



## Writing & Rhetoric IV

**Mrs. Alison Johansen**

2023-2024 Yearlong Course

T/Th 9:30 am (ET)



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### ELIGIBLE STUDENTS

**GRADES 6-8.** This course is designed for **sixth to eighth graders** who want to develop their writing skills using the imitation and practice method contained in the Writing & Rhetoric series published by Classical Academic Press. Students should be familiar with elements of narration, description, and exposition in writing, and should feel comfortable writing a five- or six-paragraph essay when guided by prompts. All students should be in the process of mastering basic typing skills, because students will be expected to type their essay assignments.

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### COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course will strive to foster a love for writing in each student. Students will study with *Encomium & Vituperation* and *Comparison*, the seventh and eighth books of the Writing & Rhetoric series. An **encomium** is a short essay in praise of someone or something; a **vituperation** is an essay in which one criticizes something to show its faults. An encomium praises virtue, and a vituperation blames vice. In the middle of the year, students will also compose a multi-source biographical research paper. Students will be assisted in developing their love for writing through engaging class sessions, assignments, and individual feedback. Students will also develop and hone their public speaking skills through short recitations and presentations.

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### COURSE SCHEDULE

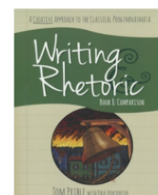
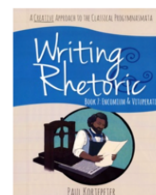
**ORIENTATION & CLASS SESSION DATES:** Our student/parent orientation will be held on Thursday, August 31, 2023, at 9:30 a.m. ET. Our classes will be held on Tuesdays and Thursdays at 9:30 a.m. ET. Please consult the Scholé Academy [academic calendar](#) for scheduled, school-wide breaks.

**OFFICE HOURS:** I am always available to meet with you upon request. Please email me at [ajohansen.scholeacademy@gmail.com](mailto:ajohansen.scholeacademy@gmail.com) to schedule a Zoom meeting.

## REQUIRED COURSE MATERIALS

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- Classical Academic Press' *Writing & Rhetoric Book 7: Encomium and Vituperation* and *Book 8: Comparison*
- Commonplace journal (this may be a spiral notebook, a bound journal, or looseleaf paper with a three-ring binder)
- Optional: Audio files of both texts are available through [www.ClassicalAcademicPress.com](http://www.ClassicalAcademicPress.com)



## COURSE MAP

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Our class will follow the timeline below, adjusting as needed for our group of students.

- **Weeks 1-4:** Gathering and developing tools for encomia and vituperation writing
- **Weeks 5-14:** Writing encomia and vituperations as persuasive essays for and against specific historical figures; featuring biographies and autobiographies of historical figures, including Susan B. Anthony, Ulysses S. Grant, John Wilkes Booth, and Jesse James
- **Weeks 15-23:** Planning and writing a research paper; gathering and developing tools for comparison writing
- **Weeks 23-31:** Writing comparisons with step-by-step writing prompts; studying culturally significant historical narratives to foster delight and enthusiasm
- **Week 32:** Culminating assessments and reflections

## STUDENT EXPECTATIONS: EXECUTIVE FUNCTION SKILLS

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Students enrolling in Scholé Academy's Writing & Rhetoric program will be expected to show development of Executive Function Skills throughout the year. Executive Function Skills speaks to a set of qualities and skill sets students can develop and hone to better their approach to the courses, lectures, readings, and teachers they will encounter in their future academic coursework.

Scholé Academy commends several important skills that should be observed by students.

1. **An Engaged Student:** One who is willing to step into the arena of class discussion, ask questions, supply answers, and consider how the discussion at hand applies to oneself.
2. **Note-Taking:** A student must be engaged with the class by taking notes on important and relevant content in an organized fashion. They should then independently consult those notes for assignments and in preparation for assessments. It is essential that all students acquire a notebook for use during the class, as this will keep them organized by subject.
3. **Attention to Detail & Preparedness:** These students are ones who consistently adhere to deadlines, submission requirements, adhere to style guides and codes, confirm technology is working prior to the start of class, are responsible to determine how to proceed after an absence, are responsible for consulting their course syllabus and adjusting as the class proceeds, etc.
4. **Critical Reflection:** These students are ones who receive feedback to their submissions, and

then apply that feedback to future assignments rather than repeating mistakes. These students also glean information from the live class critiques of fellow students and learn from others what mistakes to avoid.

5. **Initiative/Maturity:** This student will be proactive in listening to the teacher's comments, assessing how they apply to his/her work, taking the initiative to schedule office hours with the teacher if necessary.

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### STUDENT EXPECTATIONS IN ACTION

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- **Reading and writing fluency.** Students should be able to read with fluency and to comprehend the text independently. Students should be able to narrate (tell back the story), summarize (shrink the story down), and amplify (stretch a story out by adding details, dialogue, and description) before enrolling in this course. Students should also be able to write a five- to six-paragraph essay before enrolling in this course. Students must be able to type and write legibly and understand basic English grammar rules and punctuation (for example, recognize a noun, verb, adjective, subject, etc.). They should be persevering as they begin on a long journey towards becoming great writers. Students should be motivated and inspired to persevere by the vision of mastery and wisdom laid before their eyes. They should be willing to take risks and to explore the art of writing.
- **Class participation.** Classes will sometimes be spent reading aloud as a group and sharing each student's writing. Class participation will also be required through discussion, writing, public speaking, and going over homework contained in the text. Reading and writing about the lives of famous people who lived virtuously and viciously contributes to our aim to cultivate the virtues as well as knowledge.
- **Timeliness.** Timeliness in both arriving to classes and turning in assignments is essential in cultivating a foundation for success. Students should strive to arrive on time so they can contribute to and keep up with lessons. While all classes will be recorded and available upon request for viewing in the case of student absences, they are not meant to replace a live class. Similarly, turning in assignments on time will be key in preparing for class discussions and understanding lessons. When unavoidable conflicts arise, students should try to reach out ahead of time.
- **Listening and contributing to class discussion respectfully** by practicing humility and love as we delight in seeking to cultivate "affection and taste" for truth, goodness, and beauty.
- **Class readiness.** A student who demonstrates readiness arrives to class on time with all materials, having already submitted the relevant homework. Tardiness and/or missing materials will affect the student's weekly readiness grade, which is part of their overall participation grade. **For more information about class absences, please see the Student Parent Handbook.**
- **Submitting assignments.** All due assignments must be uploaded to the appropriate Canvas assignment module prior to the start of class each day. Students turning in late work will have points deducted from those assignments. Students must submit their work by uploading it into the Canvas assignment window **in the format of either a Word document or a PDF. Photographs of completed assignments will not be accepted, as they are incredibly difficult to read.**

- **Using Canvas.** The class syllabus, assignments, occasional class recordings, and other resources will be posted in our Canvas classroom. Please check for Canvas updates regularly throughout the week. (Setting up Canvas notifications will help.) **Sixth to eighth graders** should be able to log in to Canvas to review homework assignments and upload completed work. When necessary, students should be able to comment on and collaborate with classmates through Canvas. Class recordings will be posted upon request after a class absence.

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## STUDENT GRADING AND EVALUATION

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While pursuing Writing & Rhetoric Year 4 through Scholé Academy will be “restful,” we also recognize the need to provide grades for students. It’s a delicate balance to achieve both restful learning and excellent academic performance. Earning a specific grade should not overshadow achievement goals for mastery of this discipline. Writing, as an element of Rhetoric, is a “core” discipline in Classical Education and learning to own the concepts introduced in this class will be a necessary and significant component of future success in growth in a Classical Education. In that sense then, attaining a mastery of Writing & Rhetoric is its own reward.

The following grades will be assigned to your student’s level of achievement: *magna cum laude* (with great praise); *cum laude* (with praise); *satis* (sufficient, satisfactory) and *non satis* (not sufficient). Ideally, every average student working diligently should do praiseworthy work (*cum laude*). Those who excel beyond this expectation will be the *magna cum laude* students. Students who do adequate but not praiseworthy work will be designated *satis*. *Non satis* means lacking sufficiency or adequacy.

Students and their parents will receive regular feedback in the form of a quarterly update. If students need to complete a high school transcript with either a numeric or letter grade, they will need to notify me at the beginning of our course so I can provide a traditional letter grade accordingly upon request at the end of the course.

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## STUDENT EVALUATION: MASTERY PORTRAIT

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During the first semester, *Cum Laude* students will masterfully craft essays of praise and blame, focusing on the following skills: discerning the main idea; utilizing hyperbole and thesis; incorporating background and supportive detail, biography, and autobiography; noting the good and poor qualities present in a person or event; contrasting virtuous behavior and vice; and crafting effective conclusions that encourage readers either to emulate virtue or eschew vice.

Moving into the second semester, students will further scholarship skills of source selection, while *Cum Laude* students will fine tune their competency in note taking, organizing, outlining to compose a multisource biographical research paper. For the remainder of the semester, building on the skills learned studying encomium and vituperation, *Cum Laude* students utilize the art of comparison, crafting comparative compositions that set two persons, events, ideas, texts, or objects side by side for assessment. In practicing this art of comparison, *Cum Laude* students will also master or show growth in elements of critical analysis, assessment, and judgment.

Finally, students are also guided in the development of the virtues of Truth, Goodness, and Wisdom. Ideally, students will employ wisdom when responding to virtues and vices, along with the actions and thoughts that they encounter in the readings. By the end of the course, a *Cum Laude* student will understand that reading a rich selection of great literature is one of the ways in which it is possible to build the reservoir out of which one can draw good ideas and model our own lives and behaviors.

## STUDENT EVALUATION: ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

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Do not plagiarize or cheat. All papers and assignments must be your own work. While you may get help from parents, classmates, or tutors with brainstorming, organizing, and proofreading your papers, the actual writing and rewriting of your paper must be your own work. Plagiarized work will receive a zero, regardless of intent. Students are on their honor to abide by Scholé Academy's Learning Philosophy which assumes the personal cultivation of Student-Virtues described in the Student Parent Handbook.

## THE VIRTUAL CLASSROOM

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We will use the free online “virtual classroom” software provided by Zoom. The live, interactive nature of our courses is foundational; ***we require cameras to be on during all class sessions. If you are sick, I always recommend resting and asking for the recording; cameras must remain on during our classes.*** (Please see our Student Parent Handbook to review this rule and others.) Our virtual classroom will provide students with interactive audio and an interactive whiteboard in which texts, diagrams, video, and other media can be displayed and analyzed. We will provide students with a link (via email) that will enable students to join the virtual classroom. Courses will be managed through our learning management system, Canvas. Specific information regarding the technology used by Scholé Academy (including required technology) can be found by visiting the [Technology in the Classroom](#) section of the Student Parent Handbook.

## ABOUT THE INSTRUCTOR

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**Alison Grace Johansen** is teaching *Writing & Rhetoric Level 4, Introduction to the Art of Poetry, Formal History of Poetry, and Well-Ordered Language Level 1*. She earned her Juris Doctor from the Dickinson School of Law in Carlisle, Pa., and her Bachelor of Arts in political science from the University of Richmond in Virginia. She worked as a journalist in Washington, D.C., for over 13 years before pursuing writing and editing in all forms of media. She hopes to help inspire her students to discover the many ways they can use their own words to express themselves with truth, goodness, and beauty. Alison lives in Virginia with her husband and two children. Her dedication to her faith and children influences every part of her life, from teaching Sunday school and writing a children's picture book, to exploring the beauty of God's world with her family. If they aren't birdwatching and enjoying a walk outside, you might find them reading together or playing their favorite instruments: the piano, flute, guitar, ukulele, and drums!

*Please note: While this syllabus addresses details specific to this course, it is not extensive. Parents should also read the Student Parent Handbook located on [scholeacademy.com](http://scholeacademy.com) and be familiar with the ideas, policies, and procedures outlined therein.*



