, Medicine and Science Research focuses on learning the process of scientific discovery. Students will engage with topics including genetic engineering, stem cell biology, cancer

biology, immunology, and drug design and discovery. To peek into the scientific process, students will engage in methods-centered reading of primary research and student-driven, long-term research. Students will have the chance to use advanced research techniques and equipment including the cell and tissue culture facility at Branson and will be expected to engage and correspond with mentors in the scientific community. In the last six weeks of the course, juniors will complete a Branson Science Research Project (BSRP) and participate in the Branson Science Symposium. (Seniors may choose to pursue a BSRP project as a part of their senior capstone project.) Juniors taking Biotechnology, Medicine and Science Research are strongly encouraged to continue their research during the summer of their junior year at Branson or an outside institution.

## **ENGINEER YOUR WORLD**

3 units

*Prerequisite: Completion of Physics and Chemistry, and completion of or concurrent enrollment in Algebra II.*

In this class, failure is not an option - it's mandatory! The design and construction challenges in this class, each drawn from one of the major engineering disciplines, will allow every student to experience the challenges and rewards of engineering as his or her team designs, prototypes, revises, perfects, and documents their approaches. Students will discover how engineers use creative design approaches, make data-supported design decisions, collaborate to solve complex challenges, and improve lives. Developed with funding from the National Science Foundation by a team of University of Texas faculty and NASA engineers, Engineer Your World engages students in authentic engineering practices in a project-based environment.

## **MARINE BIOLOGY**

3 units

*Prerequisite: Completion of or concurrent enrollment in Biology Honors.*

Our earth is a marine planet, with oceans covering 71% of the earth's surface. Marine Biology introduces students to this fascinating realm of the world's oceans and the spectacular creatures who inhabit these waters through exploration of local field sites, laboratory investigations and related classroom studies. The Earth's oceans are filled with amazing creatures and a surprisingly large variety of habitats. In this course we will dive into this mysterious world by investigating local habitats, plate tectonics, ocean chemistry, marine ecology, several ocean ecosystems and their inhabitants, and much more. An additional goal of this course is to foster a lifelong interest in, and stewardship for, our world's oceans and their role in the health of our planet. In the last six weeks of the course, juniors will complete a Branson Science Research Project (BSRP) and participate in the Branson Science Symposium. (Seniors may choose to pursue a BSRP project as a part of their senior capstone project.)

## **MICROBIOLOGY AND INFECTIOUS DISEASE**

3 units

*Prerequisite: Completion of or concurrent enrollment in Biology Honors.*

This course is designed to cover the basic concepts in microbiology, specifically bacteria, viruses and protozoa. We will focus our studies on the pathogenic microorganisms, specifically in human infectious diseases and how our immune system responds to them. Specific examples of diseases we will study include, Influenza, HIV, Tuberculosis, MRSA, and Malaria. We will not only examine the direct cause and effects of these diseases, but also their broader implications in medical care and public health. There is a strong laboratory component to the course as well as an emphasis on independent research. In the last six weeks of the course, juniors will complete a Branson Science Research Project (BSRP) and participate in the Branson Science Symposium. (Seniors may choose to pursue a BSRP project as a part of their senior capstone project.)

### **AP CHEMISTRY**

3 units

*Prerequisite: Senior standing and completion of Algebra II, Physics 1, Chemistry, and Biology Honors, as well as approval of the Department Chair.*

Advanced Placement Chemistry is a rigorous, fast paced, in-depth study of chemistry. Students enrolled in AP Chemistry should expect a heavier work-load than the Science electives. AP Chemistry covers many of the same topics as Chemistry Honors but in much greater depth and breadth. Topics include: atomic and molecular structure, phases of matter, thermodynamics, reaction kinetics and equilibria, acid-base reactions, and electrochemistry. There is an emphasis on interpreting experimental data and using analytical thought to solve problems. The course is intended to give students advanced study in chemistry, a thorough preparation for college-level chemistry, and a firm preparation for the Advanced Placement examination. All students in this course are required to take the AP Chemistry examination in May.

### **AP PHYSICS 2**

3 units

*Prerequisite: Senior standing and completion of Algebra II, Physics 1 and Chemistry, and Biology Honors, as well as approval of the Department Chair.*

AP Physics 2 offers students the opportunity to build on the foundations they developed in Physics 1. The course is designed to be the equivalent of a semester-long Algebra-based college course for life science majors and premedical students. The topics include fluid mechanics, thermodynamics, electricity and magnetism, circuits, optics and atomic physics. Students will compose substantial in-depth lab reports in order to deepen their understanding of physics and improve their critical thinking and writing skills. Equal emphasis is placed on conceptual understanding and numerical problem-solving, and a constant theme of the course is the exploration of how wonderful complexity can unfold from a few simple principles and laws. Students will be well prepared for the Advanced Placement examination in May. All students in this course are required to take the AP Physics 2 examination in May.

## BLEND-ED

The Bay Area BlendEd Consortium offers unique interscholastic courses that combine demonstrated best practices for online learning with face-to-face interactions, and take advantage of the rich and unique resources of the Bay Area. Founded in 2013 by Marin Academy, The Athenian School, The College Preparatory School, Lick-Wilmerding High School, and The Urban School, the consortium has now grown to include Branson and San Francisco University High School. Each member school offers two semesters of course offerings (either one full year course or two different semester courses) and juniors and seniors from any member school are eligible to sign up for them.

BlendEd courses combine face-to-face and online instruction, and students access BlendEd materials through a shared Learning Management System (LMS). All courses are interactive and involve significant time working individually and in small groups, as well as periodic virtual class meetings and three to five face-to-face sessions. The face-to-face sessions may occur during regular school hours, after school, and/or on weekends, and may be held at one of the partner schools or at a specific location relating to the class topic. Students must have reliable access to the Internet and access to a device such as a desktop computer, laptop computer, tablet, or similar device.

All BlendEd courses are UC approved, and students are strongly encouraged to consider taking a BlendEd course during their time at Branson. For more information about BlendEd, please visit [www.blendedconsortium.org](http://www.blendedconsortium.org). For additional information about Branson's participation in BlendEd, please contact Branson's BlendEd Coordinator, Jeff Symonds ([jeff\\_symonds@branson.org](mailto:jeff_symonds@branson.org)).

All BlendEd courses are electives that students may take in addition to meeting their graduation requirements.

BLEND-ED CURRICULUM AT A GLANCE	
SUMMER/FALL 2020 COURSES	
➤ Wilderness Studies	
YEARLONG COURSES	
➤ Multivariable Calculus	
FALL SEMESTER COURSES	SPRING SEMESTER COURSES
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ American Politics</li> <li>➤ Intro to Psychology</li> <li>➤ Laid to Rest: Burial Grounds of the Bay</li> <li>➤ Oaktown: A Multifaceted Deep Dive in an Era of Gentrification</li> <li>➤ Public Health &amp; Vulnerable Populations</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Bay Area Cinema &amp; Filmmaking</li> <li>➤ Case Studies in Medicine</li> <li>➤ Entrepreneurship &amp; Design Thinking</li> <li>➤ Financial Literacy</li> <li>➤ Intro to Organic Chemistry</li> <li>➤ Intro to Psychology</li> </ul>

◇ All BlendEd courses are singletons.

### SUMMER/FALL 2020 COURSES

## WILDERNESS STUDIES

1.5 units

The West has always spanned a range of wild spaces and landscapes. For thousands of years, humans have lived in this wilderness. For the last 200 years, humans have ravaged many of these wildernesses. And yet, in 2020 large tracts of wilderness still exist within the Western United States.

This course will examine the value of wilderness and public land (commons land) in the year 2020. What is the value of these lands (and waters) to the people who use, manage, conserve, appreciate, or have traditionally lived on them? We will use a week-long field experience to the Great Burn Recommended Wilderness of Montana and a weekend expedition to Point Reyes National Seashore to probe both the historical and current relationships between humans and these wild, largely untamed landscapes.

Guiding questions for this course are:

- *What is the role of humans in managing nature, wildlife, & wilderness?*
- *Who is wilderness for? What groups have been historically underrepresented in conversations related to wilderness? What effects may these exclusions have on society and the environment? How do we begin to change this story?*
- *How do we balance the preservation of public land with the need for local people to make a livelihood off the land?*
- *What, if any, models can we use to balance the preservation of wildland ecosystems and the current and future use of public land by humans for tourism, recreation, and utilitarian purposes? Can there be any land that humans are not managing or influencing?*
- *How important is collaboration between governments, non-profits, businesses, user groups, and cities in the process of public land conservation?*

To answer these questions, students will participate in backpacking and camping trips to immerse themselves in the lands we're studying while engaging with local experts who approach these landscapes from different ethical and practical approaches. Readings will provide additional knowledge in both the history of these spaces as well as current information and debates surrounding the use and management of the Great Burn and the Point Reyes National Seashore.

This trimester intensive course will include Zoom group discussions as well as four face-to-face trips including the two intensive field experiences. Field experiences will involve rigorous academic work and will be physically demanding. Students will maintain a cultural and natural history journal throughout the course and engage in weekly readings, discussions, and reflections. Students will be asked to weigh in on current events, science, and legislation throughout the course by considering the significance of wilderness and nature from their own personal lens, the field experiences from this course, and their understandings of the cultural, political, ethical, historical, and economic perspectives addressed in the course. Assessments in this course will require that students research and evaluate wilderness areas and public lands and, applying their learnings from the class, make recommendations (based on sound research and the understanding of multiple perspectives) regarding the future of the land. Students will create a podcast related to the theme of wilderness as their final project for this course.

## YEARLONG COURSES

### **MULTIVARIABLE CALCULUS**

3 units

*Prerequisite: Completion of AP Calculus AB or AP Calculus BC.*

Multivariable Calculus begins by exploring vector geometry and functions in more than one variable. Then, after expanding the concepts of limits and continuity to include multivariate functions, students develop a rich understanding of concepts and methods relating to the main topics of Partial Differentiation and Multiple Integration. After generalizing a number of tools from single-variable to multivariate calculus, we explore topics of optimization and geometric applications in areas including physics, economics, probability, and technology. We expand our fluency with topics to address vector fields and parametric functions, and we will understand applications of Green's and Stokes' Theorems. We employ multidimensional graphing programs to aid in developing a more thorough understanding of the myriad ways for describing and analyzing properties of multivariate functions. At the conclusion of the course, students have the opportunity to further explore applications of and/or concepts relating to topics covered by the course.

Throughout the course, emphasis is placed on students expressing fluency with numerical, algebraic, visual, and verbal interpretations of concepts. Students can expect to collaborate weekly on homework, problem-sets, and projects in small groups and in tutorial with their instructor online; face-to-face sessions may include visits with experts analyzing functions in multiple variables as well as group problem-solving activities and assessments.

## FALL SEMESTER COURSES

### **AMERICAN POLITICS**

1.5 units

American Politics will examine the development of the American Republic and its institutions, and will investigate the various groups, constituencies, beliefs, and ideas that characterize current U.S. politics. Constitutional questions, political values, political beliefs, political parties, interest groups, the influence of mass media, and the effects of government and public policy both upon the states and individuals will be studied throughout the course. Because 2020 is an election year, a great deal of emphasis will be placed upon studying party politics, the presidential campaigns, and the fall's most significant or trenchant congressional elections.

We will hold a virtual class meeting via Zoom video conferencing every week. Students will be expected to come prepared having done all assignments and ready to share and ask relevant questions. We will also use Zoom for regular small group collaborations. Students will have the chance to present their own research, and to lead discussions concerning the ongoing election.

There will be four face-to-face (F2F) meetings over the course of the term. Participation in F2F meetings is a course requirement, and students must attend all four meetings. Dates and locations are pending, but will include attending a local government session, a conversation with journalists,

and a “watch party” on Election night. The first F2F will occur during the opening two weeks of the course, and the final face to face will likely happen on the last Saturday of the term at The Branson School, and will give students a chance to present their final work to one another.

## **INTRO TO PSYCHOLOGY**

1.5 units

This class will survey the evolution of psychology from psychodynamic theory to contemporary socio-cultural psychology. We will examine how the study of human development has progressed through time as well as reflect on how human development might be culturally defined: from Freud’s psychoanalysis theory to today’s rising interest in multicultural psychology. Course topics include the history of psychology, biological bases of behavior, learning and memory, life-span development, psychological disorders and treatments, and social/multicultural psychology.

Together, we will conduct basic experiments to illustrate our theories, engage in simple fieldwork, and connect with professionals who will share their experiences with us. We will also apply psychological understanding to promote health and wellness practices in our own lives. Students will keep a journal and regularly reflect on observations of their environment and how it affects them.

This class will hold virtual meetings on a weekly or every other week basis to discuss, debate, and present new ideas. Students’ preparation for and participation in virtual meetings is essential to creating a sense of community and enriching the learning experience of all. Students will be responsible for leading discussions around articles assigned, or debating controversial theories or findings either solo or in groups.

There will be 4 to 5 face-to-face (F2F) meetings over the course of the semester. Dates and locations are subject to guest and host availability and will be announced as available. The first F2F will occur sometime in the opening 2 weeks and the final F2F will likely fall on the last Saturday of the term.

## **LAID TO REST: BURIAL GROUNDS OF THE BAY**

1.5 units

All cultures have specific rituals for laying their dead to rest. Cemeteries, shellmounds, and mausoleums are intended to be places for eternal peace, but the history of cemeteries is lively and often controversial. In this course, students will learn about the history of burial practices and explore Bay Area cemeteries. By examining headstones, architecture, land use, and symbols, we can glean history, culture, and social priorities throughout time. From the rich and storied past of the Mountain View Cemetery in Oakland to the development of housing, parking lots, and shopping malls on sacred Ohlone burial grounds, the Bay Area provides insight into cemeteries that represent a variety of cultures, religions, histories, and controversies. Students will visit multiple local sites and design a research project of their own to contribute to a class website. Topics may be historical, cultural, scientific or other in discussion with the instructor. Research time and check-ins will be built into the structure of the course. Students will also be expected to do an independent field research trip in relation to their project.

### **Meeting requirements:**

- We will have three face to face meetings throughout the semester.
- Two mandatory all-class field trips will take place on September 12th and December 5th.
- Students must attend at least one additional field trip with the instructor from a set of optional dates to be determined at the start of the semester.
- Weekly virtual classes will alternate between full class discussions and time for individual research check-ins.

### **OAKTOWN: A MULTIFACETED DEEP DIVE IN AN ERA OF GENTRIFICATION**

1.5 units

In this experiential BlendEd course, students will study the legacy of political organizing, sports, and cultural/musical expressions of Oakland, CA. Given the vast and rich history that the city of Oakland has, this will be an enlightening experience for students who will meet and work with a range of significant contributors to Oakland's legacy while studying different aspects. Having lived and worked in "The Town" for 20 years, the instructor will be utilizing personal connections and resources to create a dynamic course. Additionally, we will examine the current dynamics of gentrification which has impacted Oakland. Students will learn about the politics, economics, sociology and urban planning that have played a role in changing the culture of "The Town." We will also do a community service project engaging the homeless population in a respectful and productive manner.

#### **Face to Face (F2F) Meetings:**

- Interactive visits to the Oakland Museum of California & the African American Museum and Library at Oakland
- A day of service with the homeless population of Oakland; working with The Village Collective
- An interactive exploration of Jack London Square & Lake Merritt
- Visiting a historically significant music recording studio (Hieroglyphics Emporium)

### **PUBLIC HEALTH AND VULNERABLE POPULATIONS**

1.5 units

The San Francisco Bay Area is rapidly becoming one of the most inequitable places to live in the nation. Taking a casual BART ride can reveal the environmental disparities that exist between places like the affluent suburb of Pleasanton and an industrialized community like West Oakland. The lack of income and environmental equality is obvious, but the disparities run much deeper. A short ride between BART stations can mean an 11-year difference in life expectancy. Folks getting off the train and living in neighborhoods near BART's Walnut Creek station live on average 84 years, while folks that exit at and live near the Oakland City Center station live on average only 73 years. In other words, living just 16 miles apart can mean the difference between living more than a decade longer. Why does such a health disparity exist? This course will dissect the factors that influence this social gradient of health.

There will be three whole-class face-to-face sessions and at least one off-campus face-to-face meeting with a teammate. During our first face-to-face trip on Saturday, September 9th we will be doing a neighborhood health assessment in the Bayview-Hunters Point Neighborhood of San Francisco. On Saturday, October 17th we will volunteer in the native plant nursery at the Literacy for

Environmental Justice in the Candlestick Point State Park Recreational Area from 9:45am – 1:30pm. Our final whole-class face-to-face trip will be to the Social Emergency Medicine Department at Highland Hospital in Oakland. The exact day of this trip has yet to be determined, but it will likely be from 3:45pm – 6:30pm on a weekday between the dates of Tuesday, December 2nd through Wednesday, December 9th. Additionally, students will be expected to collaborate with a team on the Just Video Project outside of school hours at a time and location that is convenient for the team between Tuesday, October 27th through Monday, November 16th. Students will also be expected to attend one virtual meeting roughly every other week on either Tuesday or Wednesday for one hour.

## SPRING SEMESTER COURSES

### **BAY AREA CINEMA AND FILMMAKING**

1.5 units

Film, animation and alternative film and video has been a stalwart of Bay Area culture from Muybridge to Silent Film and from Pixar to the Prelinger Archive. In this course we will explore the history of the moving image and its cultural impact in the San Francisco Bay Area as well as create our own imaginative responses to the ideas and concepts in the course. Students will get a chance to study films, technologies, philosophies and ideas related to the manipulation of time as well as create their own art, videos and visual journal entries. Topics will include a wide variety of cinematic genres and motion picture technologies. Students will learn interdisciplinary skills related to their own independent filmmaking in tandem with film and cultural studies. Students will be expected to make connections with larger social, political and cultural forces and be interested in independently creating artworks, visual journal entries and film and animation.

Online meetings with the whole class will take place every other week to discuss projects and share presentations. Students will sometimes be paired together or in small groups during our online meeting time or may occasionally arrange their own meeting times for collaborative activities and projects.

During our 4-5 face-to-face sessions we may be meeting filmmakers, exploring museums, cinemas, archives, film festivals and places of cinematic industry in the prolific bay area arts culture. Tea and discussion will follow. Students will need access to a digital still camera and be able to upload images to the web. Students will need to have some knowledge of video editing and have access to basic video editing software, a digital video camera/tripod combination and will need access to basic art supplies.

*\*Some supplies will be provided.*

### **CASE STUDIES IN MEDICINE**

1.5 units

*Prerequisite: Two years of high school science.*

This semester-long course uses medical case studies as vehicles for studying the anatomy and physiology of the human body. For each unit of study, students will be responsible for researching an aspect of the body system in question and for putting together a video presentation to educate the other members of the class. These presentations, along with some additional research, will be

used by students to make a diagnosis and treatment plan relative to the case study in question. Through this process, students will apply the general knowledge they have gained to a specific medical problem. Students will be expected to conduct independent research to produce their presentations in addition to working collaboratively on case study diagnosis. Weekly zoom sessions will be for short presentations, Q&A and case study discussions. At the end of the course, students will have a basic working knowledge of the major systems of the human body and how they work together to keep us healthy.

**Online Meetings:** The entire class will meet via Zoom once per week in the evening. Generally, this is scheduled on a Monday, Tuesday or Wednesday at around 7:30 or 8:00 p.m. These meetings will run for 1 hour during which the instructor will answer student questions, students will make short presentations and the case study will be discussed. As these meetings are critical for keeping the class connected and updated, any interested student should be able to commit to this requirement. On occasion, a virtual meeting may be scheduled to accommodate a guest speaker in the medical field. Zoom sessions may also be scheduled directly with the instructor by an individual student or small student group for purposes of tutorial assistance or general Q&A.

**F2F Meetings:** There will be 5 face-to-face (F2F) meetings scheduled during the course. The dates of these meetings depend on the availability of medical professionals in the Bay Area and so will be firmed up as the start of the course nears. All F2F events will take place on Saturday mornings between the hours of 9 – 12, not including travel time to and from the destination. Of the 5 scheduled events, students will be required to attend a minimum of 3, though students will definitely benefit from attending them all. This allows for illness and other scheduling conflicts that may arise. Students are responsible for their own transportation. As these events are central to the course, any interested student should be able to keep Saturday mornings relatively open from January to May.

## **ENTREPRENEURSHIP AND DESIGN THINKING**

1.5 units

Living in the Bay Area, we are in close proximity to the most important and innovative companies in the world. This course will leverage the unique accessibility we have to cutting edge fields and empower students to create a unique product, service or program that is original, viable and socially beneficial. In addition to employing the design thinking process, students will be equipped with marketing skills and techniques that allow them to engage a fast emerging industry and strategize on ways to create their own business entities. Students will learn different methods of utilizing social media outlets such as YouTube, Facebook, and Twitter in order to promote the products, programs or services that they create.

We will begin with our first meeting in a BlendEd school classroom and then the subsequent meetings will involve field trips to some of the major local social media companies in order to give students a hands-on experience of seeing entrepreneurship in action. There are no prerequisites for the course. There will be 4 face-to-face (F2F) meetings over the course of the semester with exact dates and details to be announced as available. We usually participate in The Diamond Challenge (the world's top entrepreneurship competition for high school students), as well as take an April field trip to Facebook and visit Google HQ in May for our culminating F2F.

## FINANCIAL LITERACY

1.5 units

What financial skills do you need for life? How can you make financial decisions while understanding the impact on yourself and others? What financial decisions are made for us by the institutions and structures that, for better or for worse, exist today? What is our role in creating a more equitable financial world in the future?

This interdisciplinary mathematics, economics, and social science course will be organized around case studies chosen from all walks of life, circumstances, and backgrounds. We will consider the mathematics of budgeting, personal banking, credit & borrowing, renting or owning a home, taxes and insurance while discussing the tough decisions people make along the way. We will keep an eye on the ways in which these discussions are shaped by the particular economic distortions we see in the Bay Area. Students will do weekly readings, engage in regular course discussions, attend field trips to gain real-life experience, and complete collaborative projects and/or presentations for each unit.

We will virtually meet as a class one evening per week via Zoom video conferencing for student discussions, presentations and meetings with guest experts.

### **Proposed field trip/in-person meetings:**

- Welcome meeting + team building and group formation
- Visit to local financial institution(s), both traditional and Internet-based
- Guided Q&A with a financial advisor

Students must attend the welcome meeting and 2 out of the 3 other in-person meetings.

## INTRO TO ORGANIC CHEMISTRY

1.5 units

*Prerequisite: Successful completion of Branson Chemistry or Chemistry Honors.*

This introductory survey course will cover organic chemistry and relevant biochemistry. The cast of organic compounds is a virtual who's who of chemicals, including foods, medicines, drugs, and cellular components. Their compositions and structures determine how they perform their functions. The course will cover the chemistry of carbon, functional groups, hydrocarbons, determining molecular structure via a variety of lab techniques, reaction mechanisms, and biochemicals. Organic chemistry is considered to be one of the most challenging and difficult college science courses, and certainly one aim of this BlendEd class is to at least partially allay student fears prior to encountering organic chem in college!

Students will work both individually and collaboratively on homework, problem sets, assessments, and projects. Molecular modeling will be emphasized. We will get together at College Prep for four 2-3 hour sessions evenly distributed throughout the semester. Three of these meetings will take place on Saturday mornings and the last meeting will be a culminating event during the last week of the course, with exact dates to be determined in consultation with the students. During these sessions, we will work collaboratively answering your questions, solving problems, doing experimentation, planning projects, and educating one another via presentations at the culminating

event. Students must attend a minimum of 3 of the 4 in-person events to pass this class. Weekly online virtual classes (typically 30-60 minutes long) offer opportunities to develop course community, answer questions about the material, introduce new concepts, and to reinforce present material through group problem-solving.

## **INTRO TO PSYCHOLOGY**

1.5 units

This class will survey the evolution of psychology from psychodynamic theory to contemporary socio-cultural psychology. We will examine how the study of human development has progressed through time as well as reflect on how human development might be culturally defined: from Freud's psychoanalysis theory to today's rising interest in multicultural psychology. Course topics include the history of psychology, biological bases of behavior, learning and memory, life-span development, psychological disorders and treatments, and social/multicultural psychology.

Together, we will conduct basic experiments to illustrate our theories, engage in simple fieldwork, and connect with professionals who will share their experiences with us. We will also apply psychological understanding to promote health and wellness practices in our own lives. Students will keep a journal and regularly reflect on observations of their environment and how it affects them.

This class will hold virtual meetings on a weekly or every other week basis to discuss, debate, and present new ideas. Students' preparation for and participation in virtual meetings is essential to creating a sense of community and enriching the learning experience of all. Students will be responsible for leading discussions around articles assigned, or debating controversial theories or findings either solo or in groups.

There will be 4 to 5 face-to-face (F2F) meetings over the course of the semester. Dates and locations are subject to guest and host availability and will be announced as available. The first F2F will occur sometime in the opening 2 weeks and the final F2F will likely fall on the last Saturday of the term.



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