



# ENGLISH OVERVIEW



## DAVIDSON EXPLORE

Davidson Explore (DE) courses are offered through the Davidson Institute for Talent Development and not by Davidson Academy Online. They are often taught by Davidson Academy Online staff.

## PLACEMENT IN ENGLISH

Placements are determined by assessment data and are modified throughout the diagnostic period. During diagnostics, teachers examine students' quality of thinking, reading, writing, and discussing. Each class has benchmarks and goals that build on the previous level, and a mastery of certain skills is required for our more advanced English courses. Placement decisions are based on demonstrated skills and abilities, and teachers will make recommendations concerning placement at the end of the diagnostic period.

## THE WRITING CENTER

The Writing Center, which is run on Canvas, gives students the opportunity for one-on-one assistance from peer tutors ("Word Nerds") who provide feedback on all stages of the writing process, from developing ideas to revising and editing. The Writing Center is reserved for assignments that students are working on in their Davidson classes or that they plan to submit for competition. Word Nerds are upper-level DAO English students chosen by teacher recommendation. Word Nerds understand the DAO curriculum and teacher expectations and are mentored and monitored by a DAO English teacher.

## WRITING AND YOUNG ADULT FICTION

*(Davidson Explore only):* In this course, students will utilize mentor texts, including popular young adult fiction, for both topic inspiration and examples of techniques employed by each author. In writing assignments, students will focus on a few specific traits of good writing (e.g., ideas and topics, organization, details and examples, imagery, sentence fluency, word choice, and voice). In addition, there will be grammar and word usage exercises to facilitate mastery of the conventions of Standard English.

## WRITING IN THE HUMANITIES

*(Davidson Explore only):* This class focuses on the key building blocks of creating interesting, effective arguments, a skill that students will draw on for the rest of their humanities careers. This class is divided into thematic units and will include various forms of fiction, nonfiction, film, critical thinking skills, and extended writing or speaking assignments.

## INTRODUCTION TO HUMANITIES

Introduction to Humanities is a specially designed introductory course that will expose students to skills necessary to be successful in the English and History courses offered at Davidson Academy Online. Through four theme-based units that cover topics ranging from the nature of time to cultural studies of food, students will be introduced to critical thinking strategies like identifying points of view, making comparisons, and recognizing patterns to make predictions. In addition, students will develop note-taking and organizational skills and will have opportunities to practice working with feedback from instructors and peers while focusing on reflective practices and goal-setting strategies. The course draws from a variety of texts, including short stories, poems, essays, primary historical documents, scientific papers, and cultural artifacts to engage students in the work of studying the humanities at DAO.

## CRITICAL THINKING IN THE HUMANITIES/ CRITICAL READING AND WRITING

*(Davidson Explore and Davidson Academy Online Full-time enrollment):*

This course is a continuation of previous courses with an emphasis on drawing logical inferences based on evidence gleaned from the text, as well as crafting and defending a valid thesis statement based on those inferences. The class is split into four thematic units, with each unit including a variety of texts to explore, including short fiction and nonfiction, poetry, and songs.

## COMPOSITION AND ANALYSIS

This class focuses on textual analysis, creative and critical thinking, and written expression. The class is split into four thematic units. Each unit offers a variety of texts to explore, including novels, short fiction and non-fiction, film, poetry, and drama. Particular emphasis is placed on compare/contrast analysis, analyzing symbolic and archetypal patterns, and poetry analysis, with a significant amount of practice offered in both short-form writing assignments and full-length essays.

## RHETORIC AND LITERARY ANALYSIS

This course is comparable to an undergraduate-level composition course in scope and structure, with students completing four major essays over the course of the year, engaging with complex nonfiction texts, and embarking upon sophisticated research techniques. Students will take the time to examine their writing processes and will work through common hurdles such as perfectionism, writer's block, and writing in a variety of different scenarios. Students will also experiment with different styles of presentations, from leading classroom discussions to delivering highly technical poster presentations.

## INTRODUCTION TO RESEARCH & COMMUNICATION

This class uses a combination of nonfiction and literary texts as vehicles with which students can practice their newfound writing and analytical skills. In preparation for American and British Literature, the class focuses largely on formal literary criticism, the tradition of analyzing and evaluating texts and presenting thoughts in ways that draw interesting conclusions, push the thinking of readers, clarify ideas, and supports valid points of view. Students will focus on developing strong written arguments in the fall before studying techniques for writing literary analysis papers in the spring.

## AMERICAN LITERATURE

This class is designed to be a glimpse into the vast pool of texts that can be defined as American literature. Given the sheer scope of the subject matter we cover in a mere two semesters, we only get a taste of what constitutes the canon; thus, the goal of this class is to expose students to some notable examples from America's major literary movements. We also dip our toes into some critical articles to widen our vision of how to read and write about literature. Most importantly, this class uses literature as a medium through which to explore the question that has baffled thinkers and artists since our country's inception: What does it mean to be an American? We analyze how writers have tackled this question from their own unique cultural perspectives and examine how their answers, articulated through their literary works, have helped to form who we are as a people.

## BRITISH LITERATURE

This survey course is designed to give students a taste of the incredibly vast and complex wealth of literature that hails from the British Isles. It is literally impossible to cover all important, canonical works of British Literature within the course of a year, so the focus of this class is to expose students to a few notable works from early periods; specifically, we study the Anglo-Saxon, Medieval, and Renaissance eras. These periods span across many centuries, so students can expect to learn some basics of British history as well as history of the English language. The focus of our inquiry is the evolution of the English Epic, from the earliest example of the Anglo-Saxon Beowulf to the late-Renaissance masterpiece Paradise Lost. This exploration of the epic allows us to consider important cultural and historical moments as illustrated in the literature and how those moments influenced Western (and thus, American) thought and cultural consciousness.

## ADVANCED RHETORIC

In this class, students will explore the vast world of rhetoric, which includes all of the signs and symbols that contribute to an argument or discussion. Students will study concerns of who is making an argument, to which audience, and why. Also of interest is who is allowed to make an argument or who controls the language of an argument or discussion. Students will work to create sophisticated syntheses of multiple and potentially disparate texts, experiment with innovative thinking, craft analyses of a variety of texts and narratives, effectively and smoothly employ a variety of writing genres based on the most appropriate match, and engage in thoughtful discussions of texts and ideas.

## VALUE THEORY

Value Theory is a year-long course on moral, political, and aesthetic value. Students are assigned challenging expository readings that address such topics explicitly, as well as philosophically rich portrayals from literature, film, and other media. The course is divided into six parts and provides a comprehensive survey of meta-ethics, ethics, political philosophy, and aesthetics. Value Theory is similar in difficulty and scope to a sophomore-level undergraduate philosophy class or theory-heavy English course. With respect to our sequence of English courses, it requires the highest level of reading comprehension and expository writing ability, and is intended only for advanced students looking for an intellectual challenge. The course provides students with broad and deep exposure to perennial questions of human value, along with intensive training in logical and conceptual rigor and expository writing. Special attention will be paid to close and critical reading of difficult texts.

## GRADUATION REQUIREMENTS

Four core English Credits.

Typically:

- Rhetoric and Literary Analysis
- American Literature

Two of the three upper-level English courses (British Literature, Advanced Rhetoric, Value Theory)

## GROWTH IN READING, THINKING, AND WRITING

Students generally see 3–4 years growth in their writing skills their first year here. Our English teachers give a tremendous amount of feedback on student work and often offer revision options so students can learn from their drafts. This mimics the real world, in which all published authors go through multiple revisions in the editing process. All DAO English courses emphasize critical thinking and close reading; creating, supporting, and defending an argument; and developing skills in academic discussions and presentations; however, the specific benchmarks and expectations for each class are different. These goals are sequential, building from one class to the next.