



**SCHOLÉ ACADEMY**  
CLASSICAL ACADEMIC PRESS

## Common Arts IB

**Mr. Chris Hall**

Spring Semester Course  
2023-2024

### **ELIGIBLE STUDENT:**

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Grades 6–9; 10th graders welcome. Students must be able to read independently and to create notes that are organized and easy to follow. Students should be able to express themselves effectively through writing, and must be capable of reviewing information and concepts on their own throughout the year outside of class. A sure foundation in arithmetic, as well as basic geometry (perimeter, area, measurement) would be a plus.

**Please note:** Course includes multiple laboratory exercises in addition to in-class coursework. Lab reports will require time outside of class to complete.

### **REQUIRED TEXTS AND MATERIALS:\***

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- Common Arts Education, Chris Hall, Classical Academic Press.
- Commonplace notebook
- Graph paper
- Pencils
- Highlighter
- Ruler
- Basic art supplies: gum eraser, colored pencils, any other desired art tools
- Various materials related to the common arts we're studying. This specialized list will be provided one month in advance of the start of class.

### **COURSE SCHEDULE**

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#### **REGULAR CLASS SCHEDULE:**

**SECTION 1 WF 11:00AM-12:15PM ET**

**SECTION 2 WF 9:30-10:45AM ET**

**SECTION 3 WF 12:30-1:45PM ET**

**ORIENTATION SESSION:**

The date and time of the student/parent orientation will depend on the particular section in which you are enrolled, but all orientation sessions will be scheduled during the week prior to the start of the class.

**CLASS SESSION DATES:** The dates of your class depend on the particular section in which you are enrolled. Consult the Scholé Academy [academic calendar](#) for details concerning scheduled, school-wide breaks.

**OFFICE HOURS:** Your teachers are available outside of scheduled class times. During “Office Hours” students may raise questions, seek assistance, or review class material. This can happen via email or a meeting in the Zoom classroom. Your teacher will do their best to respond within 24-48 hours; please keep in mind that they likely will not respond immediately to messages after 5 p.m. EST.

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## COURSE DESCRIPTION

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Common arts are the skills that provide for basic human needs through the creation of artifacts or the provision of services. We need to eat, drink, build shelters, defend ourselves, bargain, maintain our health, work raw materials into various forms, and repair artifacts that are broken. These arts provide for our survival, and yet, in our current moment, we outsource these arts more than practice them ourselves, and to our detriment. Many can live, even live comfortably, without knowledge of these fundamental skills that root us, not just in the realities of our embodiment, but in the orders of God’s creation in the cosmos all around.

John Milton, author of *Paradise Lost* and a wide-ranging thinker, once had a friend ask him to write a description of an ideal education. The letter that followed turned into one of Milton’s most famous writings, “Of Education”. Within its compact, but rich exposition, Milton describes an education that roots the learner in deep realities:

“And having thus passed the principles of arithmetic, geometry, astronomy, and geography, with a general compact of physics, they may descend in mathematics to the instrumental science of trigonometry, and from thence to fortification, architecture, engineering, and navigation. . . . To set forward all these proceedings in nature and mathematics, what hinders but that they may procure, as oft as shall be needful, the helpful experiences of hunters, fowlers, fishermen, shepherds, gardeners, apothecaries . . . And this will give them such a real tincture of natural knowledge, as they shall never forget, but daily augment with delight.”

In this course, we will explore these common arts with an interest in reclaiming not only these skills, but the connection of these skills with the liberal arts, God’s created orders, and JOY. We will strive to reclaim some of our outsourcing by cooking our own food, learning about the flora and fauna around our homes, tying useful knots, learning basic first aid, growing ingredients that we can use for medicine and for good nutrition, and more. In the process, we will bring the arts of language and mathematics not just alongside, but into the practice of these arts, to show how the common arts make manifest the liberal arts through virtuous craft.

Woven throughout the course are the habits of observation, commonplacing, and careful planning. We will learn the way to approach craft with prudence, temperance, and fortitude, as well as with safety in mind. We will learn how to document our success and failure, research prudently, identify next steps, and render what we sense faithfully. In this way, we will learn the foundations for a lifetime of continued practice, refinement, and service to our families and to others.

While the common arts could simply be called the arts of survival, taken with God's orders and the liberal arts in mind, through virtuous practice, they become something far more: the arts of 'thrival', and a chance, as Milton put it, for students to gain that "real tincture of natural knowledge, as they shall never forget, but daily augment with delight."

## COURSE MAP

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- Armament and Hunting
  - strategy and tactics, GOST framework
  - military history- examples of GOST at work in Ancient Greek, Roman, Medieval, Early Modern, and Modern battlefields
  - spring tracking and wildlife photography
- Agriculture
  - spring gardening
  - propagation techniques- rooting cuttings, seed starting
  - soil management and restorative agriculture practices
  - seed selection, placement for companion planting
- Architecture
  - basics of design- elements of design, considerations in engineering
  - sketch training- elements of art, developing the ability to see and render
  - architecture in nature- bird nests, beaver dams, and spider webs
  - architecture in antiquity, medieval, and renaissance periods
  - physics of building- equilibrium, arches, triangles in structures

The basic common arts will also be mixed in, including first aid, how to light a fire, how to tie five basic knots (square, sheet bend, double half hitch, taut-line hitch, and bowline), how to tell time by the position of the sun, and more. These basic arts aid in the practice of the focal arts, and offer small-scale practice opportunities throughout the day.

## STUDENT EXPECTATIONS: EXECUTIVE FUNCTION SKILLS

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Students enrolling in this course will be expected to show development of Executive Function skills throughout the year. Executive Function is a set of qualities and skill sets students can develop and hone to better approach the courses, lectures, readings and teachers they will face in their future academic coursework.

Each teacher will invariably have his own set of requirements and skills he requires students to bring to their studies. Generally speaking, I believe there are five such qualities that are necessary for my students in various subjects:

- 1. An Engaged Student:** One who is willing to step into the arena of class discussion, ask questions, supply answers, take in what is being discussed, and apply it to his own experience.
- 2. Note Taking:** A student who during and after being engaged with the class has been trained to note important and relevant content in an organized fashion. His notes would then be consulted, independently, for application in assignments and assessments. For those who need a framework from which to begin or refine this process, Cornell notes is a helpful system.
- 3. Attention to Detail & Preparedness:** Students should consistently adhere to deadlines, submission requirements, proper reporting formats (ex. project reports, commonplace updates), confirm technology is working prior to the start of class, determine how to proceed after an absence, be responsible for consulting his course syllabus and adjusting as the class proceeds, etc..
- 4. Employ Critiques:** When students receive feedback to one of their submissions, they should apply that feedback to future assignments. Students should also glean information from the live class critiques to learn from the experience of others.
- 5. Initiative/Maturity:** Students should hear the teacher comments and be able to assess whether or not the teacher was describing his work, and then take the initiative to schedule office hours with his teacher if necessary.

## STUDENT EXPECTATIONS IN ACTION

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Students are expected to arrive to class on time and with all assigned material completed. The instructor will facilitate learning for the student, but the responsibility for staying up-to-date with classwork and assignments ultimately falls to the student.

Students will be expected to listen attentively and to participate actively in class discussions and practices. During class discussion, students will review answers, pose questions, explain and justify their answers and solution. Each week the teacher will lead discussions informed by issues and problems raised by students, as well as issues introduced by the teacher.

Students will also be expected to maintain their commonplace notebook, submit drawings and preliminary plans before starting projects when appropriate, and be prepared to discuss the current state of any ongoing projects at any time.

All assignments will be due at the date and time specified in the assignment post. Students turning in late work will earn a 10% penalty for each day the assignment is late. Students will submit their work by scanning their homework pages and uploading onto the assignment post. Photographs of projects are the best way to

document the physical artifacts we'll create during this course, but all written work must be scanned for submission, not photographed.

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## STUDENT GRADING AND EVALUATION

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The following grades will be used to document 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 be designated *satis*. *Non satis* means lacking sufficiency or adequacy.

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## STUDENT EVALUATION : MASTERY PORTRAIT

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Students who are prepared to take this class are typically early to late teens, adolescents approaching young-adulthood. It's imperative, then, that this course not only provide the academic components necessary to achieve mastery of the course content and skills associated with analytical thought, but also to help engage the student in development of their moral virtues. These aspects of the course would comprise the "learning target".

- Students will be able to define common arts, and tell about their complex relationship with the liberal and fine arts.
- Students will be able to name the most common of the common arts practiced in homes, ex. cooking, medicine, trade, and more depending upon lifestyle of the family.
- Students will be able to identify key safety precautions and practices inherent to virtuous practice of the common arts.
- Students will be able to explain how to start a common arts project, including weighing the Five Rights, selecting mentorship and guidance, and keeping track of their explorations in a neat and efficient manner.
- Students will demonstrate how to keep a commonplace, complete with writings, drawings, recipes, thoughts, and other related content surrounding the course.
- Students will demonstrate basic proficiency in drawing from observation. They will demonstrate developmentally-appropriate proficiency in the elements of art related to the renderings at hand.
- Students will demonstrate basic proficiency in at least three common arts by completing projects to *satis* level. Students will also show knowledge of proper self-evaluation and continued learning resources.

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## STUDENT EVALUATION: ASSIGNMENTS, TYPES & WEIGHTS

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Students' grades will have the following weight (out of 100):

1. Class Participation: 10
2. Homework assignments: 20
3. Regular Quizzing: 30
4. Regular Testing: 40

The incremental nature of the assessments is in place to ensure that students are continually reviewing previous material.

Typically Speaking:

- *magna cum laude* is the grade range of 94% or above.
- *cum laude* is the grade range of 85-93%
- *satis* is the grade range of 75-84%
- *non satis* is any grade lower than a 75%

This reflects the student's mastery and ability to move on to the next level.

Students and their parents will receive quarterly feedback from their teachers in the form of a quarterly update.

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## STUDENT EVALUATION: ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

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Students will often take tests and/or quizzes privately at home. 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. We ask that parents proctor quizzes and tests to help keep their children accountable.

Specifically, cheating and plagiarism are punishable offenses. Copying the work of other students is prohibited and proper citation of all sources is essential.

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## THE VIRTUAL CLASSROOM:

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We will be using the free online "virtual classroom" software provided by Zoom. The live, interactive nature of our courses is foundational and we require cameras to be on during all class sessions. The 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.

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## ABOUT THE INSTRUCTOR

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**Chris Hall** has a BA in philosophy from Gettysburg College and an MAT in elementary education from Towson University. He has been a classroom educator and administrator for 28 years, having served in public, independent, and classical schools. In that time, he has served as a classroom teacher in grades K-12, primarily as a science educator, PK-8 Science Department Chair, and a Lower School Academic Dean. Along with his professional pedigree, he is a lifelong practitioner of several of the common arts profiled in his book *Common Arts Education: Renewing the Classical Tradition of Training the Head, Hands, and Heart* (Classical Academic Press, 2021) and the founder of Always Learning Education, an organization dedicated to teaching, learning, and propagating the common arts. He lives on a small, homesteaded farm in central Virginia with his wife and three homeschooled sons.

*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.*