

**Schole Academy/St. Raphael School**  
**Upper-School Classics of Christendom Literature**  
**Syllabus 2020–2021**

**THE PRAYER:**

O GOD, Who didst instruct the hearts of the faithful by the light of the Holy Spirit, grant us in the same Spirit to be truly wise, and ever to rejoice in His consolation, through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.

**THE INSTRUCTOR:**

Rhea Bright

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405-831-6631

Office hours: Wednesday 8:30–9:30 a.m. and 1:45–2:45 p.m. ET

I am always happy to answer questions or address any concerns that students or parents may have. Please e-mail me anytime, or text or call between 9 a.m. and 5 p.m. ET to set up a time to talk. I will get back to you as soon as possible. When you contact me, please give me some idea of what times are good for you and what time zone you are in. I am in Atlantic time, which is 1 hour ahead of eastern time.

**THE STUDENT:**

This course is suitable for rising 11th–12th graders. Students are expected to have strong reading and writing skills as well as the interest in and capacity for engaging in discussion about literature and history. Students enrolling in this course are expected to:

- Reads at or above a tenth-grade level.
- Composes paragraphs and basic essays with confidence.
- Uses a planner and tracks assignment progress.
- Listens, take notes, and is willing to engage in group discussions.
- Types sufficiently well to transcribe paragraphs without frustration.
- Possesses basic computer skills—browsing, accessing assignments, scanning, e-mailing, and managing files without significant help from parents.
- Has some exposure to medieval history and has taken a course in the Great Books of antiquity.

If you are unsure whether your student meets all these qualifications, please schedule a time to talk with me so that we can evaluate whether this class is suitable for the student.

**THE CURRICULUM:**

This course introduces high school students to some of the great literary texts, or Great Books, of the Middle Ages, Renaissance, and Reformation. These texts have influenced the development of

both Christian culture and the secular West, and while studying them, students explore the ideas, events, and cast of characters that molded the social, political, religious, scientific, economic, and technological history of the Middle Ages through the Reformation.

This course focuses on literature, but also integrates some study of medieval and Renaissance history, helping students to see and enjoy the integration of both history and literature. In this upper-school course, students will seek and examine the virtue and wisdom in a selection of the Great Books, while also noting the ways in which the authors influence one another and participate in the Great Conversation of Western civilization.

Students are asked to consider and engage with carefully crafted questions as their window into the Great Conversation. Occasionally, the teacher will present historical context through brief lectures, but otherwise classes are seminar-style discussions on the classical texts. Students are assessed for their curiosity, participation, and diligence during discussions, as well as by means of short response papers, essays, and occasional quizzes.

This class is paired with our high school course Upper-School Classics of Christendom History, taught by the same teacher and scheduled back to back with that course in a block.

#### **THE GOALS:**

- Students will learn to read slowly and with the intention of understanding the author's purpose and argument. This course is as much about method as it is about content.
- Students will begin to engage with those ideas, to examine them and be able to express orally and in writing the author's argument and evaluate it for truth and goodness.
- Students will acquire confidence in their ability to read with comprehension.
- Students will appreciate the ideas of the past and put them into the context of their contribution to Western civilization and culture.

#### **THE METHOD:**

In general, students will be assigned a reading for each class. The most important part of being a student is learning *how* to be a student, so we read with a goal of understanding the author's purpose and argument before commenting on it. Thus, students can expect to spend about as much time preparing for class as they spend in class. Students will be asked to mark key terms in the text as they read, identify the main point or argument of the reading, and write a summary sentence or two in their commonplace books before coming to class.

In the classroom setting, the reading will be discussed by all present. The teacher will provide any necessary background, clarification, and assistance to the understanding of the argument or key points. Students will take notes during class, and they will be given the last 10 minutes of class to write a paragraph in their commonplace books summarizing the main points of the reading as enlightened by the discussion. Scanned copied of these commonplace entries should

be sent to Mrs Bright by noon (eastern time) the following day. The readings are selected to build upon one another, so by the end of each semester, students should be able to trace a development of ideas in their journals.

There will, however, be many times when we read aloud in class and discuss the reading as we progress through it. This is especially helpful with poetry and more difficult readings, and will assist the students as they begin a new reading.

At the end of each text, students will write an essay or other type of composition on that text. At the end of each semester, students will write a longer essay on a topic that requires tracing a theme or idea over multiple readings. The purpose of the writing exercises is for students to practice and improve their writing skills and also for them to think deeply about important ideas.

### **THE READINGS:**

Students will need the posted translation, with the correct ISBN, of each text. Printed texts are required (no digital editions). Students will need their own text (not a family copy) as they will be expected to annotate and mark up the text. If you think you have a version that is substantially the same and would like to check, feel free to contact the instructor.

1. Boethius, *On the Consolation of Philosophy* (ISBN: 978-0140447804)
2. Dante, *The Divine Comedy*
  - a. *Inferno* (ISBN: 978-0812970067)
  - b. *Purgatory* (ISBN: 978-0812971255)
  - c. *Paradise* (ISBN: 978-0812977264)
3. Chaucer, *The Canterbury Tales* (ISBN: 978-0140424386)
4. Shakespeare, *Hamlet* (ISBN: 978-0198328704)
5. Shakespeare, *Macbeth* (ISBN: 978-0198324003)
6. *Shakespeare's Sonnets* (ISBN: 978-0671722876)
7. Milton, *Paradise Lost* (ISBN: 978-0872207332)

### **THE SCHEDULE:**

- Class days:  
Monday and Wednesday 12:30–1:45 Eastern Time for 32 weeks
- Orientation:  
Monday, August 31
- Semester 1 class dates, Sept. 9 to Jan. 20:  
September 9, 14, 16, 21, 23, 28, 30  
October 5, 7, 12, 14, 19, 21, 26, 28  
November 2, 4, 9, 11, 16, 18, 30 [Thanksgiving Break: Nov. 23–27]  
December 2, 7, 9, 14, 16 [Christmas Break: Dec. 21–Jan. 8]  
January 11, 13, 18, 20
- Semester 2 class dates Jan 25 to May 26:

January 25, 27

February 1, 3, 8, 10, 15, 17 [Winter Break: Feb. 22–26]

March 1, 3, 8, 10, 15, 17, 22, 24 [Holy Week/Easter Break: March 29–April 2]

April 5, 7, 12, 14, 19, 21, 26, 28

May 3, 5, 10, 12, 17, 19, 24, 26

- In case of cancellation due to illness, family emergency, internet problems, etc, I will get a substitute, record a makeup session, or provide an alternative assignment in lieu of class that day.

## EVALUATION:

We desire for students to cultivate scholarly virtues and habits of diligence, constancy, patience, and persistence. Cultivating habits and acquiring virtues takes time and encouragement. I will provide grades in order to help students and their parents assess if the student is moving adequately toward those goals. Students will receive marks on a scale from *non satis* to *magna cum laude* (see below). Note that *magna cum laude* is, by definition, an uncommon accolade. I will also post letter or numerical grades and make them accessible to parents.

- Every two weeks, students will receive an assessment on their contributions to class discussion. The assessment will reflect the student's participation and engagement with the texts and ideas over that two-week period. Absences (exceptions are made for religious observances), tardiness, and being unprepared or disrespectful all contribute to being *non satis*.
- The twice-weekly commonplace journal entries will receive a completion grade of *satis* or *non satis*, along with comments as necessary. These are not given numerical grades.
- Writing assignments will receive qualitative grades of *non satis* to *magna cum laude*.
- End-of-semester essays will receive a letter or numerical grade. This grade will be an assessment of the quality of the student's argument, the understanding conveyed, and the clarity and quality of the expression of the argument.

<i>Magna cum laude</i>	with great praise	Especially and unusually fine work. This is not common.
<i>Cum laude</i>	with praise	Very good work done by the average student. This should be common.
<i>Satis</i>	satisfactory	Adequate work that is completed as assigned and on time.
<i>Non satis</i>	unsatisfactory	Work that is incomplete, poorly executed, or late.

We all have different gifts and abilities. The instructor will attempt to guide students toward being better students, and is always willing to have those conversations. The instructor cannot, however, guide a student toward a particular grade, and does not think such conversations are ever fruitful.