



# ESSENTIALLY ENGLISH

GERMANTOWN FRIENDS SCHOOL 2010

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LITERATURE AND WRITING COURSES FOR STUDENTS, PARENTS, ALUMNI, AND FRIENDS  
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## 1. Anything Prose: Writers' Workshop

Yolanda Palacio

3 day sections (all sections)

This workshop will improve your writing chops with constant practice and give you the confidence and tools to write with versatility. Each week we will focus on a different type of nonfiction writing including memoir, personal essay, features, profiles, reviews, and travel writing. You will create a portfolio of revised, polished pieces and submit one of your works to a literary contest or journal for publication.

*Yolanda Palacio teaches tenth and eleventh grade English and the Modern City seminar.*

## 2. Readers' Theatre: Shakespeare

Susan Wilder and Lisa Burns

Monday evening

The plays of William Shakespeare were not written to be read but to be brought to life by a company of actors. In this class we will explore *Twelfth Night*, *The Taming of the Shrew*, and *The Winter's Tale*, with the text itself as the focus rather than directorial interpretation. We will read the plays together in class and learn to use many of the practical tools that classical actors use to craft their performances. We'll watch selected filmed productions and go to the Lantern Theatre Company in May to see *Henry IV, Part 1*. The class is informal and thoroughly participatory. There will be three papers assigned. Participants are encouraged to use any edition of the plays as the variations are quite interesting in themselves.

*Instructor and professional actress Susan Wilder (Broadway, regional, film and television) received an M.F.A. at The Shakespeare Theatre Academy for Classical Acting at The George Washington University in Washington, DC. Lisa Burns is the director of the GFS Theatre Program.*

## 3. Writing for an Audience: Journalism Essentials

Karen Heller

Wednesday evening

This course will delve into the necessary skills for reporting, interviewing, feature writing, editing, and commentary for newspapers and school assignments. We will address ethics, voice, fairness and professionalism in crafting articles that resonate. Pieces by top practitioners will be studied. There will be guest appearances by leading journalists and editors. Students will learn news writing, feature writing, criticism and opinion. Students will write four articles and workshop them.

*Karen Heller is a columnist and staff writer at The Philadelphia Inquirer and has contributed articles to several national publications. She has won national, state, and local awards in investigative journalism, feature writing, and criticism and was a finalist for the Pulitzer Prize in commentary.*



## 4. Going Gonzo: American New Journalism

Joe McGeary

Monday evening and 2 day sections (all sections)

This class examines an important subgenre of recent and current American writing known variously as “new journalism,” “gonzo journalism,” or the “nonfiction novel” and known also for the innovative strategy of putting the reporter into the story. The best practitioners of the genre succeed in producing dazzling works of prose that transgress the boundary between fiction and fact, while at the same time exposing American society to sometimes serious, sometimes playful, often wittily satirical scrutiny. Hunter Thompson goes to the dark side of 1960s counterculture in *Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas*. Norman Mailer examines the movie-star mystique of the Kennedys in *Superman Comes to the Supermarket*, and also reports on epic battles between Muhammed Ali and Joe Frazier in *The Fight* and between police and college students demonstrating outside the 1968 Democratic National Convention in *The Siege of Chicago*. Joan Didion explores the underside of L.A. and Hollywood in her 1979 collection of essays, *The White Album*, while David Foster Wallace brings the genre up-to-date with his brilliantly perceptive reportage in *A Supposedly Fun Thing I'll Never Do Again* and *Consider the Lobster*. This class is primarily a reading class, although students will produce one example of creative non-fiction writing. There will be weekly response papers, a critical essay, and one creative nonfiction essay.

*Joe McGeary teaches twelfth grade English and is the coordinator of Essentially English.*

## 5. Once Upon a Time: The Literature of Childhood

Anne Gerbner

Wednesday evening and 1 day section (1,2,3,5,6)

The stories we hear as children are crucial influences on our moral and social development, and the books we read as children give us entry into what Richard Wright called “forbidden and enchanting lands.” We will read popular children’s fiction, beginning with Maria Tatar’s anthology *The Classic Fairy Tales*, as we study the cultural and psychological influences of children’s literature. Books include Lewis Carroll’s *Alice in Wonderland*, James Barrie’s *Peter and Wendy* (the novelization of Barrie’s 1911 play), Phillip Pullman’s *The Golden Compass*, and E.B. White’s *Charlotte’s Web*. We will also read authors such as Roald Dahl, Dr. Seuss, and Maurice Sendak and consider essays by Neil Postman (*The Disappearance of Childhood*), Bruno Bettelheim (*The Uses of Enchantment*), and Ariel Dorfman (*The Empire’s Old Clothes: What the Lone Ranger, Babar, and Other Innocent Heroes Do to Our Minds*), as we debate when adults should monitor or control what children read. We will read a psychiatrist’s analysis of children’s picture books and consider a historian’s critique of *The Story of Babar*. Assignments will include a paper on a Hardy Boys or Nancy Drew book, an analysis of a Disney adaptation, and a formal presentation. Weekly reading will be quite heavy but delightful.

*Anne Gerbner, head of the English Department, teaches eleventh and twelfth grade English. During the summer, she is the children’s librarian at Pocono Lake Preserve.*

## 6. Writing For Radio

Yolanda Palacio

Monday evening

“Radio is the theater of the mind; television is the theater of the mindless” —Steve Allen

Have you ever dreamed about being the host of your own radio show? This course will introduce you to the fun and exciting art of writing for radio. Weekly skill-building workshops on scriptwriting and capturing and editing audio will lead to the creation of three student-produced shows which will air on the internet radio station [Gtownradio.com](http://Gtownradio.com). The course will have a special focus on covering current events in Germantown and include visits from local radio hosts and a field trip to a Philly radio station. You will keep a weekly journal, produce an audio profile, and write a 3–5 page essay on a radio-related topic.

*Yolanda Palacio, an English teacher at GFS, is the host of a poetry show on GtownRadio.com.*



## 7. Four Contemporary Poets

Meg Goldner Rabinowitz

2 day sections (all sections)

“Reading poetry is an adventure in renewal, a creative act, a perpetual beginning, a rebirth of wonder,” according to contemporary poet Edward Hirsch. In this course we will focus on reading, listening to, writing in response to, and exploring the words of four contemporary poets. Derek Walcott, Mary Oliver, Billy Collins, and Naomi Shihab-Nye each invite us to consider the world through a vastly different way of seeing. We will discuss the variety in their voices and in the forms their expression takes. By way of contrast to these contemporary writers, we will consider Rainer Maria Rilke’s poetry and examine Wim Wender’s film *Wings of Desire* as an attempt to transform poetry into film. Writing exercises will invite students to explore their own modes of self-expression in a supportive, inspiring, and dynamic group. This is a class for anyone who is interested in discovering poetry on the page, on the screen, and in the world. In addition to writing poetry, students will write commentaries and analyses of selected poems.

*Meg Goldner Rabinowitz, tenth grade English teacher, loves to read all forms of poetry. She is on the planning committee for the Germantown Poetry Festival.*

## 8. Existence 101: Basic Works of Existentialism

Rebecca Goldner

Wednesday evening

The most basic claim of existentialism—that existence precedes essence—is a complex and confounding overgeneralization of this broadly conceived philosophical movement. Coined by Jean-Paul Sartre, the notion of existentialism plays out in questions of being, essence, identity, purpose, and freedom. This course will pursue these themes as we read a variety of works by writers and thinkers such as Sartre, de Beauvoir, Marcel, Camus, and Albee, examine song lyrics from singer songwriter Ben Folds, and study films such as Jean-Luc Godard’s *Contempt* and the more contemporary films *The Virgin Suicides* and *I Heart Huckabees*. This course will be writing-intensive, with two formal papers and multiple reaction and reflection papers. Because of its focus on creating a writing portfolio, special attention will be given to the reviewing, editing, and rewriting of successive drafts of a single paper.

*Rebecca Goldner is a former GFS Latin teacher and a current doctoral candidate in philosophy at Villanova University.*

## 9. It’s Bigger Than Hip-Hop

Ted Boughter-Dornfeld with Adam Hotek

Monday evening

Through an assortment of literature, film, music, and guest lecturing, we will examine the basic history of hip-hop from its urban inception in the Bronx in 1979 up to the present. As a group, we will talk about the shift in hip-hop from a subcultural, spontaneously creative phenomenon, to its multinational corporate design and success. The course will consider the significance of hip-hop’s global acceptance as an important part of today’s popular (and non-popular) culture and the influence of hip-hop on politics, the media, and advertising campaigns. We will investigate positive business models within the music industry, alongside clear examples of mismanagement and manipulation. Students will also address the often hyper-masculine, patriarchal nature of hip-hop and will compare that trend with the larger “mainstream” culture, being careful to closely scrutinize gender bias and sexual exploitation. Finally, we will discuss stereotyping and sub-genres of the music and the role that religion has played in shaping hip-hop. Students will write two papers and make a formal presentation.

*Ted Boughter-Dornfeld is a GFS alumnus who recently graduated from Tufts University with a B.A. in Comparative Religion and English. Adam Hotek teaches junior English.*



## 10. Fight the Power: Exploring Race, Class and Gender in the Films of Spike Lee

Meg Goldner Rabinowitz

Wednesday evening

Spike Lee's films serve as an excellent beginning point for discussing complex issues and will lead us to exploring other films with similar themes but drastically different approaches. How are historically black colleges depicted in *School Daze* as compared to *Drumline*? To what extent do social taboos depicted in *Jungle Fever* harken back to 1967's *Guess Who's Coming to Dinner*? Does Lee's most brilliant flawed film *Do the Right Thing* serve as a better catalyst for discussion than the highly acclaimed *Crash*? How does *Malcolm X* stand up as a biopic when compared to *Walk the Line* or *Ray*? How does a heist film, *Inside Man*, speak to *The Italian Job*, *Out of Sight*, or *Ocean's Eleven*? What does the narrative filmmaker bring to documentaries such as *4 Little Girls*, *When the Levees Broke*, and *Passing Strange*? Students will also view and consider Lee's films *She's Gotta Have It*, *Mo' Better Blues*, *He Got Game*, *Bamboozled*, and *25th Hour*. Weekly writing assignments will include a comparison commentary, a formal film analysis, a storyboard, and a review. Students must be able to see films outside of class. Class will begin at 7 pm.

*Meg Goldner Rabinowitz has been teaching English, film, and media studies for more than 20 years. She is dedicated to using visual images as a prompt for dialogue.*

## 11. Espionage Fiction

Joe McGeary

3 daytime sections (all sections)

This class will read four novels dealing with spies, secret agents, and CIA counter-insurgents. We will begin with the popular culture figure of the secret agent as heroic adventurer in the service of overseas empire as represented by James Bond in Ian Fleming's novel *From Russia with Love* (1963). We will then read two novels that put a more serious and critical spin on the espionage genre. Joseph Conrad's novel *The Secret Agent* (1907) is based on a true event—the 1894 attempt by anarchists to blow up the Greenwich Observatory— and is eerily predictive of present-day anxieties about terrorist conspiracies. *The Spy Who Came in from the Cold* (1963) by John LeCarré portrays the British Secret Service in an ironic light during the height of the Cold War. We will end with Don DeLillo's *Libra* (1988), a richly comic imagining of a CIA-hatched plot to assassinate President John F. Kennedy. DeLillo's novel raises questions about the morality of secret government and about Kennedy's own efforts to hatch plots against his Communist adversary Fidel Castro. In addition to these texts, the class will be assigned to watch the films *La Femme Nikita* and *Syriana*. Requirements include two papers and a five-page spy story or an equivalent creative project, such as a script or short video.

*Joe McGeary holds a Ph.D. from Duke University, where he studied espionage literature as part of his dissertation on American empire.*

## 12. Teenage Angst

John Friedman

Wednesday evening

The emotional plight of the adolescent has inspired major film directors in every genre: melodrama, comedy, musical. We will watch George Stevens' *Alice Adams* (1935); Billy Wilder's *The Major and the Minor* (1942); Vincente Minelli's *Meet Me in St. Louis* (1944); Nicholas Ray's *Rebel Without a Cause* (1955); Douglas Sirk's *Imitation of Life* (1959); Elia Kazan's *Splendor in the Grass* (1961); Lindsay Anderson's *If...* (1968); and Amy Heckerling's *Fast Times at Ridgemont High* (1982). These films provided breakthrough roles for a variety of major actors: Katharine Hepburn, Judy Garland, James Dean, Warren Beatty, Natalie Wood, Malcolm McDowell, and Sean Penn. There will be weekly classroom writing assignments and three major papers.

*John Friedman has been teaching film classes in Essentially English since 1985.*



### 13. Contemporary Women Writers of Color

Antoinette Peters

1 daytime section (all sections)

This course will introduce students to some of the contemporary works by women of color. We will examine how gender roles develop and the way that women view themselves through their writing. Through a variety of genres—poetry, short stories, and novels—we will identify different themes within the literature. The female authors chosen will represent a wide selection of cultural, ethnic, and socioeconomic backgrounds and will include Julia Alvarez, Amy Tan, Louise Erdrich, and Jhumpa Lahiri. Assignments will consist of two formal essays and weekly journal responses to the readings.

*Antoinette Peters has an M.A. in English from Arcadia University, where she is currently teaching a course in freshman composition.*

### 14. A Bridge to the 21st Century: Texts and Contexts

Adam Hotek

Wednesday evening

During the 1980s and early 1990s the phrase “culture wars” was often deployed as a catch-all concept to summarize a range of debates about how artists and public intellectuals represent pieties such as “patriotism,” “classic art,” and “moral decency.” Such debates registered controversies about such matters as artistic license, race, class, gender, and what was often dubbed “multiculturalism.” In this class we will review some of these debates and then turn our attention to how these “wars” have played out in the twenty-first century. Some of the authors we will read include Don DeLillo, E.D. Hirsch, the Coen Brothers, Haruki Murakami, Colson Whitehead, Zadie Smith, and Junot Diaz, among others. There will be three papers assigned.

*Adam Hotek is a GFS teacher and has taught a wide variety of Essentially English courses. He currently is finishing his doctoral dissertation on Afro-American literature.*

### 15. Engendering the Body

Sara Gordon

Monday evening

Teenage girls average fourteen grooming tasks each morning; teenage boys average four. Many boys embrace their anger but fear others seeing them cry; many girls embrace their tears but fear others seeing them express anger. How did attention to appearance and suppression of anger become associated with femininity, and expressing anger and a more casual attitude toward appearance become associated with masculinity? In this course we will explore how gender, the socially constructed performance of masculinity and femininity, intersects with biological sex. Reading includes the novels *The Well of Loneliness* by Radcliffe Hall and *Middlesex* by Jeffrey Eugenides and essay by prominent gender theorists. Viewing includes excerpts of the dramatic films *300*, *Mean Girls*, *Tootsie*, *Boys Don't Cry* and *Mulan* and of the documentary films *Trans Generation* and *Paris Is Burning*. Students will write one thesis essay, keep a gender journal, and write a gender instruction manual.

*Sara Gordon has an M.A. in English Literature and a Graduate Certificate in Women's Studies from the University of Pennsylvania. She teaches sophomore English.*

### 16. Fresh Fiction: Contemporary Short Stories

Chris Singler

Wednesday evening or 1 day class (section 2, 5)

In this class the focus will be on the short-story form. Students will read four new collections (all situated outside of the United States). Uwen Akpan's stories in *Say You're One of Them* document the plight of African children in the face of famine, civil war, and slavery. In Alice Munro's collection *Runaway*, lovers lose and find each other, often entwined with forces beyond their control. The interconnected tales in *In Other Rooms, Other Wonders* by Daniyal Mueenuddin revolve around a Pakistani landowner and his family. Simon Van Booy's stories in *Love Begins in Winter* journey around the globe, following cellists, gypsies, and diplomats. All of these new collections have their roots in traditional short-story approaches, but push beyond the known to something new and magical. Major assignments will include journal writing in response to all of the stories we read, plus two original short stories, which will be workshopped in class.

*Chris Singler teaches upper school English and is a tenth grade advisor.*



## 17. American Literature and the City: 1870–1900

James Barron

Monday evening

After the Civil War, America's traditional rural patterns of social and economic life were suddenly disrupted by the appearance of a new phenomenon: the city. Created by the rapid industrialization and mass immigration that took place in the 1870s and 1880s, the city engendered fear and loss, longing and hope in the hearts and minds of contemporary Americans. These responses to the city, among many others, were imagined and confronted through an outpouring of new and innovative forms of literature. These late nineteenth-century American literary works are typically organized under the genre titles of realism, naturalism, and local color. In this course we will read examples from each of these literary genres: *Main-Travelled Roads* by Hamlin Garland (local color), *A Hazard of New Fortunes* by William Dean Howells (realism), and *The Sea-Wolf* by Jack London (naturalism). In preparation for the course and in order to understand the historical context in which these works were written, students will read the first half of Robert Wiebe's *The Search for Order: 1877-1920*. There will be three papers, one for each of the genres studied.

*Jim Barron holds an M.A. and a Ph.D. in Comparative Literature from the University of Chicago, where his major focus of study was Polish literature and American literature of the nineteenth century.*

## 18. Screenwriting

Kathleen DeMarco Van Cleve

Wednesday evening

This is a workshop course for those who have thought they had a terrific idea for a movie but didn't know where to begin. The class will focus on learning the basic tenets of classical dramatic structure and how this (ideally) will serve as the backbone for the screenplay of the aforementioned terrific idea. Students will read such classic and not-so classic screenplays as *Rocky*, *The Godfather*, *The Shawshank Redemption*, *Star Wars*, *Pulp Fiction*, and *Tootsie*; and they will also become acquainted with how the business of selling and producing one's screenplay actually happens. By the end of the course, each student should have at least twenty pages of a screenplay completed.

*Kathleen DeMarco Van Cleve teaches screenwriting at the University of Pennsylvania and has worked in the film industry. She is the author of the novels Cranberry Queen and The Difference Between You and Me.*

## 19. School Stories

Connie Thompson

1 daytime section (1, 2, 5, 6)

Setting will be the constant in this course: the literature we read and the films we watch will all take place in secondary schools. We will investigate how various writers in three genres tell gripping stories centering on conflicts and connections between students, between teachers, and between students and teachers. We will read two plays: *The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie* by Jay Presson Allen and *The History Boys* by Alan Bennett. We will explore school stories in the fiction of John Knowles (*A Separate Peace*), Tobias Wolff (*Old School*), Lorene Cary (*Black Ice*) and Alan Sillitoe (*The Loneliness of the Long Distance Runner*). Realistic, surrealistic, and sentimental treatments of school stories will be considered in the films and film excerpts that we watch. Students will write several journal responses, one analytical essay, and one major school story—fiction or nonfiction—of their own.

*Connie Thompson teaches ninth and twelfth grade English and is a freelance reviewer for The New York Times Book Review.*



# ADULT REGISTRATION INFORMATION 2010

ESSENTIALLY ENGLISH at Germantown Friends School offers eight-week literature and writing courses, from Tuesday, April 6 through Wednesday, May 26, designed to bring people of different ages together in the classroom. Adults are invited to join these courses, which are composed primarily of our tenth- through twelfth-grade students, who must take one elective each spring to fulfill their requirement in English. We believe that sharing widely varied perspectives on an artistic vision generates a special kind of learning, exciting for all participants. For both literature and writing courses, adults are expected to complete the reading and to participate in class discussions, but to do the writing only if they are enrolled in a writing course.

EVENING COURSES will meet once a week for eight weeks, on Monday or Wednesday. Classes start promptly at 7:30 and run until 10:15 p.m., with one ten-minute break. NOTE DATE CHANGE: The first Monday class will be held on Tuesday, April 6.

DAYTIME COURSES meet for one 60-minute session and three 45-50-minute sessions each week. Some courses are offered in one section only; others, in two, three or four. They will be taught in the section or sections in which there is the most demand. If you are interested in a daytime course, please indicate on the form which section you prefer.

## DAY SECTIONS ESSENTIALLY ENGLISH 2010

Section 1	Section 2	Section 3	Section 4	Section 5	Section 6
Mon. 8:20 – 9:00	Mon. 9:00 – 10:00	Mon. 10:00 – 10:40	Mon. 11:35 – 12:20	Mon. 12:20 – 1:05	Mon. 1:50 – 2:35
Tu. 12:35 – 1:35	Tu. 8:20 – 9:05	Tu. 12:35 – 1:35	Wed. 8:20 – 9:05	Wed. 9:05 – 10:05	Tu. 10:05 – 10:50
Th. 12:20 – 1:05	Wed. 1:50 – 2:35	Wed. 12:20 – 1:05	Th. 1:50 – 2:35	Th. 8:20 – 9:05	Th. 9:05 – 10:05
Fr. 10:05 – 10:50	Fr. 12:20 – 1:05	Fr. 8:20 – 9:05	Fr. 9:05 – 10:05	Fr. 1:50 – 2:35	Fr. 11:35 – 12:20

BOOKS for all courses may be purchased at BROWSER'S BOOKSTORE in the front hall of the Main Building at 10% discount, no tax. Pick up the assignment for the first class and the books for the course BEFORE SPRING VACATION BEGINS ON March 26. Call Susan Silverstein in Browser's at (215)-951-2376 for information about books.

FEE FOR ADULTS is \$175 per course. Make check payable to GFS Essentially English.

TO REGISTER fill out the form below, and send it before February 5 to:

Joseph McGeary, Essentially English Coordinator, Germantown Friends School, 31 West Coulter Street, Philadelphia, PA 19144. Enclose a check payable to "GFS Essentially English." If a course is over-subscribed or cancelled, you will be notified in time to choose another. Prompt registration is encouraged to avoid disappointment. Later registration is possible if there is space in the class.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION, call Joseph McGeary at (215) 951-2300 or email [jmcgeary@gfsnet.org](mailto:jmcgeary@gfsnet.org)

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## ADULT REGISTRATION FORM 2010

NAME \_\_\_\_\_ Email \_\_\_\_\_

ADDRESS \_\_\_\_\_

HOME PHONE \_\_\_\_\_ WORK PHONE \_\_\_\_\_

Circle one: Current Parent    Alumnus/Alumna    Faculty    Friend

COURSE CHOICE (Number and Title)

(Please note if you would like to take the same course as your child. If so, be sure to list at least two choices.)

FIRST CHOICE # \_\_\_\_\_

SECOND CHOICE # \_\_\_\_\_

THIRD CHOICE # \_\_\_\_\_

